CONSTRUCTING MULTIPLE REALITIES ON STAGE: CONCEIVING A MAGICAL REALIST PRODUCTION OF JOSÉ RIVERA’S CLOUD TECTONICS

By Michael John Mellas

Can love survive in a broken, fractured world? What is the nature of this love? These are the primary questions Jose Rivera asks in his play Cloud Tectonics, a three-character love-story. This thesis will catalogue a magical realist conception of Cloud Tectonics. It will explore the multiplicity of perspective inherent in and the dualistic nature of a magical realist world. Guided by the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Lois Parkinson Zamora, it will examine this world’s political and cultural implications. This thesis will also use catharsis to combine the representational theatrical worlds of Uta Hagen and Stanford Meisner with the presentational worlds of Jerzy Grotowski and Anne Bogart in production. This thesis will explore these issues from a historical and theoretical perspective, into the creation and implementation of a production concept, and culminate in the production of Cloud Tectonics as part of the Department of Theatre’s 2007-08 season.
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Introduction

If you could direct any play in the whole world, which play would you pick?

In essence, that was the question I was asked in November, 2006. I had just finished directing the one-act *A Dead Man’s Apartment* by Edward Allen Baker. The farce, about two adulterers deciding if they will leave their respective significant others, was part of my graduate directing class. That production would decide whether or not I would qualify to direct on the second-stage the following season. Though *A Dead Man’s Apartment* had problems with its overarching flow and connections between moments, the faculty thought I was ready and prepared to direct on the second-stage. I had qualified! Now, I had to decide what I wanted to direct.

So what did I want to direct? What kind of theatre did I want to put onstage? I had just directed a farce; did I want to take on another comedy? How could my choices influence the undergraduate education? What kinds of plays were the undergraduate students reading? What roles did they dream about at night? What did they want in a play? More importantly, what did I want in a play? This production would be more than just some show that I would forget once it had finished. Whichever play I chose would be the focal point of my graduate thesis, so it had better be both enjoyable and challenging. This would be an eighteen month project from start to finish including season selection committee, background readings, design meetings, production meetings, rehearsals, and a one-week run. I needed to find a play I could live with for two years.

What did I want to say with this piece of theatre?

In November, 2006, I had no idea what play I wanted to direct. However, I wasn’t completely directionless. There were certain things I knew I wanted to do with whichever play I directed.

I wanted to direct a play about hope.

My production would run third in the season, preceded by Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* directed by Bekka Eaton and Carol Churchill’s *The Skriker* directed by Dr. Roger Bechtel. Both of these plays depicted fractured, crumbling worlds where there was no sign of relief. *The Trojan Women* addresses the horrors of war, the complete loss of one’s culture and society, and the pain of not knowing what cruelties lay ahead. Though written nearly three thousand years ago, these are still important and pertinent themes today. *The Skriker* discusses the broken
nature of contemporary society, the horrors of the modern world around us, and how contemporary life is often directionless and wasted. These were themes and issues that definitely remain relevant and worth exploring.

But where was the hope? Where were the reasons to continuing trying and striving to make the world better? It is scary but often necessary to ask: where is the art that gives us a reason to continue living? I knew, even as far back as November, 2006, that the play I would direct would offer hope. The play I would direct would exist as a counterbalance for the first two productions of the Miami University Department of Theatre’s 2008-2009 season.

I also wanted to direct a play that would challenge myself, and the students I would work with.

I knew from the beginning that the vast majority of my collaborating artists on this project would be undergraduate students. The majority of performers auditioning would be undergraduate students, and typically upper-class undergraduate student theatre majors are given opportunities to design second-stage productions. *A Dead Man’s Apartment* was a nice, fun show to put on, but it was relatively simple. There were no unbelievably complex characters, and what difficult material was discussed in the play was mostly undercut by the over-the-top humor and contrived plot devices. I was ready for something more difficult, and wanted to confront my fellow artists with similar challenges. I wanted a play with meaty, challenging roles for the performers. The play I would direct would force the performers to take risks, and confront difficult issues. I wanted a play that would push the design team outside their comfort zone and force them to stretch the limits of their creativity. I wanted an experience, for both myself and my fellow artists, that we would remember working on and struggling with long after the show closed.

