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A twenty-first century Iphigenia in a play by Caridad Svich: between aulis and Ciudad Juárez
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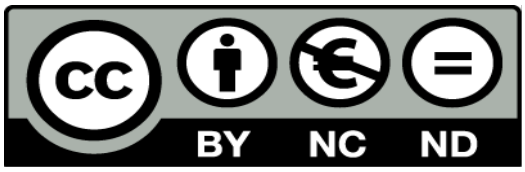

TRABAJO FIN DE ESTUDIOS

MASTER EN PERSPECTIVAS LINGÜÍSTICAS Y LITERARIAS SOBRE EL TEXTO

A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY IPHIGENIA IN A PLAY BY CARIDAD SVICH: BETWEEN AULIS AND CIUDAD JUÁREZ

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Me gustaría que estas líneas sirvan para expresar mi más sincero agradecimiento a Caridad Svich por ofrecerme su tiempo para realizarle una entrevista.

También a María Jesús por ser una excelente tutora, por brindarme su apoyo, honestidad y confianza.

Por último, quiero dar las gracias a mi familia, amigos y a todas las personas que me han dado la fuerza e inspiración para seguir adelante, por estar conmigo en cada paso y traspié.

FOREWORD

A one-year stay as a Spanish lecturer at Bryant University (Rhode Island, United States) was determinant to find the research topic for my final master's project. While in the United States, I had direct and enriching contact with the Latino community, both personally and professionally. I attended a conference by the mayor of the city of Providence (capital of Rhode Island), Ángel Taveras, of Dominican origin, which sparked my interest in the U.S. Latino community. For the first time, I became aware of what it meant that more than 50 million Latinos/as participate in building the economy, society, and culture of a country where traditions are changing. Also, I could see with my own eyes that the Latino population in the U.S.A. contributes more than just numbers.

Nevertheless, while it is a fact that the Latino community is a cultural melting pot from many different origins and ethnicities, in the United States there is somehow a widespread stereotype that gathers Latino people into one subcluster of society.

I found that by the homogenization of millions of men and women under the same label, we tend to accept social values unthinkingly – without being aware of the fact that they can eventually become dangerous inventions. There are some enduring stereotypes from early Hollywood movies. On the one hand, the Latin-lover, the lazy

Mexican or the violent Latino criminal. And, on the other, the hypersexual, exotic, or Latina maid.[1] As it is explored in *Latino Beyond the Reel* (2013)[2], a deep and interesting documentary about US Latinos, directed by Miguel Picker and Chyng Sun, the impact of the media on the portrayal of stereotyped Latinos with "no dignity" holds great responsibility for these 'inventions'. To give a few examples, *The Frito Bandito* was the cartoon mascot for Fritos corn chips from 1967 to 1971, who portrayed the 'bandido' stereotype; also the Warner Bros Cartoon Mr. Slowpoke Rodriguez character, which portrays a lazy slow-witted Mexican mouse, or the well-known Speedy Gonzalez, which portrays a Mexican 'mouse' with a very heavy Mexican accent, poor, and with a penchant for alcohol. Also, Sofia Vergara's character, Gloria, in the *Modern Family* TV show and the character of Consuela, a Latina housekeeper, in *Family Guy*, illustrate a stereotypical depiction of Latinas. According to Juan González, from the New York Daily News, "to question the images is to question history" (Latino Beyond the Reel).

As a great literature-lover, I became interested in contemporary US-Latino/a authors and I found out that although they are very diverse, most of them write pieces of art that are strongly socially engaged. Latino literature develops fictional worlds beyond mere entertainment. They are usually concerned with what it means to be Latino in the United States, and they particularly address cultural hybridity and assimilation. In other words, common topics in this literature include questions such as the status of their language, whether it is Spanish, English or Spanglish, but also gender issues such as sexual orientation, discrimination, and stereotypes or ethnicity.

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[1] According to Professor A. Valdivia, "The famous Latina actress Lupe Ontiveros estimated that she played the role of a maid a 187 times." (Latino Beyond the Reel 2013)

[2] You can watch the whole preview of the movie at this link http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/. Accessed 4 June 2013.

During my master's program in *Perspectivas Lingüísticas y Literarias* (2012-2013) at the University of La Rioja, and thanks to the suggestions of my supervisor Dr. María Jesús Hernáez Lerena, I had the opportunity to explore literary works from Latino authors such as Sandra Cisneros, Julia Álvarez, and Junot Díaz. One day, surfing the Internet looking for a Latino play, I found by chance what constitutes the focus of my research today: Caridad Svich's play *Iphigenia: Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell that Was Once Her Heart* (2004).[3] What caught my attention about this contemporary play was not only its power to retell a well-known part of Greek mythology – C. Svich's play was inspired by Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* (408-406 BC)[4] – but mainly its social goal and concern: the play denounces the real drama lived at the US-Mexican border and sheds lights on the indiscriminate abuse and slaughter of thousands of women. This is known as feminicide. Indeed, as far as I know, this is the first contemporary play which uses mythology to fight against such widespread gender violence. It has such a harrowing message that it touched me deeply. I felt strongly compelled and thrilled to engage in the present research, first, because I am a woman and, second, because I feel very much connected to the Latino community.[5]

[3] To refer to Svich's play from this moment onwards I will be using the abbreviation: *Iphigenia Crash.*
[4] To refer to Euripides' play from this moment onwards I will be using the abbreviation: *Iphigenia Aulis.*
[5] Latino/a refers to people living in the United States who have roots in Latin America, Spain, Mexico, South America, or Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries.

1. AIMS OF THE PROJECT

> *One of the amazing aspects of the classics is that the foundations of the storytelling are so, so strong that they carry them across centuries.*
> Caridad Svich (Interview 2013)[6]

The past is said to be a foreign country where things were done differently. But what if that past had a never-ending "presentness"? The main goal of this essay is to analyze to which extent a story created in the 5th century B.C. can portray gender conflicts and inequalities which persist in today's world.

I will compare *Iphigenia at Aulis* by Euripides with its contemporary "offspring", *Iphigenia Crash* by Caridad Svich, in terms of the depiction and delineation of the main characters by paying special attention to the idea of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, I will investigate the reasons why a present-day author would reshape a well-known ancient myth and re-contextualize it in a world of cultural hybridity, as it is on the border between the United States and Mexico. I will explore the

[6] The quotations at the beginning of each chapter belong to the interview that the author gave me from 24th April to 12th June 2013 through email. This interview is included in the Appendix.

relationships that the play *Iphigenia Crash* shares with the play that inspired its creation: *Iphigenia Aulis* by Euripides. I will also analyze new meanings that emerge from the interaction between fiction and reality. I will show the atemporality of the myth of Iphigenia presented in Svich's modern play and its relation with reality. Finally, I will discuss the ways this contemporary play is able to combine myth with reality in order to bring to the public eye one of the darkest realities that haunts the 21st century: feminicide and gender inequality.

I will analyze the characters of *Iphigenia Crash,* in terms of their interaction within the play and also in terms of similarities and differences with the play by Euripides. Moreover, I will focus on the differences and similarities that the characters of Svich's play show with the characters in *Iphigenia Aulis* by Euripides.

To achieve my goals, I have organized my work into the following parts. In the first section, I will contextualize the play by providing an overview of the theoretical and critical positions which allow a gendered reading of this play. Then, I will proceed to examine the historical, sociological, and cultural background that generates Svich's creative response. These fields of study are important in the analysis and comparison of Svich's and Euripides' plays.

This attempt at contextualization is organized from the most generic term (postmodernism), to more specific disciplines which are interrelated and correspond to the core of my analysis: feminism, queer theory, and masculinities. The next two sections are also arranged from more general (Latino literature) to more specific (Latino plays). They are intimately related to the notions of feminism, queer theory, and masculinities. Finally, the issue of feminicide is a subject which engages common issues from all of the previous ones. Moreover, it is the central topic of both Svich's play and this essay. This contextualization is a deliberate mixture of literature, human

rights, gender studies, transnationalism, transculturation, and acculturation. It is a varicolored patchwork of fields of study woven together with a common idea: to make a social impact and bring to light today's injustice.

The second part is devoted to the methodology. In this section, I will analyze the relationships of characters, which are crucial to understanding gender-based relationships. I will examine and compare the characterization, location, and time of these plays, focusing mainly on *Iphigenia Crash*.

In the third part, I will describe both plays with the goal of providing a general idea of the correlation between both plays, as well as to depict their main differences (or similarities) in terms of the topics studied.

Once I have described the two plays under examination in the above-mentioned terms, I will devote a part to explore gender connections and relationships between characters. This section will give voice to those who were neglected in Euripides' myth; therefore the abusive characters will go second.

Finally, in the appendix, the reader will find an interview with the author Caridad Svich, where she responds to my questions about her career and her interests as an engaged artist. She also shares valuable personal impressions on her work *Iphigenia Crash*.

2. CONTEXTUALIZATION

> *A writer cannot escape who she is or what/how she was born into something.*
> Caridad Svich (Interview 2013)

2.1. Postmodernism

Iphigenia Crash is a contemporary play nurtured by postmodernist features. In order to understand the background of Caridad Svich's play, I will contextualize this work in the period of Postmodernist Literature,[7] which started developing after World War II. In the field of literature, the term became prominent in the second half of the 20th century. According to Barry Lewis, postmodern literature can be defined as "the texts published between 1960 and 1990 that are […] to be regarded as postmodernist" (112); nevertheless, there is not a stable definition for this concept.

Although I am interested in the idea of postmodernism in literary terms, we cannot overlook the fact that it covers a great variety of fields, such as culture, art, philosophy, economics, architecture, fiction, or literary criticism. The first time the term "post-modern" was used to refer to contemporary culture was in 1945, when Joseph Hudnut employed it to describe new developments in modern architecture (Mason xvii). In postmodernism, the world was regarded as complex and ambiguous. The past was (re)fictionalized within a playful, ironic, and critical standpoint which was clearly

[7] It should be noticed that I will not attempt to provide an all-encompassing definition of the whole movement but rather a few references of its main features and authors.

affected by the era of ‘consumerist’ popular culture and mass media (Woods 1999, Jameson 2003). Reality was presented as subjective and truth was relative to one's viewpoint. Nevertheless, as with every movement, postmodernism would not have emerged if it had not been for the intellectual rebellion which arose against the previous movement: Modernism. In the view of Professor Douwe Wessel Fokkema, “modernism was their [referring to postmodernists] negative point of departure” (24).

Postmodernism was not so much a discovery of a new artistic style as a narrowing of the horizon of existing intellectual and aesthetic possibilities as prior ventures lost their critical purchase (Duval 28).But, what is actually postmodernist literature? Or as the American author Don DeLillo put the question: can we even attempt to define it? (Guerinca Magazine, 2007).

There are many scholars who believe that it is not possible to give a definite description or definition ‘behind’ the term “Postmodernist Literature”. Lord states that there is not a fixed coherent definition and that the term “postmodernist fiction” is unstable; the delineation of the term “postmodernist literature” seems to be ‘slippery’ (McLaren 20; Rorty 35; Grice & Woods 53). There may also be some disagreement between some of the authors cited. Ward agrees to this but he adds that the postmodernist lack of precision is its greatest asset as it allows ideas to stay mobile and to be constantly reinvented (80). What is certain, however, is that postmodernist authors shared a common need to show their ‘own reality’ through many different angles. Postmodernism is described as a mixture of styles which conjugate realism and fiction, “a hodgepodge of old and new narrative styles” (Billias 139) embedded in one single piece of work and structure; a many-faceted formation which has led to great discussion among critics (Malpas 22). Postmodernist fiction gathers an extensive range of forms and perspectives, a mixture of “multiplicity” and “disparity” (Hutcheon 90). This is

reflected in literary works which can be self-reflexive, but also contain strategies such as the burlesque, parody, intertextuality, and hybrid forms to create new textual realities. They embody the "rejection of those 'grand narratives' that attempt to account for all historical events or human behavior" (Billias 139). Indeed, postmodernist fiction challenges the notion of history and truth and focuses on "whose truth" (Marshall 150).

Postmodernist literature was a worldwide phenomenon which occurred both in Europe and America; therefore, there are representatives of this movement around the globe.[8] Some of the best known postmodernist authors in the United States are Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Don DeLillo, Donald Barthelme and Kurt Vonnegut. Latin Americans are an important direct influence on many postmodernist fiction writers: Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and Gabriel García Márquez are examples. In Europe some of the most prominent authors are: Italians Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco, English Salman Rushdie (of South Asian origin) and Jeannette Winterson, and finally, Scottish Alasdair Gray and Irish John Banville. Some of the best-known female writers and Postmodernist novels are *The Golden Notebook* (1962) by Doris Lessing and the novel *Disent les imbéciles* (1976) by Nathalie Sarraute. The novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) by Angela Carter, which uses a new range of styles to create a fabulated world that explores myths of gender in contemporary culture (Mason xviii); then the novel *Song of Salomon* (1977) by Toni Morrison which brings back the African American lives erased from official history and *The Passion* (1987) by Jeanette Winterson where fiction and history become one.

[8] This is an attempt to illustrate some of the most representative postmodernist authors, not an extensive list. I based my research on *The A to Z of Postmodernist Literature* and *Theater* by F. Mason.

2.2. Feminist and Queer Theory

The history of feminist literary criticism has been extensive and diverse. Although it can be traced back to the times of Sapho in the 7th century B.C., it was not until the mid-20th century that it became a prominent reality (Stimpson 7). I would like to focus on its importance as a breaking point in female physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. Through literature, feminist authors were/are able to produce an unprecedented transformation in the traditional gendered role society. During the 20th century, the concept of femininity took a radical turn when the role of women as 'the second sex' and its peripheral role in society were questioned. Two of the major works of feminist philosophy are *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by Virginia Woolf [9] and *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir.[10] Many other writers and researchers found that the classical, well-established attributes of 'femininity' were archaic, to say the least, and they felt the need to retell and criticize classic literature, fairytales, and myths. Some examples of tales retold are: *21st Retold Stories Sleeping Beauty, Indeed and Other Lesbian Fairytales* (2009) edited by JoSelle Vanderhooft, which compiles contemporary stories from a lesbian perspective. Also, *The Rose and The Beast* (2009) by Lia Block which turns nine fairy tales inside out. On the other hand, many female characters from Ancient myths have been 'rescued'; just to name a few: Hellen of Troy, Electra, Medusa, Cassandra, and the protagonist of this research project, Iphigenia.

Some of the most representative critics include the feminist scholar Marcia Lieberman, who wrote "*Someday My Prince will Come: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale"* (1972), which was one of the first critical studies related to the

[9] In this essay, Woolf explores the careers of several female 17th, 18th and 19th century authors, including Anne Finch, Jane Austen, Aphra Behn, the Brontë sisters, and George Eliot.
[10] This book provides a systematic analysis on women's condition and its treatment throughout history.

"American Fairy-tale Renaissance" (Haase 1). Also the essay "*Silenced Women in the Grimms' Tales: The 'Fit' Between Fairy Tales and Their Historical Context*" (1986) by Ruth Bottigheimer, which criticized the way in which strong female characters had been weakened and demonized by the Grimms; also *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (*1979) by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, which examines Victorian literature from a feminist perspective.[11] It is also relevant to mention *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale* (1994) by Jack Zypes, which investigates the historical rise of the literary fairy tale as a genre in the late 17th century and its relationship with subjugation in Western society. Another interesting work is *Off With Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood* (1993) by Maria Tatar, which explores how Perrault, the Grimms, and other writers reshaped fairy tales with a view of socializing the child.

Feminist literature enabled the construction of a better and more egalitarian world through fictionalized characters, and also opened endless possibilities to break down other socially constructed boundaries such as heteronormativity,[12] homogeneous masculinity, and racism.

