

Abstracts

Where the Wild Things Go: Tourism and Ethnic Longing in the Theatre of Rodolfo Santana Vicky Unruh

Tapping into the performative intricacies of tourist activity and showcasing the negotiations of performed ethnicity in the implicit contrasts between tourists and the people they travel to see, Latin American and U.S. Latino theatre artists use the tourist character or theme to investigate the cultural negotiations marking contemporary social life. This work parallels critical theory that investigates the tourist as an improvisatory player in trans-regional interactions and unpacks the tourist-“native” binary to revise conceptions of people and cultures that travel. As exemplified in two plays by Rodolfo Santana (Venezuela), artists deploy the tourist theme to critique culturalism, that is, to use the term coined by Arjun Appadurai, “identity politics at the level of the nation-state” (15). Santana’s plays *Mirando al tendido* (1992) and *Influencia turística en la inclinación de la Torre de Pisa* (1996) highlight the interaction of tourism with its designated other, the ethnic, to critique the concept of *abolengo*, or nation-based ancestry or blood-line, as the authenticating mechanism of a particular cultural practice or group. Santana’s work—along with that of his cohort—also proposes that staging tourism harbors insights into the everyday that might generate more salutary social arrangements.

Mobile Thresholds, Immobile Phones: Staging Migration, Return, and the Empty Home in Recent Ecuadorian Theater Amalia Gladhart

In the past decade, hundreds of thousands of Ecuadorians have emigrated, principally to Spain and the United States. A growing body of recent Ecuadorian plays has treated the experiences of the migrants and, tellingly, the experiences of those left behind. This essay focuses on three plays that present migration as a kind of threshold, a space of transition that is paradoxically temporary yet solid: *Con estos zapatos me quería comer el mundo* ‘With These Shoes I Meant to Take on the World,’ (2002) by Jorge Mateus and Pablo Tatés; *El pueblo de las mujeres solas* ‘The Village of Solitary Women,’ (2005) by Jorge Mateus; and *La Travesía* ‘The Crossing,’ (2002) by Nixon García. These plays present the ambivalent situation of the migrant as one of both frustration and possibility. All three plays employ small casts of characters to explore the individual transitions faced by the migrant and to evoke the nostalgia and ambivalence that surround the possibility of return. The stage, endlessly redefined, mimics, in some ways, the provisional space occupied by the migrant. These plays exploit that resemblance, using the malleability of the stage space to perform a migration that is not yet finished or resolved. The plays also raise vital questions about the staging of a specific Latin American experience in different national or regional contexts. The staging of liminality and displacement is central to these plays as the characters negotiate unfamiliar languages and landscapes, including the previously familiar landscape of a home changed by the absence of the migrant.

The Procession that Travels Inside: *Yuyachkani*’s “Santiago” Miguel Rubio Zapata

In collaborative theater projects like *Yuyachkani*, it is hard to define the exact moment when a new project begins. Generally we have a very imprecise idea as our initial point of departure and we explore it more fully in the day-to-day work, where it changes a great deal. Santiago is a project that began as a processional performance piece in the public plazas before premiering as a theatrical work in its current form, as a largely Quechua-language play focusing on permutations of faith in an almost uninhabited Andean village. The final project arrived as a result of this complex process of research and exploration. Santiago has a very long road to its current form, always with the indispensable accompaniment of the writer Peter Elmore, the co-author of the play.

The Lost Apple Plays: Performing Operation Pedro Pan Kimberly del Busto Ramírez

From 1960 to 1962, more than 14,000 unaccompanied minors took flight from Cuba to the United States,

establishing the largest recorded exodus in the Western Hemisphere. The displaced children and the country they left behind are often metaphorized using a popular Latin American nursery rhyme, "The Lost Apple." Now, more than four decades later, Operation Pedro Pan persists through a revealing body of performance by and about a nation's exiled children. The *Lost Apple Plays* investigates how memory, identity formation, nationhood, citizenship, and migration have been dramatized through these performances. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Nilo Cruz, director/actor/playwright Mario Ernesto Sánchez, singers Willy Chirino and Lissette, performance artist Ana Mendieta, sculptor María Brito, prolific dramatist Eduardo Machado, and new playwright Melinda López compose a Cuba that can be neither lost nor recovered for Pedro Pans, but remains an impenetrable illusion like the restless, liminal condition of lifelong exile.

Passion Plays: The Dominican Diaspora in Waddys Jáquez's *P.A.R.G.O.* Maja Horn

This article analyzes how the play *P.A.R.G.O.* (2001), written, directed, and performed by the Dominican Waddys Jáquez represents the contemporary experience of the Dominican diaspora. Jáquez himself forms part of a new generation of diasporic artists who frequently return "home," to the Dominican Republic, and who, unlike the previous generation of diasporic artists and writers, continue to find their most valuable audience there. This tendency towards an increasing interconnectivity between diaspora and homeland is represented and effectively reinforced in *P.A.R.G.O.* The play brings the experience of the diaspora close to home for the audience, not by compelling them to identify with the characters' particular identities, but rather by placing center stage their ongoing negotiations and "making do" with personal and economic difficulties that define their lives both at home and abroad.