Lastly, I wanted to direct a play that would engage the audience and draw them into the production.

Far too often contemporary theatre neglects or rejects the audience. The production I would direct needed to keep the audience at the forefront. I didn’t want to create self-absorbed art. I needed to explore themes and issues that would engage and intrigue the audience. The last thing I wanted was the theatrical equivalent to a mind-numbing, popcorn-popping, Hollywood blockbuster. I wanted to direct a play that would create dialogue with the audience. The play I
would direct would make everyone involved think, question, and ponder long after they had left the theatre.

Now I knew exactly what play I wanted to direct. All I had to do was find it. As it is with most “lost” things in our lives, my mysterious play was right beneath my nose (or, more precisely, sitting on my bookshelf) the entire time.

I first encountered José Rivera’s haunting play *Cloud Tectonics* (1995) as a freshman at Bucknell University. While I never saw a production of the play, I read it first in my Introduction to Theatre class, and have since reread the play many times. Something about *Cloud Tectonics* always stuck with me. Yes, there was the flowing poetry, the amazing events, the ridiculously long monologues, and the beautiful images, but there was more.

This was a play about hope, about love in a world gone terribly, horribly wrong. Here were characters who had every reason not to love anymore, every reason to give up on life, yet they continued to struggle, and to work, and to live, and to love. Even after their time together was cut so very short, these characters continued to love. In the end, this was not a play about missed opportunities, but about love affecting and changing your very being.

*Cloud Tectonics*, this play, would be the play that I would direct.

Over the past eighteen months I have worked with Rivera’s beautiful play in several different capacities. This thesis is the final product of that work. In it, I will chronicle my journey through the directing process. I have divided my thesis into four categories: dramaturgy, theory, praxis, and production. In my first chapter I will discuss the background information that surrounds the playwright, the play itself, and the artistic background of the play. Using the cultural and historical information from chapter one as a guide, the second chapter will look at the theory that informs and illuminates the script itself. Chapter three will discuss how I bridged the historical and theoretical understanding of the world of *Cloud Tectonics* to create and develop a production concept. The fourth and final chapter will continue the work from chapter three, exploring the route away from the page and onto the stage, by discussing the rehearsal process. The goal was that each chapter influences and directs the next, so that historical, cultural, and theoretical influences that spawned the play would be evident in production. The thesis catalogues that process.

This is the written component to a creative thesis in directing. While there is no replacement for sitting in the audience and participating in the production, hopefully this thesis
will explain the world of the play, the choices made, and challenges undertaken throughout the process.
Chapter 1: Dramaturgy

Filling the Cultural Well: Understanding the Historical and Cultural Significance of Magical Realism, José Rivera, and *Cloud Tectonics*

“Magical realism is, more than anything else, an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures…In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts. The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality (as the realists did) or to wound it (as the Surrealists did) but to seize the mystery that breathes behind things.”

Luis Leal, “Magical Realism in Spanish America”

“It is only natural that they [Western Europe] insist on measuring us [Latin America] with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all, and that the quest for our own identity is just as arduous and bloody for us as it was for them. The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary.”

Gabriel García Márquez, “The Solitude of Latin America”

“Theatre is not a tape recorder; theatre is the poetic reinterpretation of the tape recorder.”

José Rivera, *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*

No art is created in a vacuum. To fully understand and appreciate any work of art, one must completely explore and examine the world from which that work of art was created. What was José Rivera’s personal history? What were the key events that shaped his life? What were the playwright’s influences? Were there other artists or art forms that he was trying to emulate? How did his work change or grow? Are there reoccurring themes he continues to explore? Have
those themes changed or evolved over time? It is only by exploring and answering questions like these that I can be prepared to present, direct, and discuss José Rivera’s work.

I pursued many historical and dramaturgical avenues in my preparation to direct José Rivera’s *Cloud Tectonics*. In this chapter I will explore three key aspects of that dramaturgical research: a brief history of magical realism, biographic background on José Rivera, and a production history on *Cloud Tectonics* itself. I will explore magical realism. What is it? How did it develop? Who were the key figures? Why were they important? And, finally, how does magical realism relate to José Rivera and specifically *Cloud Tectonics*? I will also look at José Rivera’s background. Where did he come from? How does his personal narrative shape his works of art? Specifically, how does his personal history bleed into and shape *Cloud Tectonics*? Finally, I will explore the history of *Cloud Tectonics*. Why was it written? When was it performed? How were those productions received? With what works did Rivera precede and follow *Cloud Tectonics*? Hopefully, this background information will give me a greater understanding of and appreciation for *Cloud Tectonics*, and better enable me to direct its production.