2.3. Queer Theory

Caridad Svich's play aims to put disadvantaged social groups in the center of attention by giving priority to the voices that have usually been neglected and even stigmatized as a waste of human society. Characters who were/are marginalized and

[11] Based on the book *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches* by Hasaan (2004).
[12] The term was first coined by Michael Warner in *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993).

abused because of their sexual preferences acquire a primary role.[13] While women's liberation was simultaneously developing, many LGBT[14] activists felt inspired by it when fighting for their rights (Fetner 18). The LGBT movement has gained strength since the 1960s and LGBT literary works have become more and more common.[15]

It was the founding of the Lambda Literary Award in 1989 that helped to increase the visibility of LGBT literature. The Lambda Literary Awards identify and celebrate the best lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender books of the year and affirm that LGBT stories are part of the literature of the world ("A Brief History of LLF").

Some of the most relevant lesbian fiction books are:[16] *Trash: Short Stories* (1988) by Dorothy Allison, *Written on the Body* (1993) by Jeannette Wintterson, *Fingersmith* by Sara Waters (2002), *Babyji* (2005) by Abha Dawesar, and *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* (2005) by Alicia Gaspar de Alba. The last book, a mystery novel, shares with Caridad Svich's play the issue of the US-Mexican border feminicides by telling the stories of women brutally raped and murdered.

In relation to gay fiction, some of the most relevant books are:[17] *Faggots* (1978) by Larry Kramer, *The Beautiful Room* is *Empty* (1988) by Edmund White, *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988) by Alan J. Hollinghurst, *A Home at the End of the World* (1990) by Michael Cunningham; *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on*

[13] Social attitudes toward the LGBT community vary greatly in different cultures and historical periods. Nevertheless, the Western World has taken heterosexuality as normative.
[14] LGTB is an acronym that collectively refers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. It has been in use since the 1990s (Smith & Haider-Markel 2). I will be using this term when referring to this community.
[15] The Stonewall riots of 1969 in New York are considered to be one of the most representative events leading to gay liberation (Adam 174). They gave birth to important groups such as Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and Gay Activists' Alliance (GAA) (Kissack 105-134).
[16] The selection of LGBT books is based on the Lambda Awards database ("Lambda Literary Awards").
[17] The selection of gay fiction is based on the Lambda Awards database ("Lambda Literary Awards").

National Themes (1991) by Tony Kushner, *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001) by Jamie O'Neill *Hero* (2007) by Perry More, and *The Empty Family (*2010) by Colm Tóibín.

We can also find bisexual fiction such as *The Correspondence Artist* (2011) by Barbara Browning and transsexual literature[18] such as *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach* (2001) by Virginia R. Mollenkott or *I Am My Own Wife* (2003) by Doug Wright.

With the liberation of women and the LGBT community, a new era towards gender and sexual equality was being forged, but that was not enough. It was also the time for the Western World to reshape the concept of manhood.

2.4. Masculinities

The topic of (new) masculinities is another central issue in my analysis, especially in relation to hipermasculinization and non-standardized masculinities. I will base this section on the studies and books proposed by one of the worldwide referents on gender and masculinities studies: the American sociologist Michael Kimmel.

The foundations of the concept of 'gender' originated thousands of years ago and the term has been historically used as a tool to favor the masculine gender to a greater extent, and in particular, white heterosexual males (Kimmel & Messner 1).

Masculinity studies emerged in the United States as a result of the feminist and gay liberation movements of the 60s and 70s (Kimmel & Messner xv-xviii). These movements demonstrated that the concept of gender is not inalterable and should not

[18] Bisexual and transsexual literatures and awards are terms which were born since the writers who belonged to these groups did not feel represented. Bisexual literature is a term used when both authors and/or literary plots relate to bisexuality, whereas transsexual literature is a term used when both authors and/or literary plots relate to transsexualism.

promote ‘social stratification’. These studies were born in the mid-1970s in the United States with the aim of understanding the phenomenon of masculinity (Kimmel & Messner xviii). In order to do that, scholars based their studies on feminist theory and research (Kahn 5).

The first published books related to male liberation are Warren Farrell's *The Liberated Man* (1974), Marc Feigen Fasteau's *The Male Machine* (1974) and Jack Nichols' *Men's Liberation* (1975). All of them attempted to deconstruct the elements of male sex roles. Two of the main representative works on masculinities were written by Robert Bly and Michael Kimmel. These works offer antagonistic visions on the concept of masculinities. Bly’s book *Iron John* (1990) makes use of myths and Brothers Grimm’s story “*Iron John”* to take men back to what he considers is the source of their masculinity. Kimmel’s *Manhood in America* (1997) disagreed with Bly’s conceptualization of masculinity and offered a vision which also embraces feminist philosophy. Sociologist Kimmel points out that: “the challenge to the hegemonic definition of masculinity came from men whose masculinity was cast as deviant: men of color, gay men, and ethnic men. We understand now that we cannot speak of masculinity as a singular term” (Kimmel & Aronson xxii).

The importance of literature in masculinities studies lies in its relevance not only as an aesthetic product but also as a cultural product which can be a reflection of social realities. Some representative books on masculinity are: *Richard Ford and the Fiction of Masculinities* (Armengol, 2010), which studies the construction and deconstruction of masculinities by the Pulitzer-winning author Richard Ford, and the book *Hombres soñados por mujeres de hoy* (Alsina, Andrés & Carabí, 2008), which deals with the image of North American manhood in literary works written by female authors, not

only white, but also those belonging to minorities of Asian-American, Latino, Native American, African American, Jewish, and Arab-American origin.

I would like to end this section with one of Kimmel's quotes which, I believe, summarizes the main goal of the study of femininities, queernesses,[19] and masculinities: " what will remain […] is not some non-gendered androgynous gruel […], I believe as gender inequality decreases the differences among people- differences grounded in race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality as well as gender- will emerge in a context in which each of us can be appreciated for our individual uniqueness as our commonality" ("The Gendered Society" 5).

The next section will revolve around the concepts of Latino literature; the notions of 'uniqueness' and 'commonality' in terms of race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality as well as gender.

2.5. Latino Literature

Identity terminology is particularly tricky in Latino/a studies. The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are US inventions designed to describe peoples of American descent. Both are considered misnomers to the extent that they imply a transplanted European heritage and elide the mixture with indigenous and African peoples that characterized the formation of "mestizaje" (Bost & Aparicio 1). Moreover, "There is no 'one' Latino/a group but many" (Svich, Interview 2013).

[19] As there is a plurality of masculinities and femininities, I considered that 'queerness' should also be addressed in the plural.

The rising of Latino authors and literature is portrayed not as a minor phenomenon but as a necessity.[20] Indeed, more than 50 million Hispanic American people keep participating in the construction of the economic, cultural, and societal growth of the United States.[21] Just to give an example, the Latino vote was crucial in President Barack Obama's re-election in 2012 (Dobkin 160).

Although US Latino literature is, for the most part, produced and published in the United States, it is the final product of transnationalism and a crucible of cultures (Bost & Aparicio 1).[22] For instance, Caridad Svich was born in the USA but she is of Cuban-Argentine-Spanish-Croatian descent. This heritage, in her words, affects all her writing visions (Svich, Interview 2013). Since the 1970's, and more clearly in the 1980's and 1990's, literary anthologies have shed light on the increasing visibility of Latino/a authors as part of the US literary canon (Bost & Aparicio 6). Representative Latino scholars consider the texts *Pocho*[23] (1959) by José Antonio Villareal, and *A Wake in Ybor City* (1963) by José Iglesias, as the first books which set the basis of Latino literary tradition (Aldama 31). In relation to female literary works the anthology of short stories written by US Latinas, *Cuentos* (1983), edited by Alma Gómez, Cherrie Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona meant a breakthrough in female Latina literature. As it was pointed out by scholars Bost and Aparicio, "*Cuentos* stressed the need to translate oral traditions and family tales into literary texts as a way of inscribing orality,

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[20] I will use Aparicio's and Bost's term "latino/a" throughout because it is inclusive in terms of gender and in terms of nation of origin, encompassing Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban-Americans, and Dominican-Americans, as well as US Latinos/as from Central America and South America (4).

[21] The estimated Hispanic/Latino population of the United States in 2011 was of 51,939,916 people, which makes people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or race minority (U.S. Census Bureau, "2011 American Community Survey").

[22] The concept of "transnationalism" was coined in the 1990s by social anthropologists and can be described as "the multi-stranded" activities created by immigrants across national borders (Ben Rafael, E. & Sternberg 258)

[23] 'Pocho/a' is a term used by native-born Mexicans to describe Chicanos and those who have left Mexico. Typically, 'pochos' speak English and lack fluency in Spanish (Herrera-Sobek 924).

gender and sexuality, race, class, and different cultural experiences of US Latinas in the public light" (8). Some of the most representative Latino/a literary texts are: Mexican-American novels such as Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless me, Ultima* (1972), Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1984), and Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* (1994).

There are also many Dominican-American prominent novels such as *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* (1991) by Julia Álvarez, and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) by Junot Diaz's.

There are also Cuban American representative novels such as *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989) by Oscar Hijuelos, who was the first Latino to win a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction or Cristina García's first novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1993), and finally, the Puerto Rican novel *When I Was a Puerto Rican* (1993) by Esmeralda Santiago.

Whether the focus of these texts is on femininities, masculinities, 'queernesses', or all of them, these authors are united by a common bond: their Hispanic roots and their aim to preserve their identity in the 'mainstream' Anglo-American culture (Peng 64). The range of origins and experiences of Latino authors crosses national borders and has been formed astride two or more countries. This supports the plurality of the Latino community and questions national traditional limits.

2.6. Latino Plays in the U.S.A.

This analysis focuses on a contemporary American play written by Latina author Caridad Svich in 2004. Therefore, it is important to briefly illustrate the relevance of Latino contemporary plays in the United States.

As Jon Rossini pointed out, sometimes the plurality of the Latino community is "oversimplified" (1). Because of the complexity and significance which entails being Latino/a in contemporary U.S.A., many playwrights felt/feel the responsibility and the

need to transcribe their social realities through fictionalized worlds. Indeed, contemporary Latino plays can be considered a tool to divulge, criticize, and also transform existing presumptions and stereotypes about a culture which is not only the product of hybridity and transculturation,[24] but also an essential part of US culture, transnationalities, stereotypes, gender, sexual inequalities and identity politics.

Since the 1960's and 1970's, the impact of Latino theater has been growing steadily through the performance of Latino plays and the foundation of many theatrical groups all over the country. In 1960, following the Cuban Revolution, many exiled Cubans settled in Miami. Coming from upper and middle class backgrounds, the expatriates created theater companies. In 1965, an Off Broadway production of René Marquéz's classic play about the Puerto Rican immigrant experience, *La Carreta* (The Oxcart), was performed in New York. Also the theatrical troupe El Teatro Campesino was founded in 1965, which stimulated a national movement of Chicano theater companies. In 1969, the Teatro Mestizo (California) and the The Teatro Repertorio Español were formed. In 1971, an all-woman troupe called El Teatro Chicana was also formed in California (R. Acuna, "100 years of Latino Theatre").

Important achievements have also been obtained since then such as *Zoot Suit* (1979) by Luis Valdez, which was the first Latino theatrical production on Broadway, or the play *Anna in the Tropics* by Nilo Cruz, the first Latino play to earn the Pulitzer Prize (2003). Some of the most relevant Latino playwrights are: Miguel Piñero, Luis Valdez, Guillermo Reyes, Octavio Solis, and José Rivera.[25]

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[24] This is a term coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1940 to describe the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures (Hoeg 69).
[25] From *Contemporary Latina/o Theater: Wrighting Ethnicity (Theater in the Americas*) by J.D. Rossini (2008).

Nevertheless, the road to Latino/a playwrights' success has not been easy, especially for Latinas. Indeed, very few Latina playwrights, such as Dolores Prida, Irene Fornes, and Estela Portillo (Sandoval-Sánchez & Sternbach 3) were well-known and respected until the mid-1980s (Garza 154). Some of the most respected female contemporary Latina writers are, to name the most representative ones: Cherrie Moraga, Diane Rodriguez, Migdalia Cruz, Caridad Svich, Josefina Lopez, Edit Villarreal and Diana Saenz.[26] All of these Latina authors focus on very diverse topics such as identity, ethnicity, politics, gender, sexuality, and immigration.

Some further and more specific readings which analyze plays based on Greek mythology would include: *Greek Tragedy on the American Stage* (1995) by Karelisa Hartigan, which focuses on US productions from 1882 to 1993; *Black Dionysus: Greek Tragedy and African American Theater* (2003) by Kevin Wetmore, which gathers African-American versions of Greek tragedies, and finally, *Antigone on the Contemporary World Stage* (2011) by Erin Mee and Helene Foley, which examines the numerous adaptations of Sophocles's play.

2.7. Defining Feminicide

The next step in achieving a proper contextualization of *Iphigenia Crash* is to address the harrowing topic of the extreme violence against women. As mentioned before, Svich's play relocates the Euripidian play into an unnamed contemporary and desolate atmosphere of corruption and violence. This undisclosed and forgotten place is situated somewhere between the United States and Mexico. In this section I will

[26] From *Shattering the Myth: Plays by Hispanic Women* by E.Chávez & L. Feyder (1992) and *La Voz Latina (2011)* by E. C. Ramírez & C. Casiano.

describe the concept of feminicide as a worldwide phenomenon which started to gain visibility thanks to the dramatic situation on the borderlands of the United States and Mexico.

The origins of the term 'feminicide' are quite recent. It was coined by Diana Russell and Jill Radford in their feminist work *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (1992) and it was hispanicized for the first time by Mexican legislator and anthropologist Marcela Lagarde, who created the neologism 'feminicidio'. Lagarde has been leading outstanding changes in Mexican women's rights since the 1990's. According to her, "[i]t all began [when] the alarm sounded to bring attention to the crimes against girls and women in Ciudad de Juárez (…); from the horror and dismay came protests and demands for justice [which] transcended the borders of Mexico" (1). Although gender violence seems to be as old as humankind, the importance of the birth of the concept of 'feminicide' lies in the creation of a necessary term to rescue these actions from invisibility (Pineda-Madrid 23) and normality but also to condemn these acts as "crimes against humanity" (Lagarde xv). Feminicide is described by Lagarde as "genocide against women and it occurs when the historical conditions generate social practices that allow violent attempts against integrity, health, liberties and lives of girls and women" (xvi). These murders are said to be endlessly repeated mainly because of government negligence. It is a political term which encompasses more than the term 'femicide' because it holds responsible not only the male perpetrators but also the state and judicial structures that normalize misogyny (Pineda-Madrid 11). Although there is still a long way to go, there is an international ambition to challenge and defeat feminicide's impunity through NGOs, human right groups, governance institutions (Staudt 144-50), and somehow art.

A particular culture has arisen around these crimes in literature. Some examples are: *Tierra marchita* (2002) by Carmen Galán Benítez, *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* (2005) by A. Gaspar de Alba, *Secrets in the Sand: The Young Women of Juárez* (2006) by Marjorie Agosín and Guadalupe Morfín. Also the novels *If I die in Juárez* (2008) by Stella Pope Duarte, and *Las vírgenes del desierto* (2009) by José Vicente Pascual.

All of these novels examine the representation of female trauma and the women's version of history in contemporaneity. Although some of the messages portrayed are sometimes considered to be sensationalistic or to portray a romanticized idea of horror, most of them, whether through fictionalized worlds or not, attempt to contribute to social awareness of the reality of feminicide. They carry out powerful critiques and they spell out its causes.

3. METHODOLOGY

I hope the outcasts can become our heroes.
Caridad Svich (Interview 2013)

Through a structural method of research, I will analyze the dialogue and characters of the plays mentioned above. I will examine and compare the characterization of these interconnected plays, taking *Iphigenia Crash* (2004) as the main center of my analysis.