(De)Humanizing Humor: The Anthill of Life and Politics in the Theatre of Sabina Berman Priscilla Meléndez

This article examines several theatrical works of this Mexican dramatist by means of ironic humor as a powerful resource to examine the nature of human communication, and to expose the serious and devastating social and political aspects of contemporary culture: machismo, political corruption, sexual violence, sexism, exploitation, historical manipulation, and hopelessness. In a tense environment where humor might not seem appropriate, Berman masterfully uses and critically examines it as a means to understand humor's serious implications and its comic imperfections, as she subtly recurs to but also parodies some of the most recognized theories of humor. Berman's use of incongruity highlights the tension in her theatrical production, in which even the most sordid acts are counterbalanced by irony, which produces not only surprise or pain in the face of the unexpected, but also pleasure. Perhaps that is why she incorporates the image of the anthill in her reflections about society, politics, history, sexuality, gender identity, and art, where the artist, with her double perspective, like the queen of the "Formicas exsectoides," is able to interpret the world from both the inside and the outside.

It's My (National) Stage Too: Sabina Berman and Jesusa Rodríguez as Public Intellectuals Stuart A. Day

Based on interviews with Sabina Berman and Jesusa Rodríguez, this article offers a view of artists as public intellectuals in Mexico. These two prominent figures, in addition to staging biting commentaries on Mexican politics, have reached beyond the traditional theater to take on the role of public intellectuals (artists, activists, professors, performers, writers, among others, who speak truth to power) on the national stage, Berman through a book on the 2006 elections and her television program, *Shalalá*, and Rodríguez as the stage director for the massive public demonstrations of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Both artists see the importance of reaching out to a wide audience; however, the 2006 elections and their wake have produced a rift in the political left, a rift that is exemplified by the public positions of Berman and Rodríguez. Their long-term, irreverent questioning of the status quo manifests itself in different forms: for Berman and other leftists López Obrador has come to represent the "statist, anti-sexual, anti-diversity, and pro-monopoly" left; whereas for Rodríguez vocal support of the politician represents a move from what she called the "map" (her cabaret space) to *terra firma*, the space of Mexicans in search of a better life.

Dangerous Spaces, Dangerous Liaisons: Performance Arts on and of the U.S./Mexico Border

Kirsten F. Nigro

This essay will consider the performative arts on the border, ranging from script-based plays to performance pieces in urban spaces and public installation pieces. These will be analyzed according to their focus on 1) the plight of the illegal immigrant; 2) the violence that has become a daily factor in the lives of border citizens; and 3) the symbolic efforts to make a sacred space out of one as seemingly unsacred as the border; and if not a sacred space, one that is more transparent and hopefully, less dangerous and threatening.

An Account of *Señorita Maquiladora*

Rosina Conde

Performer and scholar Rosina Conde finds that *Señorita Maquiladora* is the performance piece that has gone through the most transformations, not in its script, but in its text, as it is constantly being rewritten to speak to contemporary social issues. She believes that *Señorita Maquiladora* has potential because it speaks to global themes that affect workers in the assembly plant industry, not only with respect to the questions of the environment and health, but also in terms of the patriarchal patterns that force these women to compete in an atmosphere of a vertical structure dominated by men, with all the attendant disadvantages, without taking into account that women are responsible for procreation. Femicide, health problems like breast and uterine cancer, and the birth of anencephalic children are only a few conditions suffered by this group of women who remain today the most vulnerable sector of the Mexican workforce.

Being Edward James Olmos: Culture Clash and the Portrayal of Chicano Masculinity

Nohemy Solózano-Thompson

This paper analyzes how Culture Clash problematizes Chicano masculinity through the manipulation of two iconic Chicano characters originally popularized by two films starring Edward James Olmos - the pachuco from Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* (1981) and the portrayal of real-life math teacher Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver* (1988). In "Stand and Deliver Pizza" (from *A Bowl of Beings*, 1992), Culture Clash tries to introduce new Chicano characters that can be read as masculine, and who at the same time, display alternative behaviors and characteristics, including homosexual desire. The three characters in "Stand and Deliver Pizza" represent stock icons of Chicano masculinity. In the skit, these icons are forced to interact with each other and through this process become more complex and accessible representatives of Chicano masculinity. They are able to communicate with each other to create something tangible. The pizza of course is a comedic metaphor for contemporary American society - the new melting pot.

From the Margins to the Mainstream: Latino/a Theater in the U.S.

Jorge Huerta

The author discusses Latina/o theatre as it evolved from social protest theatre of the 1960s to professional theatre companies and theatre artists working throughout the country. Whereas there were few scholarly articles, no books about Latina/o theatre and no plays in print (in English) in 1970, today there is a wealth of material about the theatre of the three major Latina/o groups, Chicana/os, Cuban-Americans and (mainland) Puerto Ricans. Each of these groups has a distinct relationship to the United States, as expressed in their plays.