**Magical Realism**

In recent years there has been much debate and scholarship over what separates magical realism from other art forms and why. While there is still great debate, there are some generally agreed upon shared traits. In this chapter I will address several of these aspects including magical realism’s relationship to reality, its relationship to myth and spirituality, and its relationship to history, politics, and the postcolonial condition. This is by no means an exhaustive exploration of magical realism. It is, however, a summary analysis of major magical realist concepts that are crucial to my ability to understand and direct *Cloud Tectonics*.

Magical realism presents a reality that is altered in some distinctive, finite way while still maintaining the general rules of reality. It is not an expressionistic recreation of dreams, nightmares, or hallucinations; it is instead a realization of life as the artist experiences it. Magical realism’s connection to grounded reality is very important, and is often what scholars use to separate it from fantasy and science-fiction. While the laws and perceptions of physics, time, and space are routinely altered to some degree, magical realist texts present “…magical qualities in the same matter-of-fact and detailed way that it tells us ordinary events” (Faris 45).
In this way, fantastic events are given the same authority as mundane events, the “...literal and the figurative coexist...” in a way where neither overpowers nor overshadows the other (Todd 312). This does not mean that the fantastic is unsophisticated or unstudied in any way. As scholar Wendy B. Faris explain,

...the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence -- admitted, accepted, integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism. (45)

In its alterations of the world, magical realist art has continually attempted to present the greater mystery and beauty of life that often escape Realism and Naturalism’s singular perspective on the world. In his essay “Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature,” which is, perhaps, the closest thing we have to a magical realist manifesto, Luis Leal explains,

The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality (as the realists did) or to wound it (as the Surrealists did) but to seize the mystery that breathes behind things.

(123)

With this goal of ‘seizing the mystery’ of life, much magical realist art has tended towards spirituality, mysticism, and ritual. It is not uncommon in magical realists texts to find “characters move toward mythological levels, universal communities, in order to dramatize individual realizations of archetypal human patterns” (Zamora 499). By using universal themes and having characters exist on mythological levels, magical realists are often better equipped in their attempt to ‘seize the mystery’ of the world.

Another key aspect of magical realism is its frequency to take on multiple perspectives of the same event, or embrace unorthodox or previously unaddressed perspectives of known events. By changing the world around him/her, the magical realist creates “space for interactions of diversity” instead of “objective (hence universal) representation of natural and social realities” (Zamora and Faris 3). Furthermore, magical realism undermines and attacks western rational thinking, and thereby allows for and embraces the existence of multiple viewpoints and includes and insists upon fantastic perspectives to be just as legitimate as realistic perspectives. As
Zamora states, magical realism is, “…an assault on the scientific and materialist assumptions of Western modernity: that reality is knowable, predictable, controllable” (498). When looking at historical moments, magical realism’s alternate perspectives and embrace of the fantastic can be seen as an act of defiance, of agency, and of (re)creating cultural history. By viewing history from another perspective, magical realism “may also seek to change [history], by addressing historical issues critically and thereby attempting to heal historical wounds” (Faris 138). As Jean-Pierre Durix explains,

When their past has long been viewed merely from the point of view of the colonizer, self-assertion must be accompanied by the redefinition of one’s relation to the past. (25)

Durix, here, also points out the relationship between imperialism and magical realism. In this form, when used by peoples of nation-states that have once been colonized, this subversive view of dominant history can be used to create a new history and a new national identity. Durix asserts,

When it is practiced by writers from formerly colonized countries, multiculturalism asserts a model of national identity different from that possessed by the ‘dominant culture’. (153)

As we begin to see here in Durix’s quote, by challenging “…the norms of realistic representation that is based on sensory data…[magical realism] undercuts the assumed reliability of realism…” (Faris 45). By taking on alternate perspectives, magical realism is a political act of reclamation.