Mieke Bal[27] effectively used a typology of character relationships in terms of object-subject, power-receiver, and helper opponent actants. I believe that the clear division of Svich's and Euripides' characters into oppressor *vs.* victim makes Bal's model a good method to analyze and compare actantial relationships in terms of gender connections. Bal's model also fits my purpose in the analysis of time and location, which is intimately related to gender relationships in Svich's play.

[27] I am aware that other methodologies could have been applied, such as Rimmon-Kennan, 1983 and Onega & Landa, 1996.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAYS

> *As writers we have a duty to record what is not being recorded, to shed light on the stories hidden from plain sight. Our job is to wake audiences up.*
> Caridad Svich (Interview 2013)

In this section I will focus on a descriptive and analytical illustration of the plays. On the one hand, I will present four subsections that will provide the reader with an outline of both plays. They consist of: the background of the authors, titles and their meaning, dramatis personae, and structure. On the other hand, I will show four subsections which focus on Bal's theory and which illustrate specific relationships between characters. They consist of: time, location, actants, and analysis of actants.

These eight subsections display an important corpus to understanding the characters' relationships in terms of gender roles. The main goal of these sections is to provide a general idea of the correlation between both plays. I also want to depict their main differences (or similarities) in terms of the topics mentioned.

4.1. Background of the Authors and their Plays

Caridad Svich defines herself as a playwright, songwriter, editor and translator living between many cultures. She was born in the US and has Cuban-Argentine-Spanish-Croatian parents. This fact caused in her a feeling of exile even while growing up as an "American." Among her key works we find *Any Place But Here* (1992), *Alchemy of Desire/Dead-Man's Blues* (1994), *Magnificent Waste* (2003), *Twelve Ophelias* (2004), *and The House of the Spirits* (2009). But Svich's most widely produced work is *Iphigenia Crash*, which was published in 2004. It was selected as a finalist for the PEN U.S.A. 2005 Literary Awards for Drama and named one of the Top Ten Theatre Events in Atlanta for 2004. It was also the recipient of four LA Weekly Awards in Design. But far beyond its well-deserved awards, *Iphigenia Crash* is an outstanding play which was able to rescue Euripides' play *Iphigenia Aulis* with a clear goal: to release Iphigenia from her burdens and to condemn current injustices. This play turns one of the most fascinating Greek tragedies into a silky world of sex, drugs, and violence.

On the other hand, *Iphigenia Aulis* is the last extant tragedy by the ancient Greek playwright Euripides, who was one of the great tragedians of classical Athens. It was written sometime between 408 and 406 BC (the date of his death). The play revolves around Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces in the Trojan War, and his decision to slaughter his own daughter, Iphigenia, in order to allow his troops to set sail and preserve their honor by going to battle against Troy.

4.2. Titles and their Meaning

The titles can be considered the 'real' first part of the structure of both plays.[28] I would like to dedicate a single section to them as I consider them to be of special importance to understand the plays. The main reason lies in their symbolic and powerful significance. The title of Caridad Svich's play refers to the entire universe of meaning that 'explodes' along the story as it is being narrated. The title *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell that Was Once Her Heart (a Rave Fable)*, is to say the least, shocking. Firstly, because it is impossibly long, secondly, because it is a mini-short story itself. Each word is necessary. It is a network of suggestive meanings that, as Svich stated, "is emblematic of the kind of experience the play offers to the audience" (Svich, Interview 2013).

The first word is devoted to the protagonist of the play. The following condenses her journey of chaos and gloominess into a few words. A 'crash land' is defined as "the sudden landing of an aircraft because of an emergency, sometimes resulting in serious damage or injuries" ("crash land", the free dictionary). The metaphorical meaning of this expression is related to the character of Iphigenia, who is somehow a 'damaged' aircraft that falls on the aircraft hangar, which could be interpreted as the 'neon shell'. I also want to mention the contrast between the present tense of the verb 'falls' and the past tense of the last verb 'was'. Iphigenia is falling down but her heart has 'disappeared'. How? We still do not know, but the title invites us to find out. The type of play is presented between parenthesis: 'a rave fable'. The concept of 'rave' is

[28] Due to time-space restrictions I will only focus on the main title of C. Svich's play and I will not deal with the titles of the sub-sections of the play.

probably linked to the techno and acid-house dance mood of the play and 'fable' hints at to notion of myth and reality, between which Iphigenia continuously debates.

In relation to Euripides' title, the first thing in clear antagonism to that of Svich's is its tininess. Only three words with no linking verb shape the title. It is simple, direct, and clear, which is the exact opposite of Svich's. Euripides also chose the noun Iphigenia to be the first, to be followed by the location (Aulis).[29] Euripides decided not to reveal any other information and is somehow less poetic than Svich's title.

4.2. Dramatis Personae

In the table below I establish a comparison of the main characters of both plays and I include a brief summary.

Euripides play (408-406 BC)	**Caridad Svich's play (2004 AD)**
ACHILLES, a Greek hero.	ACHILLES, a transgendered rock star. HERMAPHRODITE PRINCE, a man with a mask from the satyr play who is seriously messed up.
AGAMEMNON, King of Argos.	GENERAL ADOLFO, a politician from an unnamed location in Hispanic America. Hints at Hitler. THE GENERAL'S ASS, a mask from the satyr play. He is abusive and destructive.
ATTENDANT, an old man and a messenger	VIOLETA IMPERIAL, an aged and abused woman.
CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CHALCIS.	THE FRESA GIRLS, the murdered girls from Ciudad de Juárez, Mexico. GLASS-EYED MAN. The eye that sees everything. NEWS ANCHOR, a plastic icon on the TV. VIRTUAL MC, an obscene, liquid, techno-trip-hop vision.
CLYTEMNESTRA, General Adolfo's wife.	CAMILA, General Adolfo's wife.
IPHIGENIA, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra's murdered daughter.	IPHIGENIA, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra's murdered daughter. VIRGIN PUTA, A mask from the satyr play. She is Iphigenia's twin.
ORESTES, Iphigenia's brother, who has an ornamental role in the play.	ORESTES, Iphigenia's brother, who has an adult and worn-out soul trapped in a baby's body.

Table 1. Euripides' and Svich's plays: dramatis personae

As can be seen from the table, both plays have similar character-counterparts. Nevertheless, their roles, in most cases, are very different and even opposed. Svich

[29] Aulis was an ancient Greek town in Boeotia and traditionally the port from which the Greek army set sail for the Trojan War. (William Beckett, 1999 61)

employs well-known mythological characters to shock the audience. These viewers will be introduced to grotesque but familiar characters which will portray their imprisonment between myth and reality.

4.3. Structure

In the analysis of *Iphigenia Crash* and *Iphigenia Aulis* it is important to pay attention to how the information is delivered to the reader/spectator in terms of the organization of the texts (Nieto García 16). I will focus on the way the authors have structured the information comparing them to the traditional structure of Greek drama. Both plays follow, to a greater or lesser extent, the dramatic form of Greek Drama. Although Greek tragedies are said to vary greatly in structure from play to play, (Kuritz 33), they do share the following general characteristics.

- A *prologue,* which usually precedes the *parados* (introductory song) of the chorus. The prologue is expository and it can also initiate the action.
- The *parados* provides additional expository information and sets the proper emotional key to the play.
- The action proceeds through *episodes,* which can vary between three to six episodes.
- A *stasima (choral songs),* which creates the tragic atmosphere and modulates the tone of the play.

- The *exodus* is the final scene. It may be featured by a messenger or a *deus ex machina* (Kuritz 33). [30]

The structure of *Iphigenia Crash* is divided into five clear sections:

1. The introductory song (*parados*).
2. *Prologue*.
3. Episode. Iphigenia's Flight (From the city); Iphigenia in Between.
4. Iphigenia's Return: Seven cuts from a dream.
5. Episode. *Exodos*. Iphigenia's Return: Seven cuts from a dream.

In section 1, the *parados* is where the character Virtual MC exposes the situation by singing and sets the proper mood and tone for the play: chaotic, dark, and raw. The logical order of Greek Drama exposed by Kuritz has been altered as the *parados* precedes the *prologue.*

In section 2, the *prologue* is impersonated by Adolfo, who exposes the situation and the contextual setting. Here the action starts. He speaks in the third person even when he talks about himself: e.g. "The father could tell his daughter was not happy" (Svich 26).

Section 3 is composed by the *episodes*. Within these three *episodes* we find sub-*episodes*: A satyr play (p. 80-5), which is embedded in the second *episode*, and seven sub-*episodes* which structure the third *episode*. This satyr play follows a "dramatic line" (Henry Hudson 200). Firs, an *initial incident* (General's Ass and Virgin Puta's conversation), second, a *rising action* (General's Ass wants to abuse her), and third a *crisis* (she is raped) and finally a *resolution* (she was killed).

[30] Literally means "god from the machine". It is a Latin phrase borrowed from Greek; it comes from the Greek theater. A seemingly unsolvable problem is suddenly and abruptly resolved, with the unexpected intervention of a god, new event, character, ability, or object. (Tiziani, Iaculo 463)

The *stasimon* is also part of section 3. Although we do not have a 'proper' chorus *per se*, the *stasimon* are the songs performed throughout the whole play by different actants: Virtual MC, Achilles, Iphigenia, the Fresa girls, Camila and Violeta. The *stasimon* is especially performed by the Fresa girls, Achilles, and Virtual MC. And finally, section 5 belongs to the *exodus*, which is the section where Iphigenia finds out the truth and she is sacrificed.

Paradoxically, *Iphigenia Aulis* does not have an explicit organization divided by headings. Nevertheless, it does follow a structure:

1. The *prologue*. When Agammenon and the old man discuss. Agamemnon talks about his repentance and reads the second letter to the old man (p. 167-181).
2. The *parados*. The Chorus of women enters and sings about the extraordinary sight of the Greek camp with its warriors and its fleet of a thousand ships (p. 182-192).
3. The *episodes*. These are the actions between characters. For instance, the old man and Menelaus encounter is the first one (p. 193-195). The play alternates between *stasimon* and *episodes*.
4. The *stasimon.* The lines that the chorus sings between episodes (p. 221, 247,281, 331,343).
5. The *exodus.* Agammenon decides his daughter should be killed and finally she is sacrificed.

As it has already been pointed out, *Iphigenia Aulis* differs from the heading structured play of *Iphigenia Crash*. Nevertheless, both plays follow a similar structure. In opposition to *Iphigenia Crash*, in the play *Iphigenia Aulis,* the *prologue* precedes the *parados* (section 2). The chorus sets the heroic and dramatic tone of the play. Unlike *Iphigenia Crash's stasimon*, Euripides' songs are always performed by the same chorus (sections 3 and 4). As we can see in section 5, the *episodes* of the play are not clearly separated, though we can find them if we focus on the turning points or crisis of the text:

Episode 1: Agamemnon and Menelaus discuss with one another and change each other's minds. Clytemnestra, Iphigenia and baby Orestes arrive in Aulis.

Episode 2: Iphigenia is delighted with the idea of marrying Achilles but she, Clytemnestra, and Achilles soon find out the real truth. Achilles feels betrayed by Agamemnon and swears to protect Iphigenia.

Episode 3: Clytemnestra is disappointed with Agamemnon. She cannot believe that her husband wants to sacrifice Iphigenia. Iphigenia suddenly changes her mind and decides that she should die for the sake of the Greeks. She is brought to the altar to be sacrificed.

Therefore, the number of episodes corresponds in both plays. Finally the *exodos* starts when the messenger informs Clytemnestra that she has been saved at the last minute by Artemis. This saving god, who is absent in Svich's play, functions as *deus ex machina.*

4.4. Time

Mieke Bal also deals with the notion of time and chronology. Time is related to the duration of a period in which events happen, whereas chronology is defined as a certain order in which events occur (208). Bal explains important concepts related to duration as: "occupation of span" of x (years, months, weeks, days) and the distinction between "crisis" and "development". The first one indicates a short span of time into which events have been compressed, and the second is a longer period of time which shows a development. The concepts of "mini-story" or "sub-fabula" within the fabula are also worthy of attention.

Important concepts related to chronology are: "elimination" and "ellipsis," which cause gaps in the sequence of chronology, and "innocent" chronology (Bal 213) which is chronology recreated in the attempt of filling the gaps by an actant. Also used are "parallelism," where the same event within the same time frame is being narrated

from different perspectives, "achronicity," which is the impossibility of establishing a precise chronology (Bal 213), and the "logical sequence" which may be sequential or non-sequential.

4.4.1. The Notion of Time Applied

I will now show the distribution of time and chronology in Caridad Svich's play. Firstly, I will deal with the indicators of time found in the play and I will briefly compare them with those found in Euripides' play. Secondly I will show the chronological order of events of the play, and then I will briefly compare them with that of Euripides' play.

In *Iphigenia Crash,* temporal references are not very frequent. The first temporal allusion is explicitly made when describing the stage directions, before the actual play starts. "Time: ***The present***. An unnamed country in the Americas during a time of unrest" (Svich 20). This temporal reference may be referring to the time when the play was published and performed, which is the year 2004. Nevertheless, that is not specified in the text. Indeed, the presentness of this play still remains in 2013, and will probably continue intact in 10 years' time and beyond. Therefore, this temporal reference could be related to atemporality of the issue of gender inequality, both in literature and society. This atemporal presentness may also be linked to its relationship to Euripides' play, which was written more than 2000 years ago and whose story still prevails in the 21st century.

As I have already said, there are not many temporal references in the text. The first we can find is "Iphigenia burns into the evening's acid glow" (47), which is part of the stage directions. This temporal reference is significant as Iphigenia is running away from her apparently comfortable life. The closer she is to what she thinks to be her

salvation, the aircraft hangar, the darker the atmosphere is. Right after this quote, we find another temporal reference: "IPHIGENIA. The aircraft is minutes away. I can see it from here" (47). Iphigenia gets impatient to reach "those minutes" in order to reach her freedom. Nevertheless, what Iphigenia does not know yet is that she is actually getting closer to the heart of darkness. The next temporal reference is made right at the beginning of the second part of the play: "a field outside the aircraft hangar. Night" (69). After the evening, it comes the night. This period of time is related to ecstasy, drugs, crisis, and death. "We are night-crawling, girl" (80), "you will walk into the club one night, and you'll spit me" (92) Achilles says to Iphigenia, both intoxicated with drugs, dreams and sadness. There is no escape for them, "Iphigenia and Achilles are rapt in the night air" (80). It can be affirmed that the reference to night is linked to that of a metaphorical 'dark awakening' full of grievance and pain. Iphigenia says, "It is night, I see fragments" (106), when she notices the barbarism that surrounds her. Night is also when the news of the murderers of Iphigenia are told: "In late news tonight, the general's daughter Iphigenia is said to be dead" (108). The night is also, a metaphor which embodies 'the curse of humanity' until we learn to create equal gender-based societies. "There is no tomorrow, children. There is only the night. And we're going to live it through for eternity". These are the final words of the Virtual MC.

The spell of this paradoxical temporal reference is all at once fascinating, obscure, contradictory, all-engulfing, and disturbing.

In *Iphigenia Aulis* there is only one direct reference to night: "CLYTEMNESTRA. When's the wedding day? AGAMMENON. When the moon's orb appears once more in fullness" (242). Night is also the center of *Iphigenia Aulis* as it is the time when Iphigenia's sacrifice takes place.

Continuing with *Iphigenia Crash,* there is one clear reference to time in when Iphigenia talks about her kidnapping; which is a dramatic and traumatic episode: “I was kidnapped last year” (40).

References to temporality are also related to abrupt changes. One example is, “Time shift. Light comes up on silver clouds and jagged trees” (80), which serves to change the scenario and start a subfabula, which is a satyr play. The second change is, “Time shift. Iphigenia is awake, trembling” (87) where temporal referenciality is related to the psychological awakening of Iphigenia.

Achilles makes allusions to dawn and morning as a synonym of denouement and liberation: “wake me at dawn pierced through feeling” (87) and, “The sun will be up soon” (90). Almost at the end of the play, Achilles craves for the day to arrive. The stage directions also show the symbolic power of the day: “Night bleeds into morning” (94) and, “Sun burns upon Achilles and Iphigenia as he gives her his hands” (97), which symbolize the inexorable series of events to come: death, murder and sacrifice. The reference to daylight and dawn is also very present in *Iphigenia Aulis*. At the very beginning of the play the stage directions make references to dawn: “The time is before dawn in the camp of the Greek at Aulis” (Euripides, 166). The rising of the sun is also related to the inescapability of the events to come. Agamemnon wants his messenger to leave as soon as possible as the sun is rising fast: “Go! See the shedding-light dawn is growing bright” (181). But it seems to be too late to change what was supposedly written by fate and the gods.

The period of time in *Iphigenia Crash* is developed in more or less two nights and two days, although due to the continuous state of crisis and chaos, we have the impression that this period is even shorter. This play fits Bal’s definition that “[c]lassical tragedy needs a brief period of time, especially when describing a moment

of crisis" (210). Svich's play is a reproduction of the classical tragedy *Iphigenia Aulis*, which occurred in one day and one night. Both plays are developed in a very short period of time which embeds intensity and catastrophe. It could be considered that both plays are "a single moment, but one which can only be understood as following the past and announcing the future" (Bal, 211). The fabula in *Iphigenia Crash* occurs in a 'single moment' which is trapped in its past, past-present and future myth, whereas *Iphigenia Aulis* follows the structure presented by Bal. The story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia is related to: 1. the abduction of Helen of Troy (past) 2. She was the flashpoint for a war (present-future) 3. And she needs to be rescued (future).

4.4.2. The Notion of Chronology Applied

Here I will present a sequence of the chronology and structure of events in the story of *Iphigenia Crash.*

1. Introductory song
2. Prologue
3. XXI century story.
4. Adolfo, Camila and Iphigenia take a family picture together.
5. Adolfo talks about the past with his daughter and the future (third person narration, analepsis).
6. Part One: Iphigenia's Flight (From the city).
7. Iphigenia's birthday party.// In some other place, Achilles is heard singing. (Simultaneity)
8. Iphigenia runs away from home.
9. Iphigenia arrives at a factory wall's façade.
10. Iphigenia meets Violeta Imperial.
11. Violeta Imperial knows where Iphigenia is going (Prolepsis).
12. Violeta narrates her story to Iphigenia. (Analepsis)/ Iphigenia talks about her being kidnapped.
13. Iphigenia runs away.
14. Iphigenia arrives to another factory wall's façade.
15. There, Iphigenia meets the Fresa girls.
16. The Fresa girls talk.
17. The Fresa girls and Iphigenia go to the aircraft hangar turned into a club.
18. Achilles appears on a video image.

19. Part two. Iphigenia in between.
20. A field outside the aircraft hangar. Achilles and Iphigenia.// News Anchor Camila and Adolfo talk. (Simultaneity)
21. Iphigenia and Achilles talk about their present, past and, future. (Analepsis, Prolepsis)
22. Fresa girl 1 and 2 appear.
23. Achilles and Iphigenia sleep. *Time shift.*
24. Sub-fabula of Virgin Puta, Hermaphrodite Prince and General's Ass.
25. End of subfabula, Iphigenia screams.
26. Violeta and the Fresa girls appear. Iphigenia realizes that the Fresa girls are all dead.
27. Violeta Imperial and the Fresa girls disappear.
28. *Time shift.* Iphigenia is awake trembling.
29. Achilles emerges from a part of the field.
30. Iphigenia talks to Achilles, she feels deceived. References to the past and future.
31. Orestes appears on the screen.
32. Orestes disappears.
33. Night bleeds into morning.
34. Iphigenia and Achilles talk, sun burns.
35. Part Three. Iphigenia's Return: Seven cuts from a dream.
36. The city.
37. **One**.Violeta gives a dress to Iphigenia and tells her another girl has died.
38. Mercenary appears.
39. **Two.** Mercenary talks to Iphigenia about killing her.
40. **Three.** Iphigenia talks to Orestes.
41. **Four.** Camila is combing her hair. She confesses her story and feelings.
42. **Five.** Iphigenia walks through her own house, out to the street, toward the hangar. Iphigenia accepts her destiny.
43. **Six.** The Fresa girls at the club talk about the murder of Iphigenia.
44. News Anchor talks about the rumors of Iphigenia's dead.
45. Adolfo talks to the people. He thinks he will be re-elected.
46. Seven. Iphigenia in Extasis. Iphigenia's last words.

The chronological order of events follows, for the most part, a logical sequence. There are some parallel strings (Bal 213) happening at the same time (Examples 47, 60) which serve to introduce a new character or to emphasize the importance of lies and the grotesque. We also find an interruption of the chronology (Example 64, 65) with the sub-fabula narrated, which is also a brutal analogy of the situation that Iphigenia is living. Nevertheless, sometimes *Iphigenia Crash* gives a feeling of "achronicity" (Bal

213), as sometimes it is impossible to establish a precise chronology. *Iphigenia Aulis* instead, always follows a logical and linear sequence of events.

4.5. Location

As Bal states, “events happen somewhere” (214). These locations can be clearly specified or deduced. Spatial elements play an important role.

Bal also points out the importance of the contrast between opposites such as: inside (associated with protection/confinement), and outside (associated with danger/freedom), and the country and the city. Spatial oppositions can also be more abstract and be related to psychological, ideological and moral oppositions. Some examples cited are: high-low locations, far-near, and open-closed (216).

4.5.1. The Notion of Location Applied

The setting is described as, “the frame of an aircraft hangar. Dust, dirt, and a stained party dress nailed to a battered wall. Oddly dyed carnations on the ground. The wall is jagged and impossibly high” (20). This is the setting where most of the story takes place and where Iphigenia, Achilles, Violeta, the Fresa girls and Virtual MC party together, where they feel free and protected. This place perfectly fits the definition of a public meeting-place with a social function. The hanger is a meeting-place for companions in adversity who gain courage from sympathy, solidarity, and, we could add, from drugs and alcohol. The aircraft hangar is in the middle of a field so it is in opposition with ‘the city’; it would be the outside world which recreates ‘freedom’ for the suffering characters. Nevertheless, the hangar is, in reality, a big cage where freedom is a utopia. The field where the hangar is symbolizes the field of death and

atrocity. “Sources tell us she was seen outside an aircraft” (108) announces the News Anchor when talking about the rumors of Iphigenia’s murder. “She’s dead. I woke up in a field at the edge of the city” (39), cries Violeta when she talks about her harrowing experience. Outside the hangar the threat of death is everywhere. Paradoxically, inside the hangar, most of the characters are ghosts. The first setting is ‘the city’, then ‘the hangar’ and, finally, ‘the city’. A circular route which brings characters to the same destination: death. The locations are sometimes mixed up which can be confusing to the reader, who is not sure where characters really are.

Another ‘cage’ described in the text is that of Iphigenia’s house. “The father could tell his daughter was not happy in the small house […] He could see that the low ceiling hurt her head” (26). This is a clear metaphor of the oppression that Iphigenia felt. The ‘low ceilings’ are in opposition with the ‘impossibly high walls’ of the hangar. Another ‘cage’ is mentioned when Violeta narrates her traumatic experience with Adolfo’s men: “I was taken into a cold rook of a quiet room” (38). The adjectives ‘cold’ and ‘quiet’ reinforce the feeling of oppression and abuse. Iphigenia has a similar experience intimately related to location: “I was taken from my bed, stuffed in a sack, and tossed into a jeep […] and tossed onto a hard floor […] there were voices in another room” (40-1). All of these locations are symbols which are present along the whole play: the bed symbolizes safety, the sack is related to subjugation, the jeep represents the movement from safety to horror, and the rooms represent the place where the worst atrocities are carried out.

Another ‘cage’ shown is Orestes’ ‘house’, which is a designer shoebox labeled ‘Gucci’ (94). Orestes is objectivized (treated as an object) as an inert shoe which lives half dead in confinement. Therefore the concept of location as a psychological and moral ‘cage’ is of central importance in *Iphigenia Crash.*

Regarding to *Iphigenia Aulis,* the action takes place in East-central Greece at the port of Aulis where all the characters interact. Iphigenia and Clytemnestra are said to arrive from a very long journey (Euripides 221), therefore the remote may be associated with crime and sacrifice. The ocean, which separates the characters from Troy (where the war will take place), may symbolize the path that separates glory (the wining of the war) from point of departure (Aulis).

4.6. Actants

In this section I will show the characters' relationships in terms of Bal's model interactions: object-subject, power-receiver, and helper opponent actants.

4.6.1. Bal's (1994) Classification

In order to analyze characterization I will follow Mieke Bal's methodology. Bal (1999) categorizes characters within different subgroups; these characters are referred to as "actants". The model presented is structuralist as "it is conceived in terms of fixed relations between classes of phenomena, which is a standard definition of structure" (Bal 197). In this classification, Bal differentiates three clear relationships between actants: Subject and Object, Power and Receiver, and Helper and Opponent.

4.6.2. The Subject and Object

It is considered to be the most important relation between the actor who follows an aim and the aim itself (197), which can be a person, a personified animal, and an abstract state.

Actor ‘x’, which is called “subject-actant”, aspires to a goal, ‘y’ (“object-actant”). Bal (1999, 198) provides the following examples (a-c):

	Actant-subject	*Function*	*Actant-object*
a.	John	wants to marry	Mary
b.	Anna Wulf	wants to become	an independent woman
c.	The old people	want to prevent	the discovery of their crime

In this subject-object relationship, Bal constantly makes use of the verb ‘to want’. I will follow the same pattern in my analysis of the Subject-Object relationships.

4.6.3. Power and Receiver

The power actants are defined as “those who support the subject in the realization of its intention, supply the object, or allow it to be supplied or given” (198). That power can be positive if it helps the subject to reach its aim. It can be negative if it prevents the subject from reaching the object; it can also be a person or an abstraction.

The receiver is the person to whom the object is ‘given’. Bal also mentions the notion of the possibility of the coalescence of several actors into one or the reverse (199). In other words, one actant can embody in some cases the many powers while several actants may embody a single cluster.

Below are some examples of Power and Receiver (d-f) given by Bal (1999, 200). These examples are related to those given in the Subject-Object relationship:

	Power	*Function*	*Receiver*
d.	Mary	is prepared to marry	John.
e.	The existing social structure	makes it impossible	for her.
f.	Fate/Time	make it impossible to hide their disgrace	for Ottilie.

4.6.4. Helper and Opponent

The third category is related to the circumstances under which the enterprise is brought to an end (201). The helper is the actant who gives incidental and concrete aid to another actant, while the opponent is the actant who gives incidental obstruction to an actant.

Another valuable feature is that which is referred to as the "reader's sympathy and antipathy" meaning that "the relations between actants are not the same as those between actants and reader" (202). Therefore, the actantial roles and the reader's response may not correspond; the fact that some actant may be a helper of another actant does not necessarily mean that it will always have the sympathy of the reader.

Apart from these three classifications, Bal makes further specifications which we should take into account. One actor may stand for several classes; therefore we should disconnect the concept of 'actor' from that of 'person'. In relation to the link between subject and object, Bal also distinguishes between objective and subjective relationship. In the first case "the object is a separate actor, in the second [it] is not" (203). Therefore, the subjective relationship affects the actant-self.

Bal also points out the concept of a subject and an anti-subject (which should not be confused with the concept of opponent). The anti-subject is defined as an actant who "pursues his or her own object, and this pursuit is, at certain moments, at cross purposes with that of the first subject" (203).

Bal also deals with the concept of 'competence', defined as "the possibility of the subject to act", which may be of different kinds: the power or possibility, which is the determination or will to proceed an action, or, the knowledge or skill necessary to execute the aim.

The last factor that Bal mentions is that of 'truth value'. This concept is related to the appearance of actants and reality. One clear example is that of the 'traitor' who "has the appearance of a helper, but reveals himself […] as an opponent" (205).

Finally, Bal leaves a door open to other classifications which are different from that of the actantial model, for instance she mentions psychological relations, ideological relationships, or physical appearance.

In this classification of actants, I will show specific examples from Caridad Svich's play. This arrangement will function as an illustration for the remaining analysis and comparisons developed in this essay. After each analysis, in order to point out the contrast with the play of *Iphigenia Aulis*, I will also apply Bal's model to Euripides' characters.

One of the central aims of my research project is to articulate a social protest on the topic of gender inequalities. Therefore, the order of appearance of the actants will be determined by my motivation. First, I will analyze the actants who suffer from the gender-structured society created by Svich. Second, I will examine those who benefit from it. Finally, I will examine those who neither suffer nor benefit from it.

This decision has not been made randomly. The play gives a central focus to those characters who play the roles of castaways and who are victims of an unfair society. It must also be pointed out that the Subject-Object, Power-Receiver, and Opponent-Helper relationships exposed, constitute the most important idea(s) which define each character. They will be analyzed in more detail in other sections of the essay. In addition to this, I have included a personal section called "gender link" with the purpose of achieving a more direct connection between my critique and the issue of gender inequalities.

4.6.5. Analysis of Actants in the Plays

Iphigenia, Virgin Puta, Violeta Imperial, and the Fresa girls

The first actants that I am going to present are: Iphigenia, Virgin Puta, Violeta Imperial, and the Fresa girls. Iphigenia, who is the main character of the play, is directly related to the other characters mentioned before. The actant of Virgin Puta, which is explicitly said to be "Iphigenia's other twin" (Svich 20), could be defined as an ephemeral and super-grotesque version of Iphigenia. On the other hand, Violeta Imperial and the Fresa girls are extensions or ramifications of Iphigenia as they all serve to portray the crude reality of feminicide victims.

ACTANT-SUBJECT	FUNCTION	ACTANT-OBJECT
1. Iphigenia	wants to run away	from herself and her myth
Gender link: Male perspective in myth tradition, female as "the other"		
2. Virgin Puta	cannot choose, she is submissive	
Gender link: the supremacy of machismo where women are sexually abused and dehumanized. The contraposition virgin *vs*.. puta is important.		
3. Violeta	wants to help	Iphigenia/ Justice
Gender link: Violeta is a victim of homophobic and gender abuse.		
4. Fresa girls	Want	peace after death.
Gender link: They are victims of indiscriminate murders of maquiladora workers		

Table 2. Actant-subject Iphigenia,Virgin Puta *et al.*

As we can see in the previous table, Iphigenia is an object-actant whose main goal is to escape from the myth that dooms her to die endlessly. On the contrary, her twin, Virgin Puta, has been created to be the subject-object of male whims. From the words of General's Ass, "You have been made meat" (Svich 82). Regarding Violeta Imperial, she is the object-actant who wants to warn Iphigenia against Adolfo's atrocities. The Fresa girls, who are the ghost girls from Ciudad de Juárez, just want to find peace after being murdered.

POWER	FUNCTION	RECEIVER
5. Fate/Reality/Myth	make it impossible	for Iphigenia
6. _	_	- reader (?)
7. Corruption/ Iphigenia's crave for freedom	makes it impossible	for Violeta
8. Never-ending murders	condemn them to linger as ghosts	the Fresa girls

Table 3. Power-receiver Iphigenia, Virgin Puta *et al.*

Regarding example 5, the power of fate, reality and myth is seen as something implacable: Iphigenia can only save herself after a 'physical death'.

In example 6, as I have already mentioned, Virgin Puta has no aims. She is a subject-actant who accepts being raped and abused. In a metaphorical sense, it could be affirmed that, as a submissive victim, she has the power to show the roughest version of male abuse to the reader. Therefore the reader would be the (external) receiver.