Indeed, because the way it revisits history, and because of its close connection to the postcolonial condition, magical realism is by its very nature political. The connection between politics and magical realism is so deep-rooted that scholars Stephen M. Hart and Wen-chin Ouyang begin their critical anthology, *A Companion to Magical Realism*, with the assertion that,

There is perhaps no need to reiterate that magical realism is inherently political, concerned not only with the continuing influence of empire in the postcolonial world but
also with the corruption of political authority set up in the postindependent nation-states… (9)

Magical realism challenges the authority and universality of the world-view of colonial powers. This, by itself, is a political act, an act of asserting the equality and authority of the (formally) colonized perspective. As Faris explains,

Magical Realism therefore undermines the right to represent the world, with which Western readers and their communities have typically invested realism and which constitutes a kind of narrative authority. As a result, that questioning of realism makes way for other forms of representation. (133)

Magical realism has been used in many cultures throughout the world as a tool for asserting agency. It insists their alternative world view be presented with as much validity as western, colonial, rational Realism and Naturalism. While many of the most famous and earliest magical realist writers stemmed from Latin America, most scholars argue magical realism exists within any culture historically deprived of voice. As Zamora and Faris state in their introduction to Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community,

Readers know that magical realism is not a Latin American monopoly, though [there exists] mastery of the mode by several Latin American writers…It is true that Latin Americanists have been prime movers in developing the critical concept of magical realism and are still primary voices in its discussion…Almost as a return on capitalism’s hegemonic investment in its colonies, magical realism is especially alive and well in postcolonial contexts and is now achieving a compensatory extension of its market worldwide. (2)

Though no one can argue the great presence magical realism has had and continues to have in Latin American art, artists from all over the world have created works of magical realism under similar historical conditions as existed in South and Central America.
Perhaps the most famous and widely read magical realist is Gabriel García Márquez. An early pioneer of magical realism, the Columbian writer’s work of fiction and non-fiction texts have been read worldwide. Some of his more famous works include his 1954 collection of short stories, *Leaf Storm*, his 1961 novella *No One Writes to the Colonel*, his 1967 short story “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings,” and his 1985 novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*. His 1968 novel *100 Years of Solitude* is probably his most famous work. In it, Márquez traces the history of a fictitious Columbian village, Macondo, over a one-hundred year period. Márquez maps the genealogy of the Buendía family, exploring the way the family reinvents and recycles itself over a century.

Though extremely poetic and at times even whimsical, Márquez maintain the overt political nature of magical realism in his work. Salman Rushdie, an accomplished magical realist writer in his own right, described Márquez’s work as a genuinely “‘Third-World’ consciousness,” exploring “‘half-made’ societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new” (Hart and Ouyang 9). Again, magical realism and the postcolonial condition remain inextricably linked. Márquez was quick to point out the brutal history upon which many Latin American countries laid their foundation, both during and after European colonization. Márquez referred to his own work not as a creation of powerful imagination, but as a voice making sense of the reality in which he lived the only way one can. He downplayed his work as a seminal voice in Latin America literature, claiming,

Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality [Latin America], we had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is our solitude. (Márquez 9)

Márquez won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. In that pivotal moment, he doubted whether or not this was yet another act of hegemony, of western power yet again minimizing the efforts of Latin American culture. Márquez later said, “I have the impression that in giving me the [Nobel] prize they have taken into account the literature of [Latin America] and have awarded me as a way of awarding all of this literature” (Maurya 59). Even in the act of receiving
a highly distinguished award, Márquez (and magical realism as a whole) remained forever political.

Magical realism has played an extremely large part in shaping the artistic sensibilities of Latin America and the world at large for over seventy years. By re-envisioning the world, magical realism questions otherwise unquestioned western universal “truths.” For example, Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges’ short story “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” questions primacy and validity of the author; in the story, an unnamed critic praises (fictional) Menard’s rewriting of Don Quixote as far superior to the original, even though all Menard has done is copy, verbatim, Cervantes’ original text. Magical realism is a political act of defiance and agency by exploring and describing the world with voices that were too long silenced by colonial imperialist violence.