Example 7 shows Iphigenia's naiveté. She does not want to listen to Violeta's warnings. This event may lead us to conclude that sometimes Iphigenia acts as an anti-subject. Her pursuit is, to a certain point, at cross purposes with that of the subject. And finally, example 8 illustrates the fatalistic fate of women who live in a male-corrupted and oriented world which, in the play, that denies freedom to the Fresa girls.

	OPPONENT	HELPER
9. Iphigenia	Adolfo, Mercenary, Camila,Violeta, the Fresa girls, myth/reality	Violeta, the Fresa girls Achilles, party, physical death
Gender link Opponent: males strip women of their dignity; also the community is oppressed by the prevailing macho-system		
10. Virgin Puta	General's Ass Hermaphrodite Prince	_
Gender link: it is related to the phalocentric structure and female sexual objectification		
11. Violeta	Adolfo, Mercenary, sexual orientation	Iphigenia
Gender link: the fact that she is gay and a woman is the worst case scenario in that environment.		
12. Fresa girls	Adolfo, Mercenary	Iphigenia
Gender link: they symbolize the female tragedy; Iphigenia is the 'she-hero' that can 'save' the Fresa girls.		

Table 4. Helper-opponent Iphigenia, Virgin Puta *et al.*

Example 9: Iphigenia's real opponents are those who collaborate in the creation of a world full of death and corruption, with the exception of the Fresa girls, who are sometimes her 'ghostly' opponents and want her to die so they can steal her luxurious clothes. In this section, the notion of truth-value is important as the traitors are disguised as helpers: Adolfo, Mercenary, Camila, and Violeta, who Iphigenia considers to be an opponent, proves to be a helper. Indirectly, all the opponents/helpers of Virgin Puta, the Fresa girls and Violeta, are Iphigenia's too, and the other way round.

Example 10: this character has no helpers at all, but only opponents that prevent her fulfillment as a woman and as a human being.

Examples 11 and 12: Violeta and the Fresa girls see Iphigenia as the she-hero who will do justice and punish those who are responsible for the crimes. Violeta's worst abstract opponent is her sexual orientation in a heteronormative and abusive atmosphere.

It should be pointed out that in general, all the female characters, or those who share female attributes (Achilles), suffer the consequences of being a female. This fact, along with the prevalence of a sexist society, can be considered to be common opponents for all them.

In reference to *Iphigenia Aulis,* the 'equivalents' of the Fresa girls would be the female chorus of Calchis. They are neither actant-subject neither actant-object, they have no opponents and their helpers would be the information they have. Instead, they have the power to deliver information to the audience and categorize characters as heroic (Achilles, Iphigenia) or demonic (Helen of Troy). The counterpart of Violeta could be associated to that of the messenger. In this case, the messenger is the object-actant of Agammenon who wants him to send a letter to Clytemnestra. In this case, his opponent would be Menelaus (Agammenon's brother) who impedes him to send the

letter. But at the same time, the messenger is a subject-actant who wants Iphigenia, Clytemnestra and Achilles (object-actants) to know the truth. The power of information and morality allows him to tell the truth. His opponent in this case is Agamemnon.

The character of Iphigenia in *Iphigenia Aulis* is always the object-actant as she is tied to Adolfo's (actant-subject) and allegedly the god's desires. Her anti-subject would be Helen of Troy, as she is the reason why Iphigenia has to die. Iphigenia's death has the power to make the winds blow. Her helpers are her mother and Achilles, who cannot do anything to help her, whereas her opponents are Adolfo, the gods, and the Greek troops.

The characters Iphigenia, Violeta and the Fresa girls have clear intentions. They are related to freedom and personal fulfillment. As a matter of fact, the text creates the possibility of the achievement of the subjects' aims, but these attainments are a delusion. In *Iphigenia Crash's* story, the reader gets the impression that Iphigenia may somehow be relieved from her myth, that she may change her destiny. Nevertheless, this is a case of fabula which "has been accomplished before the narrative starts moving" (Hernáez Lerena 58). In other words, the long-lasting story of Iphigenia condemns these characters to die endlessly. Actants are chained to their Euripidean fabula and myth where female sacrifice is inevitable. Therefore, their attempt to introduce substantial changes is useless. On the other hand, Virgin Puta is a character who, in theory, does not cause or undergo functional events. She represents what Bal calls a type of actor who does not need to be taken into consideration (195). Nevertheless, I disagree. Indeed, this actor just needs her name to provoke and to invite the reader to take her into consideration. The fact that Virgin Puta does not have a functional category is used as a tool to hyperbolize hypermasculine behavior and power.

It highlights the helpless situation of all female characters: that there is no possible realization of their goals.

Achilles and Hermaphrodite Prince

After having dealt with Iphigenia, Virgin Puta, Violeta Imperial, and the Fresa girls, I will deal with the character of Achilles, who is the closest character to Iphigenia. This character also has a 'twin' who is called Hermaphrodite Prince and who I will refer to as 'Prince'.

ACTANT-SUBJECT	FUNCTION	ACTANT-OBJECT
13. Achilles	a. wants to be released b. wants to save or rescue	from his myth/reality Iphigenia from being murdered
Gender link: he is an androgynous hero		
14. Prince	–	–
Gender link: he does not fit into the macho-mold; he is also a victim of his society		

Table 5. Actant-subject Achilles and Prince

Actant-subject Achilles shows two main actant-objects while Prince is an actant-object who takes the insults of General's Ass with no complaint, e.g. "GENERAL'S ASS. This bitch?" (Svich 83), and who follows his instructions: "Do as you are told […] hands on her throat. That's right." (84)

POWER	FUNCTION	RECEIVER
15. Fate/Reality	makes it impossible	for him
16. Fate/Reality	makes it impossible	for him to save her
17. _	–	_ Reader (?)

Table 6. Power-receiver Achilles and Prince

Examples 15 and 16: Achilles shares the same negative power that prevents him, Iphigenia, the girls, and Violeta from fulfilling their goals.

Example 17: similar to Virgin Puta, he has no power in the text; this may be a consequence of his feminine and androgynous attributes.

	OPPONENT	HELPER
18. Achilles	Having AIDs, being androgynous, his own myth Adolfo, mercenary	Drugs, Sex, Iphigenia, physical death
Gender link: mythological Achilles was a 'perfect' male hero, now he falls between two stools: Female/Male traces.		
19. Prince	General's Ass	_
Gender link: he is considered to be subcategory of male, a 'he-bitch'		

Table 7. Opponent-helper Achilles and Prince

Achilles' opponents are those who are related to the negative power that impedes him from fulfilling his aims. Indirectly, his helpers are Violeta and the Fresa girls, when they want to save Iphigenia. Apart from having AIDs and being androgynous, Achilles shares the same opponents as Iphigenia, the Fresa girls, and Violeta. Both having AIDs and being androgynous are abstract concepts which emphasize the oppression of an Achilles who cannot be socially accepted and his impossibility to save himself from dying.

His helpers are Iphigenia in whom he finds a soul mate. In drugs, he finds a helper which gives him a fantastic analogous world where he can be himself. Nevertheless, drugs are also an opponent as they are making him ill. I consider physical death to be his helper as it seems the only way for him to find spiritual life, like Iphigenia.

In the case of the Prince, his opponent would be the General's Ass, who is a phantasmagoric and reduced version of General Adolfo.

Regarding to *Iphigenia Aulis,* Achilles (actant-subject) wants to clean his heroic honor (actant-object) and to save Iphigenia (actant-object). Nevertheless, the power of destiny impedes him from saving her (receiver). His helper is the old man and Clytemnestra, whereas Agamemnon and the Greek troop are his opponents.

Orestes

Orestes is Iphigenia's brother. Although his role in the play is not very extensive, its function is quite relevant.

ACTANT-SUBJECT	FUNCTION	ACTANT-OBJECT
20. Corruption/Myth	Stole	Orestes's childhood/life

Table 8. Actant-subject Orestes

Example 20 shows Orestes as an actant-object who has suffered the consequences of a corrupted society since he was born. This fact is directly related to Adolfo's corrupted world and to Camila. Just like his mother, Orestes is intoxicated with drugs and carries the burden of his myth.

POWER	FUNCTION	RECEIVER
21. Fate/Myth/Reality	Condemns	Orestes to a poisonous existence.

Table 9. Power-receiver Orestes

The power of the actant-subject in example 20 is linked to that of an inescapable fate, myth and reality shown in 21. Orestes has an external power, which is that of 'shaking' the reader's mind.

OPPONENT	HELPER
22. Drugs, Fate	–

Table 10. Opponent-helper Orestes

Finally, his main opponents are drugs and fate and he has no helpers at all; only a confidant: Iphigenia. Regarding Orestes in *Iphigenia Aulis,* he is only a baby who receives the caresses of Clytemnestra and his sister Iphigenia.

The representation of *Iphigenia Crash's* Orestes as an adult-baby object-actant is very visual. This actant, who is unable to aim anything, or to make his own decisions, is a symbolical portrayal of childhood. This childhood will never be accomplished as it has been slaughtered by oppressive subject-actants.

Camila

Camila is the last suffering actant to be analyzed. Although she is a victim, Camila is somehow contrary to Iphigenia.

ACTANT-OBJECT	FUNCTION	ACTANT-SUBJECT
23. Camila	is possessed by	Adolfo.
ACTANT-SUBJECT	FUNCTION	ACTANT-OBJECT
24. Camila	wants her to come back home	Her: Iphigenia
25. Camila	wants her to die.	Her: Iphigenia

Table 11. Actant-object Camila

Example 23 shows Camila as the actant-object of Adolfo, who achieves everything he wants thanks to a tarnished atmosphere of corruption and aggressiveness.

Example 24 and 25 are related to the value of truth. Although the actant-subject of Camila coincides in both examples (Iphigenia), the function is completely opposed. The reason for this is that Example 23 shows an aim which is only in appearance (a lie). This idea is externalized by Camila along the whole play. Nevertheless, example 25 shows Camila's actual wishes which are not revealed until the end of the play: that Iphigenia would die.

POWER	FUNCTION	RECEIVER
26. Male supremacy	Subjugates	Camila.
27. Lies/Myth/ being a mother	hide the truth	to every receiver.
28. Adolfo	Raped	Camila.

Table 12. Power-eeceiver Camila

Example 26 is linked to example 23. Male supremacy is the power that subjugates and dehumanizes Camila who only has hatred and anger in her soul. Example 27 is linked to example 24. As it has already been pointed out, example 24 is untrue. Thanks to the importance of the well-known myth of *Iphigenia Aulis* by Euripides, in which Camila is always by the side of Iphigenia, the reader can be easily deceived by Camila's good intentions (ex. 24). Also the fact that Camila is linked to Iphigenia in mother-daughter relationship is a great power for the subject-actant Camila to deceive both Iphigenia (in the text) and the reader.

Example 25 is the consequence of example 28. The fact that Camila was raped (object-actant) by Adolfo (subject-actant) determines Camila's inability to love her daughter.

Camila's opponents are related to their impact on her impossibility of fulfillment, both as a human being and as a woman. Adolfo is the clear opponent of Camila. He raped her and obliged her to marry him. Opponent Adolfo is directly related to an unequal society where he can take advantage of the situation. Drugs and alcohol are also opponents of Camila in the sense that they prevent her from "shining", but on the other hand, they are also helpers: alcohol and drugs can make her escape and forget her daily struggle. Iphigenia could be considered to be Camila's anti-subject as she is not against Camila but just the fact that she is alive is at cross purposes with that of the first subject.

Regarding *Iphigenia Aulis,* Clytemnestra (subject-actant) wants Iphigenia (object-actant) to live and wants Adolfo (object-actant) to change his mind. Again, the power of fate and Adolfo's decision subjugates her. Her helpers are the old man and Achilles, while her opponents are Adolfo and Iphigenia's fate. Her anti-subject is Helen

of Troy, who causes the war of Troy and allegedly is the reason why Iphigenia has to die.

Adolfo, General's Ass and Mercenary

In this section, I will continue to analyze "non-suffering" actants. I will deal with those who benefit from an unequal gender society: Adolfo, General's Ass and Mercenary.

ACTANT-SUBJECT	FUNCTION	ACTANT-OBJECT
29. Adolfo says he	a. wants to make happy b. wants to kill	Iphigenia Iphigenia
Gender link: hipermasculinization and violence related to success and cowardice.		
30. General's Ass	wants to rape and subjugate	Iphigenia
Gender link : the female body is seen as an object to be conquered		
31. Mercenary	wants to obtain money by killing	Iphigenia
Gender link: a hypermasculinized world devoid of any feelings of empathy or caring towards other people, especially towards women.		

Table 13. Subject-actant Adolfo *et al.*

In this case, Adolfo is the perfect example of what Mieke Bal portrays as the actant-subject 'traitor' who is not what he seems to be. Nevertheless, actant-subject General's Ass does not hide his monstrosity. The mercenary is the actant-object whose object is Iphigenia, but only to achieve his real object which is a financial reward.

POWER	FUNCTION	RECEIVER
32. Lies/father figure	makes believe so	Iphigenia
33. Lies/corruption	makes him able to kill	Iphigenia
34. No-laws, male supremacy	makes him able to rape	Iphigenia
35. Corruption	makes him able to murder	Iphigenia

Table 14. Power-receiver Adolfo

Examples 32 and 33 show that the main powers of Adolfo, both professionally and personally, are his lies and his network of corruption. Also important is the idealized father figure that the receiver, Iphigenia, sees in him.

Example 34 shows that General Ass' power lies in his leading-role in a world of bribery, where he can reign without being punished.

Example 35 shows that corruption is the power of the mercenary which at the same time is a consequence of Adolfo's politics.

	OPPONENT	HELPER
36. Adolfo	–	Mercenary, Iphigenia
37. General's Ass	–	Prince
38. Mercenary	–	Adolfo, Corruption

Table 15. Opponent-helper Adolfo

Adolfo, General's Ass and Mercenary have no successful or direct opponents. In the case of Adolfo, he is the 'super' actant-subject who is able to control everyone as he pleases and nobody can overcome his power. Just like in the case of Camila, Iphigenia could be considered to be his anti-subject. Iphigenia is not directly against him, but her willingness to be free is at cross purposes with Adolfo.

Adolfo's helper is the Mercenary who kills Iphigenia. On the other hand, Iphigenia can be considered another helper as she helps Adolfo to achieve his main aim: political success. General Ass' helper is the hermaphrodite Prince who helps him to rape Virgin Puta while Mercenary's helpers are Adolfo and corruption.

Regarding *Iphigenia Aulis,* Agamemnon (subject-actant) wants Iphigenia (object-actant) to live. Agamemnon (subject) also wants Iphigenia (object) to die. The gods (subject) want Agamemnon (object) to accomplish what he is told to do. His helper is the old man who is at first faithful but then a traitor to his master. Agammenon's opponents are Clytemnestra, Achilles, the old man and Iphigenia.

Glass-eyed Man, News Anchor, Virtual MC

Finally, I will deal with characters who neither benefit nor suffer from an unequal society: Glass-eyed man, News Anchors and Virtual MC. These actants witness or deliver biased information and impressions about the events and the main characters of the play. Glass-eyed man is a symbolic character who never talks but who observes everything. News Anchors and Virtual MC are narrators who comment on and evaluate characters and actions.

ACTANT-SUBJECT	FUNCTION	ACTANT-OBJECT
39. Glass-eyed/News Anchor/MC	is able to see/show/mold	Reality
POWER	FUNCTION	RECEIVER
40. Eyes/Media power/words	to deliver information to	any character/reader
OPPONENT	HELPER	
41. Adolfo	words/information/ people misinformed	

Table 16. Subject, power and opponent Glass-eyed man, News Anchor and Video MC.

As it is shown in example 39, these actant-subjects are able to show reality from their own perspective. They have no need to interact with the rest of the characters; they are 'above' them. These characters sometimes act as if they were gods: "Are you willing to submit yourself to me? […] this is what you do, this is what I need" (Svich 23) says the Virtual MC to an unknown audience which could be both internal (the characters) and external (the reader). The News Anchor is a bitter presenter of the news; these actants are able to show all the power that media and rumors have on that society (example 40). Adolfo would be the only opponent of these actant-subjects when they broadcast information which works against him (e.g. "NEWS ANCHOR. General Adolfo will not confirm the disappearances, but will say that all citizens must vote for

him" (29). Their helpers are their knowledge or vision of the world that surrounds them as well as their sharp tongues and their lack of knowledge of the 'real' facts of what is going on in that unnamed place. As I have already pointed out the most similar counterparts (if any) of these characters in the play *Iphigenia Aulis*, would be the chorus.

4.6.6. Final Comments

It can be concluded that almost every character has a particular aim with his/her helpers and opponents. Therefore, Bal's classification of actants in object-subject, power-receiver, helper-opponent fits in this analysis. The attainability or non-attainability of the aims of *Iphigenia Crash's* actors is directly related to the gender of these actants, who interact in a hypermasculine setting. Therefore, to analyze the actors in *Iphigenia Crash*, I found it necessary to add the relation of gender and sexual orientation to Bal's classification of actors.

The relationships of *Iphigenia Crash's* actants are also based on Bal's notion of "truth value". The actants that neither benefit nor suffer from that male-oriented world are teleologically directed to inform about the 'real' events of the fabula. All the actants live in an environment of concealment, secrets, myth, and lies *vs.* truth and reality.

Regarding the relationship between the subject and the object actants, it is mainly based on subjective connections. The objective relationships are a mere excuse to reach a certain state: happiness, political success, revenge, or freedom.

The reader encounters events where the victim-actants in the story of *Iphigenia Crash* look for an internal state opposed to that experienced within *Iphigenia Aulis'* fabula (betrayal, impossibility of decision, sacrifice). They are given the possibility to seek an internal state of relief. These actants are generally presented as unpredictable.

They are changeable and irregular. They try to "run away" from their stereotypical behavior in *Iphigenia Aulis*. On the other hand, privileged-actants look for an internal state similar to Euripides' play (hegemonic success) which oppresses the realization of their victims' goals.

According to Bal, "the actors have an intention: they aspire towards an aim" (197). Nevertheless, non-functional characters (Virgin Puta and Hermaphrodite Prince) also create consequences in this fabula. Therefore, I considered it necessary to include them in *Iphigenia Crash's* analysis of actants.

Bal also notes that "the fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by the actors" (5). *Iphigenia Crash* challenges this definition. The fabula of *Iphigenia Crash* is mostly related to the events that are not experienced by its actors because they are a direct consequence of the events that take place in *Iphigenia Aulis.* In Svich's play the events are memories that take us back to those in Euripides' play.

Also, events are sometimes presented in an illogical chaotic format. But maybe we should ask ourselves, what is logical? *Iphigenia Crash's* allegedly illogical structure is certainly very logical. The fabula of *Iphigenia Crash* revolves around the topic of sacrifice, both physical and spiritual.

Events and actions do not always represent movement. Indeed, most of them can be seen as continual aftershocks which reproduce Iphigenia's experience. This event 'wraps' the rest of events.

Sometimes events are presented as obstructions from movement or development. This organization of the text is used to emphasize the spiral of chaos, oppression, and rapture that moves along the story. Therefore, Bal's definition of events as processes and alterations (182) does not fit the fabula of *Iphigenia Crash*.

5. CHARACTERS' RELATIONSHIPS IN TERMS OF GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS

I think we need to restructure strict gender roles. New models absolutely! How else will we progress and evolve?
Caridad Svich (Interview 2013)

5.1. Iphigenia: A 21st Century Redefinition

The play *Iphigenia Crash* offers a grotesque reflection of our current society. Some of the main factors are the reshaping of the diegesis of the Euripidean myth into a hostile system somewhere in Latin America, and the allocation of dysfunctional qualities to mythological characters trapped in time and their own story. In this section, I will focus on Iphigenia, the character who was condemned to be murdered endlessly but who rebels against her own destiny.

The story narrated by Euripides about Princess Iphigenia arriving at the soldiers' camp, lured by the lie that she will be married to the great warrior, Achilles, is familiar, at least superficially, to the general public. This cultural legacy comes from the ancient Greek times of Euripides. It was inherited from past generations, maintained somehow in the present, and preserved for the benefit of future generations. This fact is well-

known by the author Caridad Svich, who decided to create her own *Iphigenia at Aulis,* turning the former mythological story upside-down in order to bestow upon Iphigenia the voice and personality that she was denied centuries ago. In this section, I will analyze the main symbolic purpose of Svich's Iphigenia in two subsections: first, Iphigenia and Helen of Troy, and second, Iphigenia and the facing of her own destiny.

5.1.1. Iphigenia and Helen of Troy

In Euripides' play, Helen of Troy is immediately appointed actant-subject because she caused all the troubles. To provide a few examples: the chorus leader claims, "cruel Helen, because of you and your marriage, a great struggle has descended on the sons of Atreus and their children"(299); and also Iphigenia blames Helen for her sacrifice, "since they have paid for the loss of Helen [...] all this rescuing is accomplished by my death"(317).

According to Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, she is the reason why Iphigenia cannot escape her miserable fate and has to die. In opposition to *Iphigenia Aulis* Helen is absent in Svich's story, but only apparently. Her presence lingers on in modern Iphigenia's story. Before Svich's Iphigenia is killed by General Adolfo's mercenary, she narrates a horrible experience about being kidnapped and having pictures of her sold for lucrative purposes (p.40-4). This brings us to the well-known kidnapping of Helen of Troy by Paris, narrated in the Greek play. Moreover, although not referred to in Euripides' work, Helen is said to have been kidnapped by Theseus when she was just a young girl (Newton 31); Hellanicus of Lesbos, who was an ancient Greek logographer, said she was seven years old; the Greek historian Diodorus makes her ten years old, although her exact ages differ among authors (4 Maguire); and most surprisingly, some writers, like Stesichorus, stated that Helen was Iphigenia's real mother, and that

Iphigenia was the product of a rape (Grant, Hazel 243). Some hints of this rape can be found almost at the end of the play when Camila, Iphigenia's mother in *Iphigenia Crash*, explodes and expresses in her anger, "she is the fruit of Adolfo's rape of me. Such glorious, poisonous fruit" (105). Helen of Troy is impersonated by the character of Iphigenia, when she was kidnapped, and by Camila,[31] the raped mother who is the object-actant of Adolfo's world of machismo .

Therefore, the character of Iphigenia in *Iphigenia Crash*, who is trapped in time and myth, comes to the present to make her story of imprisonment visible, but especially to make public the injustice of all those women who have had to suffer in myth, history, and reality, just for being born a woman and beautiful.

5.1.2. Iphigenia and the Facing of Her Own Destiny

Euripides' Iphigenia is naïve and trusts her father's word. She is the object-actant of all his lies. We find a girl who is devastated and shocked when she learns that, in reality, Achilles' engagement is a mere farce. Iphigenia begs on her knees for mercy to helpless Agamemnon who "has" to kill her. Nonetheless, she is suddenly "brought to her senses" and voluntarily accepts her destiny on behalf of her homeland: "Hear, the thoughts that have come to me as I pondered. It is determined that I must die […] upon me depends the power to take their ships over and destroy the Phrygians" (316). Iphigenia does not want to be, in her own words, "a coward" (323), therefore she is set on being killed. Modern Iphigenia knows that her forceful response to her sacrifice will be praised because her attitude, allegedly, shows her "virtuousness" (319).

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[31] In *Iphigenia Aulis*, Clytemnestra's first husband was Tantalus, King of Pisa (in the western Peloponnese), who was slain by Agamemnon. Agamemnon also murdered her infant son. He then forcibly made Clytemnestra his wife.

Nevertheless, modern Iphigenia loses her naivety on her psychological and physical journey. She tries to escape from the destiny that has been haunting her for centuries and flees to a world of evasion, dancing, and drugs: the aircraft hangar. There, at least psychologically, she achieves her goal for a couple of hours.

This 21st century woman carries the burden of her long-lived myth. She is aware of the fact that she cannot run away from her fate because her life is not hers and it has never been. Nevertheless, when she is going to be killed by a mercenary, we find a woman that is not submissive anymore. Although she is still a trading coin used for the sake of "others", she (subject-actant) is able to look at reality in the eye and tell the mercenary (object-actant) the way she wants to be slaughtered, "make my father pay you. I want you to lead me into a quiet house off the main road, and tell me Achilles is waiting for me. I want you to close the door, and cover my eyes and when I ask 'Why?' I want you to pierce me with a knife" (Svich 103).

Svich's Iphigenia's words cut like the mercenary's knife. We perceive remains and echoes from Euripides' tale such as Iphigenia's progressive acceptance (object-actant) to become the victim of her own tragedy. This woman is not blinded by nonsensical reasons that justify her "first" death for the sake of warfare. She does not want her death to be mythologized. On the contrary, Euripides' Iphigenia is trapped in a 5th century B.C. world that lies between myth and reality. Being a (rich) woman, she is not able to speak for herself, as gods and men have silenced her voice.

Though Svich's Iphigenia has to die too, she has the strength of a 21st century woman and the power to look back on her life, and to revise it critically to do justice to her ill-treated image and be freed from it, which is the main difference with Euripides' Iphigenia. Svich's play ends up with a triumphant Iphigenia saying to Achilles, "the story has been told again… Every part of me is breaking. But I'm all right. Give me

your hands. Give me your hands, Cause you're wonderful" (113). This utterance confirms the significance of Svich's Iphigenia as a powerful icon who discovers that her corporeal death will not only prevent her individualistic spiritual death but it will also contribute to denouncing one of the most threatening global problems which persist in society: feminicide.

5.1.3. Iphigenia's Twin: Virgin Puta

The character of Virgin Puta, who is described as Iphigenia's twin, is a symbolic character. As I already said, this character can be interpreted as an extension of Iphigenia. If we focus on her name we can appreciate revealing and appalling contradictions. The word Virgin is usually related to the image of purity, decency, and even innocence. But, combining this word with 'puta', which is a Spanish word for "whore", Svich builds a corrosive implication. The fact that 'virgin', the positive meaning, is written in English and 'puta', the negative meaning, in Spanish may also impersonate the stereotypes of those two worlds (that in which English is spoken and that in which Spanish is spoken) which touch, mix, and collide all at once. This name also hints at the famous Mexican myth-fact of La Malinche. She incarnates one of the most powerful symbols in Mexico for female treachery: "ella fue acusada de haberse sometido a las ideas y a la lengua del conquistador en su calidad de intérprete y amante" (Sánchez 252).

La Malinche has come to be seen as the combination of a traitor of the indigenous people and the mother of the Mexican Nation (Bruce-Novoa 14). She is just like Virgin Puta, a contradiction which embodies veneration, humiliation, and the sexualized object.

The character of Virgin Puta can also be related to that created in Racine's play *Iphigenia (*1674), who also reshaped the myth told by Euripides. Racine produced an alternative dramatic solution for the ending: another princess, Eriphile, is revealed to be the real 'Iphigenia', who is the true sacrifice the gods are demanding (Bauman & McClymonds 120). It has been suggested that Racine's play focuses on the development of a new order. In his play, Iphigenia lives while Eriphile dies, so that her priorities – social relationships, duty to one's father and community- prevail over the commitment to the tragic" (Jennifer Wallace 42). Virgin Puta is a character that, just like Eriphile, is condemned to die and to lose over and over again.

5.2. The Classical Greek Tragedy Used to Condemn Feminicide

Before illustrating how feminicide is portrayed in Svich's play through mythological allusions and characterization, it is crucial to understand its meaning.

According to professor Pineda-Madrid, the invention of this term to address female murders is essential because "by naming it feminicide, we make visible what otherwise remains invisible as it turns our attention toward the roots for this experience of suffering as virile misogynist sexism" (27).

It is evident that in the 5th century B.C. the concept of feminicide did not exist in their day-to-day life or in mythology, but it did in practice. Euripides' *Iphigenia Aulis* focuses on the character of Iphigenia, who is murdered by her own father. Although embellished and justified by a fate that she had to accomplish to please goddess Artemis and to help the Achaeans (subject-actants) to reach the city of Troy, this act can be considered, at least performatively, a type of feminicide. If so, this would demonstrate that these murders are a millenary and extended "tradition". As Svich stated, "there is a cycle of historically of repetition – of historically treating women as disposable, second-

class, etc.–, and objectifying and dishonoring women's bodies and psyches. Until the cycle breaks world over, we are trapped" (Svich, Interview 2013).

Iphigenia's story in a 21st century context may be regarded as an attempt to break the 'cycle', to build different alter egos or extensions of this ill-treated character through the personalities of Virgin Puta, Violeta, the Fresa girls, and with a very determined goal: to condemn feminicide out loud.

5.2.1. The Fresa Girls

The traditional chorus of the plays in Classical Greece was used as a tool to express what the main characters could not say, such as inner fears or secrets (Godhill 271). This chorus was normally represented by average citizens and it was usually communicated to the audience through songs. In Euripides' play the chorus is portrayed by maidens from Calchis, whereas Svich recovers these theatrical figures through the Fresa girls. Like a Greek chorus, the Fresa girls describe the love and rapture experimented by Achilles and Iphigenia (Svich 69). They verbalize the main character's darkest fears. But unlike the Greek chorus, the Fresa girls interact with the characters and their chaotic and whimsical behavior conceals a sharp denunciation for the ill-treated. "In the land of the living, the dead will reign… Of the forgotten and unforgiving who have been left to walk along the fields of Juárez without graves" (Svich 66). The Fresa girls, in their half-dead and half-alive state, are haunting voices which sometimes seem to come from the unconscious, other times from an omnipresent cruel past, and others from average young girls who are willing to have fun in a club or wear expensive clothes. "Fresa", which literally means "strawberry," is a slang term that is used in Mexico to refer to young, rich, and popular girls (49 Monroy). A 'fresa' (person) is also defined as, "[t]he stereotype which refers to a woman (or a man) with money or who are

eager to give the impression that they have it [personal translation from Spanish]" (Escobar, del Puy Ciriza and Holguín-Mendoza 275). This definition amplifies the scope to women and men and adds the notion of "false appearances," a key concept in *Iphigenia Crash* play.

Svich employs the concept of "fresa girls" to address "the ripe girls, like strawberries, who come from deep country to work in the factories" (51), the poorest girls, who were exploited in maquiladoras.[32] These girls have to work in infrahuman conditions sitting for "twelve hours a day at a sewing machine" (51) and are "killed by anonymous hands" (52). The word "anonymous" implies that nobody bothers to find the one to blame, leaving these murders silenced.

This fictional episode can be relocated to the dramatic situation that many women live every day in Hispanic American countries, especially on the border that separates the United States of America from Mexico. According to Amnesty International, more than 800 bodies had been found as of February 2005, and over 3,000 women are still missing (Sarria 2009).

The Fresa girls of *Iphigenia Crash* are dead, but their phantasmagoric souls wander around Iphigenia, who would fit by definition what a real 'fresa' is in Mexico: a rich girl dressed in Prada and Chanel.

Ironically, Iphigenia, who is totally unaware of the real identity of these girls, dreams about being like them. "I could be one of these girls. Who says I have to be Iphigenia?" (51), "You are beautiful girls" (54). Naïve and unacquainted with the atrocities the Fresa girls lived, Iphigenia romanticizes their lives. Nevertheless, as reporter and editor Amy Littlefield stated, there is nothing beautiful about a dead body-

[32] Maquiladoras are factories that produce low-priced clothing which originated in Mexico in the 1960s along the U.S. border, mainly for U.S. consumption.

even that of a young female's (genderacrossborders.com). It can be concluded that the appalling impact that the story of these victims causes on the reader is one of the most prominent messages in Svich's play. Another clear example of misogyny can be seen with our next character, Violeta Imperial.

5.2.2. Violeta Imperial

Violeta Imperial is the name of a flower also known as 'cyclamen' in Mexico. It is appreciated for its beauty. Its origins are said to come from Asia Minor, Greece, 'incidentally' where the play *Iphigenia Aulis* comes from.

Iphigenia Crash's 'flower' is described as an ageless apparition, a messenger and an earth-bound prophet. This character could be associated Agamemnon's messenger when he announces to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia the fatidic denouement that awaits her (259-65). Nevertheless, her purpose is even deeper. Violeta's function is on the one hand to unmask Iphigenia's father, "His men took me into a room and cut me open with a blade. You hear screams? Those are the screams of the innocent…the disappeared" (Svich 37), and on the other hand, to act as "a walking warning for others" (Svich 38); for all those women who can still save their lives. However, no optimism can be found in those warnings. The General and his men stripped Violeta (object-actant) of her dignity as a human being and left her only with a bruised body and a heart full of anger, ("You're the asshole's daughter" she says to Iphigenia" (Svich 37), and pain, ("cut open for nothing. For kissing a girl." (Svich 38)). The traumatic episode that Violeta lived with the men who abused her for homophobic causes molded her personality into an unstable character which swirls from a protective woman, ("You are blind, Iphigenia" (44), and "It's better for young girls not to be seen" (47)), to an

aggressive personality, ("Thanks to you the city will be smashed, and every soul will be uprooted from their homes" (45)).

Nevertheless, her foul-mouthed language is justified by her harrowing circumstances which are an inescapable consequence of Adolfo's world, like Iphigenia's destiny: "You can't do anything. You're at the mercy of your father. Like me. Like a piece of chicken. Want a taste?" (44). It can be concluded that Violeta's disheartening language, tainted by the boldness in her words, refers to the inexorableness of Iphigenia's death since the times of Euripides. This fact can be symbolically applied not only to the characters of Svich's play, but also to the ordeal that many women suffer in real life. Both the Fresa girls and Violeta Imperial represent a part of society that has been silenced repressively: girls who work at the maquiladoras, who are murdered outside the clubs, or who decide to love another woman and suffer the consequences of a monstrous and narrow-minded world because of that. Those are the voices that Svich decides to pay tribute to and to rescue.

5.2.3. Cross-Gender Heroism and Lipstick Warriors

In the production and script notes of Svich's play, she gives very clear instructions about the characterization of the Fresa girls: "(they) should be preferably played by men" (21). One of the reasons to choose cross-gendered outfits could be to create an analogy with travesty roles in the history of theatre; the presence of actual women on stage was rare. Until the late 17th century, women's roles were conventionally performed by male actors in drag (Normington 64).

Another motivation of *Iphigenia Crash's* emphasis on cross-dressing characters could be the necessity to illustrate a part of society which is usually voiceless and even taboo: transgendered individuals or individuals with androgynous traits.

The last function of these characters is that stated by Amy Littlefield: "to dramatize the process of presenting death as beautiful or romantic" (6) and to create a 'disturbing' visual impact on the spectator.

Achilles is described as "a transgendered glam rock star, beautiful and damaged" (19) and then, as "an industrial glam rock androgyne" (58).[33] If we now focus on Euripides' play, Agamemnon's betrayal was devastating to Achilles' ego: "Achilles is giving his name, not his actual self. He does not know about the wedding or what we are doing" (179). Even harder for the Greek idol (Achilles) was his inability to act as a hero and save Iphigenia from death; this burden is carried by Svich's Achilles.

In opposition to Euripides' play, he is not a mythological hero anymore but he is still a rock star. Just like the stereotypical rocker, he has the extravagant but attractive charm of a living legend and an excessive predilection for alcohol and drugs. "Stoked up on the cocaine, living with a migraine, looking for an end to end all my days" (60), he sings. His melodies become a symbol of himself, a mixture of delirium and rapture. Before meeting Iphigenia, he only communicates through music and the reason for that may be because it is less harmful to wrap the crude truth with some musicality.

In *Iphigenia Aulis,* Achilles is not physically described but, instead, we learn from a conversation between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon of his glorious past. "The son of Zeus…Chiron brought him up, to prevent his learning the ways of the wicked" (241). Of course, it would be hard to imagine a heroic Achilles who is feminine or a drug addict, like we see here. "All muscle. Didn´t you used to be an archer boy? A wing-footed archer with limbs traced in golden armor?" says Iphigenia to which Achilles answers, "I used to be everything" (Svich 78).

[33] As I have already mentioned, Hermaphrodite Prince is a 'short' extension of Svich's Achilles. The Prince is a grotesque and dehumanized version of Achilles.

One superficial interpretation of the emphasis on Achilles as an androgynous character may be a comical hint at the traditional, but somehow latent version of the play, where it seems that Achilles may have had same-sex affairs. Nevertheless, his hybridity, which is not only physical but also psychological, can be interpreted as a critique to the canon of the flawless, masculine and statuesque hero. Achilles says "I am a boy and a girl at once," (79) so why cannot a transgendered or androgynous character be a hero? This provocative (anti) hero not only pays justice to his tormented past, but also represents and makes visible a group of people who are in many situations out-casted in today's society, in this case, in a Latin American location.

5.2.4. Snatched Childhood Portrayed: Orestes

In Euripides' play, Orestes is just a sleeping child that Clytemnestra carries in her arms. In *Iphigenia Crash*, just a couple of lines are devoted to Orestes but he has an important role. Svich's Orestes never sleeps but instead he cries endlessly, which emphasizes his everlasting and anguished sentence to immortality through myths and fables. Though Orestes is portrayed as a little baby in both plays, Svich's Orestes is a human being that carries more than 2,000 years on his back. Like Peter Pan, he never ages; he is in a never-ending pre-childhood, but only physically as time has molded his inner world into a grotesque land: like a baby Dorian Gray, with a beautiful appearance and a gloomy soul.

This little 21st century creature has been infected with drugs and abuse since his birth. "I got coca in my brain since the day I was born" (93) he says to Iphigenia referring to Camila's addiction; harsh words which illustrate that even the most symbolic sign of purity is corrupted: "ADOLFO. A general has many burdens. NEWS ANCHOR. Like your son, general? ADOLFO. My son? He´s a baby. He doesn´t know

such things" (72). The irony lies in the fact that he *does* know such things. Orestes does not cry as a child, but as an adult who is totally conscious of what surrounds him; like the heartbreaking shouts of all those people who cannot talk anymore because they were erased from the world, he begs for freedom and justice for the Hispanic American women who were murdered in Svich's unknown land which is probably Ciudad Juárez. Therefore, he is a very important symbol in the play, which is probably why Svich decides to give Orestes something other than childish tears, and opposing Euripides' Orestes, he is able to speak, and even more significant is the fact that he weeps with an adult voice. Euripides' Iphigenia says before dying, "My farewell words; and promise me to rear this babe Orestes to manhood" (325). The tragedy of Svich's Orestes is being trapped in a poisoned world in a baby's body with an adult mind which is intoxicated by drugs, and the fact that he will never be able to reach manhood. Thus Orestes' character can be interpreted as a tool to express that there is no space for childhood, beauty, or innocence in a scenario where women are kidnapped, raped, mutilated and killed.

5.2.5. The Punishment for Women Who Transgress Gender Roles

I have previously analyzed the female figure as a victim (object-actant) of brutal masculinity (subject-actant). In Svich's play there is another character that also portrays feminicide, but in an indirect and less obvious way: Clytemnestra.

The unconscious desire on the part of a woman towards harmful and revengeful infidelities in marriage is known as "the Clytemnestra Complex" (Shueibi 80). The most extended version of Clytemnestra is that of an evil femme fatal; an unfaithful wife to Agamemnon who was deceived after ten years in the war of Troy and killed by Clytemnestra's lover, Aegisthus. This side of Clytemnestra is not presented in Euripides' play but in the tragedy *Agammenon* written by Aeschylus.

The name of Clytemnestra is Hispanized in Svich's play by the name of 'Camila'. This is a rather common name in Spanish-speaking countries. Its meaning is said to be "altar server" or one "attendant to a sacrifice" (Brown 60), which perfectly fits the definition of this character.

Camila is metaphorically unfaithful to herself and to her own daughter and submissive to her husband. Regarding Clytemnestra, she shares stereotyped female characteristics such as being submissive with also stereotyped male behavior, such as being unfaithful or feeling strong enough to kill somebody. The fact that she is in-between gender roles has been traditionally punished through history. In *Iphigenia Aulis,* Agamemnon is indulgent with his wife as long as Clytemnestra remains silent or totally unaware of his plans, but unfortunately for Agamemnon, she is an intelligent woman who will not be content with her husband's superficial statements. When he feels his secret is threatened, he is implacable, as is evident when he says, "I will tell thee, lady, what to do; so obey me now," (30) "Obey!" (Euripides 245) and macho, like when he says, "he who is wise should keep in his house a good and useful wife or none at all" (Euripides 247), translated from the Spanish version of Euripides' play as "obsequious".

In Svich's play Camila is an interesting figure. At the beginning, she shares the same confusion and worries about her daughter as Clytemnestra does: "Iphigenia! Where are you daughter?" (34) Although both characters are portrayed as devastated mothers, they are quite antagonistic. In contrast to Clytemnestra, Camila feels relieved when she hears about Iphigenia's murder.

Almost at the end of the play, Camila clearly states that she never loved her daughter; "when I look at her I feel hatred," and "I hope they plaster her body all over the papers… Get some bamboo and string up my Iphigenia. Screw her 'till sundown"

(72). In opposition to Adolfo's fake tenderness, this honesty seems to have a hidden goal in Svich's play. Though shocking and disgusting, the reader is able to feel sympathy and empathize with her story. "She (Iphigenia) is the fruit of Adolfo's rape of me… He married me against my will. He smashed the head of a baby boy whose name is no longer remembered and stuck his cock inside me. For the good of the country" (105). Therefore, though very grotesque like her husband, Svich does not portray Camila as an evil femme fatal but as Adolfo's victim. He abused her and turned her into a soulless human. A no-woman, a no-mother, who needs drugs to survive her internal hell; "the specter of a heavily narcotized Camila" (34). So all her cruelty, which is a consequence of a life of hardship, is somehow justified and understood.

5.3. The Portrayal of Hypermasculinity: "I Love You So Much That I Will Kill You"

Masculinity is a chameleonic identity which can be manifested in many different ways. The exaggeration of male stereotypical behavior in a hyperbolic way is known as hypermasculinity. According to Cynthia Weber, "hypermasculinity is an over saturation of signs of the masculine" (qtd. in Kramarae, Spender 1089). Hyper-masculine conduct is an essential topic to be discussed in this essay as it is the main cause of feminicide. The character that portrays this hyper-masculine behavior the clearest in Euripides' play is Agamemnon and his modern counterpart is General Adolfo in Svich's play. I will be studying hypermasculinity based on the relationship of these two characters with Iphigenia. In order to analyze their behavior, I will divide this section into four subdivisions which are features of hypermasculinity. First, I will focus on the chauvinist statement which defends the idea that men can have a hyperbolic sense of privilege and right because it is an inner right. Second, I will emphasize the significance of a wolf in

sheep's clothing, or the contrast between perfect appearances which conceal a gloomy soul. In other words, I will analyze the role of playing contrary to his real character. Third, I will focus on the paradox of dictatorial behavior as a consequence of male insecurities and complex of inferiority. Finally, I will look at the antagonistic portrayal of femininity as the tempting and mischievous figure which caused the expulsion of Adam (men) from the Garden of Eden, versus the portrayal of masculinity as a victim who has to suffer the consequences of female impertinence.

5.3.1. Overly Exaggerated Sense of Privilege and Right

Menelaus' conversation with the Attendant and then with Agamemnon is an important scene in Euripides play. At the beginning of the story, Agamemnon allegedly changes his mind and decides not to kill his daughter, but Menelaus threatens to kill him unless he kills Iphigenia (197). Then, when the messenger arrives announcing that Iphigenia is already there, Menelaus pities his brother and retreats from his words saying "I counsel thee, slay not thy child nor prefer my interests to thine" (214), and, surprisingly, it is now Agamemnon who says "I thank thee…'tis useless, for circumstances compel me to carry out the murderous sacrifice of my daughter" (217). One interpretation of this conversation could be that Menelaus goes back on his words to show Agamemnon that, he already knows that Agamemnon will kill his own daughter. Agamemnon summons Iphigenia and Clytemnestra for a beautiful wedding. This statement wraps a horrible denouement: a murder. Agamemnon's personality is unstable and bipolar; nevertheless, in Euripides' play Agamemnon's weak nature is portrayed as something not to be criticized but understood. Agamemnon regrets his first decision, "Ah me! I was out of my senses! Alas, I fell into madness!" (179). Agamemnon is trapped between his heart and what he must do. He claims to love his

daughter immensely but he is subdued by the gods' whimsical will. Therefore, Euripides' Agamemnon is a victim of superior forces he cannot control, and even Iphigenia ends up understanding that her father is acting in the best interest of everyone. Consequently, Euripides' Agamemnon does not necessarily portray an exaggerated sense of his privileges or rights, which put him in the situation in the first place. General Adolfo, on the contrary, is dispossessed of his 'real' rights and portrays an overly exaggerated sense of privilege that cannot be justified by his circumstances as we will appreciate in the following section.

5.3.2. Hypermasculinity: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Svich's portrayal of the 21st century Agamemnon (General Adolfo) is used to criticize, rather sharply, the way Iphigenia has been treated, "he had lived with fame at his side all his life. He envied others" (26). In the words of the author, "I patterned General Adolfo much more on the images projected by hyper-masculine dictators in Latin America – that kind of machismo associated with totalitarian power" (Svich, Interview 2013). The name of Agamemmon is hispanized to (General) Adolfo. The name change seems to correspond with not only Svich's aim to 'spread' a Hispanic touch on the play, but also to hint at a well-known general: Adolf Hitler.

General Adolfo is not hesitant anymore; he is described as ambitious and cold. He could metaphorically "see that the low ceiling hurt her head (meaning Iphigenia)" (26), but he would do nothing. He is also sexually depraved ("He liked looking at her. He liked having her in the house" (26)) and even incestuous ("You were made to be sacrificed daughter, open your legs" (81)). Adolfo tries to be gentle and sweet, "Dear, sweet Iphigenia" (27). Although it is implicitly said that it was Adolfo who prepared the first kidnapping of Iphigenia in which she went through hell and then he "ransomed"

her, the general cannot verbalize his own cruelty, “my father refused to recognize me ‘The papers will print anything’ he said,” and, “my daughter, my dear Iphigenia, never went through this”” (44). Referring to the passage when Iphigenia is murdered and she disappears, Svich hints at what is narrated in Euripides play: “My daughter´s cry was heard but once. When I lifted my eyes, she was gone. There was blood everywhere. But no sign of my Iphigenia…God took her…. Iphigenia is a saint. I will be re-elected” (109). Like in *Iphigenia Aulis*, although she is not substituted by a deer, Iphigenia mysteriously vanishes; by getting rid of her body, he destroys the only thing that proves that this was a murder and creates a convenient romanticized myth that will erase all the guilt (“ADOLFO: she escaped death. She´ll save us all” (110). As we can see, this man cannot be pitied by the spectator anymore. All his good reasons turns into a bitter satire of human monstrosity, “he loved her so much that he would do anything for her” (25), even kill her.

5.3.3. Insecurities and Inferiority Complex

Focusing on the paradox of dictatorial behavior as a direct consequence of male insecurities, we need to analyze the conversation that takes place between Agamemnon and Menelaus in Euripides’ play. Menelaus, who is a sharp man, accuses his brother of having a weak personality which fluctuates from being positive to negative. Menelaus is persuasive (subject-actant) and possesses a skillful eloquence, unlike Agamemnon (“AGAMEMNON. This is monstruous! Shall I not be allowed to manage my own house? MENELAUS. No, for your thoughts- present, past and future-are devious” (199). Nevertheless, Svich decides to omit Menelaus.

One of the main reasons for this decision could be that Svich considered Menelaus Agamemnon’s *alter ego*; that in fact Agamemnon is really debating with

himself, his good and his evil part colliding ("MENELAUS. Ah ah! It seems I have no friends, poor man that I am! AGAMEMNON. Yes, you have. Unless you mean to destroy them". (207)). A man who at times thinks of his glory and enrichment by sacrificing Iphigenia and at other times is humanized and thinks about his family and his beloved daughter. Agamemnon is a king full of insecurities and so is General Adolfo. He is a character that tries to give an external appearance which does not correspond with reality, a traitor (Bal 205). He would never admit who he really is; a grotesque monster who has no qualms and would do anything to have a successful career. So we have the same person with a split personality. As a consequence, Menelaus may not need to be portrayed as an individual character.

5.3.4. The Mischievous and Manipulative Femininity: Victimizing Masculinity

In Euripides' play, although Agamemnon is the one who is causing all the pain to "his" women, he seems to be a victim who cannot escape from their "over femininity,": "thou are moving my pithy all the more by speaking so sensibly" (233). Both Clytemnestra and Iphigenia are portrayed as overly sentimental and ornamental, which is emphasized by different exclamations such as, "Ah! How I wish it were proper for you to take me with you as a shipmate!" (235), and, "Ah, ah, daystar that lights our way" (330), or, "ah, I take this as a lucky omen, thy kindness and auspicious greeting" (227). Iphigenia seems to ask too many questions, like "IPHIGENIA. What! Hast thou found me a new home, father!" (234) and that make her father nervous, because it is not convenient. We can see him getting uncomfortable when he says, "enough of this! 'Tis not for girls to know such things" (235). Again, he is portrayed as a victim who has to suffer, because he knows the atrocity that awaits Iphigenia and she does not, "I count

thee happier than myself because thou knowest nothing" (237), he says. In order to denounce hypermasculine stereotypes that say feminine attributes are alluring, disrupting, and inferior to the masculine reason and good sense, Svich decentralizes masculine supremacy in opposition to the characters in Euripides' play. Svich decides to transfocalize the perspective of the play to the female perspective. Male characters are peripheral complements used in order to expose female tragedy, for instance, soldier X is the mercenary that kills Iphigenia and his role is futile and General Adolfo's few lines show a sweet and rather dumb man. Indeed, he does not seem to know what is going on. But we get to know his grotesque personality through female characters (Violeta, the Fresa girls, Iphigenia) and the 'narrators' (Glass-eyed man, News Anchors and Virtual MC). It is true that Achilles has a considerably important role; nevertheless, as we have already analyzed, he is portrayed as an androgynous who is effeminate and hybrid. Therefore he is not a "real man," but rather another victim of masculinity.

5.4. One Soul in Two Bodies: Love and Romanticism in Svich's Play

Finally, I want to close my essay with Iphigenia's and Achilles' relationship because I believe that beside all the horror presented in the play there is a heartening message. This message is most visibly represented through these characters. The famous Greek philosopher Diogenes was once asked what a friend is and his answer was, "one soul abiding in two bodies" (Shepard Walsh 399). This quote represents perfectly the story featured by Svich's Iphigenia and Achilles.

The first sentence where Achilles intervenes happens right after Iphigenia tells her mother that she is running away from bad luck to the northernmost point of the city, which is quite representative. Achilles, who will be Iphigenia's shoulder to cry on, her luck and her relief in a futile night that will end up tragically, begins to sing, "war is

over, the gods are over, everything, everything is over…" (33), as a soothing lullaby to Iphigenia. He announces to Iphigenia that all that caused her pain is dead and Iphigenia completes the song by singing, "…and I´m going to let my body reign…to let my body be. And stop, stop being the general´s daughter" (33). This duet symbolizes their unity, two voices and one song which will remain unbreakable from the moment they encounter each other; Achilles even says, "we´re one girl" (95). We find that Iphigenia IS herself for the first time when she meets Achilles and Achilles is NOT himself until he meets her. Though we are able to perceive romantic bits and pieces, we have no Romeo and Juliet here; the interdependency among these characters is created by necessity; they are both tormented souls, fragile and wounded, willing to survive in a distorted world, even if that surviving requires a physical death. There are flashbacks of what they used to be, when they were mythological characters, as seen when Iphigenia says, "You were raised by centaurs…Achilles, son of the sea-nymph, raised by a glorious centaur" (91). She is clearly talking about what Agamemnon explains in Euripides' play to Clytemnestra (Euripides 245). Iphigenia talks about the stereotypical and grandiloquent Achilles that we all know from mythology, but paradoxically, modern Achilles rejects his past when he says, "I don´t know what centaurs you speak of… That´s the past, isn´t it?... I have erased everything" (91). Like the Titan Atlas who was compelled to support the weight of the heavens, Achilles has been tortured and subjugated by a past that was a heavy load and after thousands of years. He is finally "freed" from it, though with long-term effects. Svich's Iphigenia, on the contrary, is still trapped in that illusionary world that has created her "I think I am what the past has made me," (91) she says.

It can be concluded that Iphigenia and Achilles' relationship is both passionate and destructive. They fuse together ("I don't want anything but your tongue" (78)), they

repel each other (“IPHIGENIA. I will destroy every bit of your celebrity” (92)), and desire each other (“IPHIGENIA. I like your skin. ACHILES. taste it. Lick it.” (73)).

They cannot live without each other because as Achilles said, “we´re one, girl” (95). “IPHIGENIA. Will you betray me? ACHILLES. Will you forgive me?” (96). In these two sentences we can see echoes of Euripides’ play. Svich’s Iphigenia cannot trust anybody, not even the one she loves the most. Svich’s Achilles asking for forgiveness refers to the fact that he will not be able to save her from being executed, the same way he could not save her in Euripides’ play. Interestingly enough, Svich’s Achilles confesses that he is a “coward”.

Achilles is weak, nevertheless, he mourns Iphigenia. In opposition to *Iphigenia Aulis*, *Iphigenia Crash’* characters are humanized and dignified by their flaws. Their actions are consequences of an inescapable past. Behind the cataclysmic vision of today’s culture presented in *Iphigenia Crash* there is a heartening message which places high expectations for a truer world and also for a reconsideration regarding gender roles and sacrificial women.

6. CONCLUSION

The play has a catastrophic quality as drama, but I do think it is hopeful. Somehow.
Caridad Svich (Interview 2013)

Caridad Svich was aware of the influence of *Iphigenia Aulis* as a cultural legacy, and she decided to offer a different perspective of the Euripidean myth to prove that it is by no means a static old relic and that the story narrated in this Greek tragedy remains alive in today's society. The myth of *Iphigenia Aulis* is retold to praise the never ending "presentness" of the play as a universal piece of art but also to denounce the persistent gender discrimination.

The main topics addressed in *Iphigenia Crash* (feminicide, masculinity, femininity, and loss of identity) may lead us to the conclusion that it is a play with a pessimistic and cataclysmic vision of today's culture. Nonetheless, this disconsolate framework camouflages a powerful and rather hopeful message: it is possible and necessary to modify the grotesque side of the "tangible" world if we are able to revise and reconfabulate our myths. It is necessary to face and to undress our past and present from romanticized ideas in order to improve our future, to reconfabulate our myths with a critic and constructive perspective adapted to today's realities. As Caridad Svich stated, "Achilles mourns Iphigenia. We witness the sacrifice. We consider how we treat and think about sacrificial women. To even think about that is hopeful because it means possible change in awareness may come/occur" (Svich, Interview 2013).

Caridad Svich deglamorizes the myth and the characters of *Iphigenia Aulis* in order to cause social impact and a changing attitude on today's world through the language and iconography of theatre. It also gives voice to those who did not have the chance to express themselves in Euripides' play and to the ill-treated: an androgynous rock star infected with AIDS (Achilles), a fresa girl (Iphigenia) condemned to end up like the 'maquiladoras' girls (the Fresa girls), a homosexual woman who suffers the consequences of a misogynist and narrow-minded world (Violeta Imperial), or a little baby intoxicated by drugs who will never reach manhood (Orestes). All these characters reject the long-lasting past portrayed in Euripides' play and are reborn in a dangerous, chaotic, and politically corrupted 21st century society with a decadent charm.

Characters' relationships in terms of object-subject, power-receiver, and helper opponent actants were portrayed through Bal's model. I believe that the clear division of Svich's and Euripides' characters into oppressor *vs.* victim makes Bal's model a good method to analyze and compare actant relationships in terms of gender connections. Bal's model is also significant in the analysis of time and location, which is intimately related to gender relationships in Svich's play.

Committed art, as the one created by this transnational author opens up an interesting field of future research. Other areas of study could be the impact of technology and media, as well of politics, on the mythification of feminicide; the study of more works related to feminicide in Juárez and the borderland; and the analysis of the dramatic prominence of feminicide in the literature of America and all over the world.

Caridad Svich is able to prove that art not only transports its spectators to embellished and imaginary scenarios, but it also has the ability and function to reformulate uncomfortable truths. Art does bring closer to audiences a part of the world

that is taken for granted and, therefore, remains invisible. It also helps to break through the long-lasting gender inequalities' cycle. Art reminds us that the past is bound to happen again unless we confront it.

The events of so many Aulis in the past are still present in so many other Ciudad Juarez of our world, and we should do our utmost to build a more promising and less threatening future to the twenty-first century Iphigenias.

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APPENDIX

Interview with Caridad Svich
(24th April 2013 - 12th June 2013)

ELENA GARCÍA BARCA (EGB): You are an author born in the US of Cuban-Argentine-Spanish-Croatian parents. How has transnationalism influenced your identity as a writer?

CARIDAD SVICH (CS): It has affected everything. In every way. A writer cannot escape who they are or what/how they were born into something.

EGB: In relation to the performance of your plays in the theatre, how would you define them formally? Do you participate in process?

CS: For the premieres of my plays, I am very much in the rehearsal process. A play, after all, is really made in rehearsal. That's where the real work begins! Actors teach you so much about the intentionalities of the characters, working closely with a director does as well. Plays are events in space and time. This is crucial to be in the process.

EGB: Have you ever lived in the places of your works?

I have lived in New Jersey, North Carolina, Florida, Utah, NY, CA, PA, MA, OH, TX, MN and have traveled in South America and Europe.

EGB: Which writers have influenced your writing?

CS: So, so many! But Virginia Woolf, Sam Shepard, Tennessee Williams, David Mamet, Federico Garcia Lorca deeply impacted my thinking about writing.

EGB: What current issues concern you?

CS: Environmental damage in water and in the earth, climate change, gun violence, women and girls rights.

EGB: Do you have any academic connections with the university?

CS: I teach at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. I have taught creative and playwriting at many colleges and universities. I am founder of NoPassport theatre alliance and press, which stages activist actions for social change.

EGB: Has your play Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart (a rave fable) been studied before?

CS: The play has been produced at Arizona State University-Tempe directed by Lance Gharavi and also at North Harris Community College in North Texas directed by Cash Carpenter, and also has been studied at Brown University Dept of Theatre, and been written about in Theatre Topics, TheatreForum, PAJ and American Theatre magazine.

EGB: Why did you choose the title *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart (a rave fable)* for your play?

CS: The title is poetic, of course. For me, it is emblematic of the kind of experience the play offers to the audience.

EGB: In your play Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart (a rave fable) you reshape a well-known ancient myth and recontextualize it in a world of cultural hybridity that of the border between the United States and Mexico. How did the process of writing a contemporary “Latina” Iphigenia began for you?

CS: I was writing a play about the feminicide in Juárez and during the process I re-read Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis in WS Merwin's translation and suddenly I realized that what I was really writing was a contemporary Iphigenia.

EGB: Which is your target audience?

CS: I never know who will show up at the theatre. That's the beauty of it, isn't it? I do hope that this play appeals to a young audience, though. It's a demanding play, and some of it is quite raw, so the audience needs to be ready for that.

EGB: To which extent a mythological story created in the 5th century B.C. can portray gender conflicts and inequalities which persist in today's world?

CS: One of the amazing aspects of the classics is that the foundations of the storytelling are so, so strong that they carry across centuries. Humans haven't learned very much about getting along after all these years. We fight the wars, kill each other, fight for territory and supremacy. The inequalities continue to persist. The classics remind us that we have been in the struggle and in the mess a long time and still are.

EGB: One of the main topics addressed in your play is the issue of indiscriminate feminicides in the US-Mexican border, which involves the violent deaths of hundreds of women and girls since the 90s, and in many cases there has not been efficient political actions to stop it. Do you think that literature can empower the visibility and awareness of the darkest realities which haunt the 21st century? In your opinion, how?

CS: I think that as writers we have a duty to record what is not being recorded, to shed light on the stories hidden in plain sight. Our job is to wake audiences up.

EGB: Your 21st century Iphigenia seems to be trapped in time and myth. She comes to the present to project the injustice that many women have to suffer just for the reason of

being born woman and beautiful. Would you consider that the question of feminicide is trapped in time and myth? Why so?

CS: Women's bodies have been violated and destroyed (murdered) for centuries. As have those of men. Violence against women by men needs to be stopped. There is cycle historically of repetition - of historically treating women as disposable, second-class, etc. – and objectifying and dishonoring women's bodies and psyches. Until the cycle breaks world over, we are trapped.

EGB: Hyper-masculine behavior is another topic I would like to discuss as it could be considered the main cause of feminicide. The character that portrays this behavior more clearly is General Adolfo. How does he differ from his Euripidean counterpart, Agamemnon?

CS: Men taught and conditioned socially toward hyper-masculinity can cause feminicide. I patterned General Adolfo much more on the images projected by hyper-masculine dictators in Latin America – that kind of machismo associated with totalitarian power. In Euripides' play, Agamemnon is actually somewhat sympathetic. He is in a moral crisis.

EGB: You also create an alternative masculinity which is less aggressive, impersonated by Achilles. In my essay I state that your androgynous Achilles is a provocative (anti) hero who serves as a critique to the canon of the flawless, masculine and statuesque hero. For a long time in literature, outcasts have been heroes, especially in post-colonial literatures. Do you think we need new models of masculinities and femininities? Would you consider that is the time for the outcasts to become heroes?

CS: I hope the outcasts can become/are our heroes. I think we need to restructure strict gender roles. New models absolutely! How else will we progress and evolve?

EGB: In the Production & Script notes of your play you pointed out that "The Fresa girls should be preferably played by men", could you expand on this idea, please?

CS: The Fresa Girls embody both the masculine and the feminine – the victim and perpetrator. They are in some ways like the Furies. I also wanted to destabilize the gender roles right away in the play with their appearance.

EGB: Behind the cataclysmic vision of today's culture presented in Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart (a rave fable) would you consider that your play hides a hopeful message?

CS: The play has a catastrophic quality as drama, but I do think it is hopeful. Somehow. Achilles mourns her. We witness the sacrifice. We consider how we treat and think about sacrificial women. To even think about that is hopeful because it means possible change in awareness may come/occur.

EGB: The importance of Latino/a authors and literature is not a minority phenomenon but a pressing necessity. Indeed, more than 50 million Latinos people participate in the construction of the economic, cultural and societal growth of the United States.

What is your opinion on contemporary Latino literature?

CS: I have written and advocated about and for Latino/a literature for many years. I think the more voices writing, the more different in form and style and content, the less pigeonholed we will be as a performing writing body. There is no "one" Latino/a literature but many!

Thank you.