José Rivera

José Rivera was not brought up in its literary tradition, but comes from a magical realist cultural tradition that he re-explored later in life. It is difficult to view Rivera’s major work outside the realm of magical realism. In this section I will explore Rivera’s childhood and early developmental years, his professional development as a prominent Latin-American writer in multiple literary forms, and his relationship to the theatre.

José Rivera was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1955. His family moved to Long Island, New York, when he was four years old. Rivera learned English as second language at five years old. Though neither of his parents finished elementary school, young José did well throughout his schooling, and began writing at a young age. José’s father worked several blue-collar jobs supporting his five children in and around New York City. Rivera says, “We weren’t impoverished, although we were right on the edge,” recalling his “working poor” upbringing (Sarvan 174). Rivera’s father worked as a janitor, gardener, and taxi driver at different times.¹

Though he was born in Puerto Rico, Rivera spent most of his childhood very much alienated from his Latino heritage. “If we’d grown up in the Bronx it would have been one thing, but for years we were the only Puerto Rican family in the neighborhood” (Sarvan 177). As an outsider, Rivera speaks openly about his attempt to fit in as a child.

¹ For a more full account of Rivera’s childhood years, see David Sarvan’s interview with Rivera in The Playwright’s Voice: American Dramatists on Memory, Writing, and the Politics of Culture pages 165-188.
I remember desperately wanting to be a townie, to be like all the kids. When I was a child, I didn’t want to listen to Tito Puente and the things my parents loved, I wanted to listen to The Rolling Stones. That was my quest to assimilate, to be united. But like Marisol [from Rivera’s play, Marisol], especially in my twenties, I really felt like I had cut something off that was lost and precious and beyond my grasp. Marisol is twenty-five in the play, and I remember in my twenties thinking, What was it I lost? And having psychically to go back home to the stories, the culture…I grew up with no sense of our literary culture, the great works of Puerto Rican and the Caribbean, the great Cuban writers. It was a loss on my part. I had to discover those as an adult. (Sarvan 177)

Though it would not be until his mid-twenties, Rivera speaks warmly about his reconnection with his Latino literary heritage, and how that connection would propel and direct his work later in life: “I was exploring my cultural heritage by writing in a new form, employing the myths and legends of my grandparents. That was a real liberation for me” (Sarvan 166).

Though he saw very little live theatre growing up, Rivera remembers his earliest experience with the theatre very fondly. As a sixth grader watching a traveling production of “Rumpelstiltskin,” the first theatrical production he ever saw, Rivera recalls thinking,

“Oh, my God.” I thought that was the most incredible thing I’d ever seen, and it completely wiped out all the years of TV I watched…I remember thinking that we were all joined together, that the communal aspect of the event was somehow electrifying. (Sarvan 169)

Though he always had a passion for writing, Rivera speaks openly about that moment deciding to write plays: “I was seduced very young by the theatre” (Rivera, “Split Personality” 89).

In 1983, Rivera’s first full-length play, The House of Ramon Iglesia, won the FDG/CBS New Play Contest, and was aired on the TV series American Playhouse. Rivera’s early plays were based firmly in the American realist tradition of Eugene O’Neill (1888), Tennessee Williams (1911), and Arthur Miller (1915). Much of Rivera’s early work continued this tradition, like his 1988 one-act play “Slaughter in the Lake,” about two New York businessmen
discussing their families in Central Park. However, *The House of Ramon Iglesia* deals heavily with what it means to be a Puerto Rican living in the United States. This would become an continuing theme for Rivera, exploring what he calls, “the experiences of a Latino mind and soul set in a non-Latino world…” (Rivera, “Split Personality” 89).

In 1989, Rivera participated in a workshop with Gabriel García Márquez that would become extremely influential in the way he wrote and constructed the worlds of his plays. Rivera constantly speaks openly about his admiration for Márquez, and the effect Márquez has had on his writing. “To this day, I would say that my two godfathers are [Garbiel Garcia] Márquez and [Sam] Shepard” (Sarvan 171). Rivera took the way Márquez viewed his writing and implemented it into his own structure.

[Márquez] sees his work as a form of journalism, even to this day. As fantastic, as unbelievable as it seems, he will ground everything he writes in some kind of experience, even if it’s overheard. I abide by that as well. If someone believes in it strongly enough, then I can write about it as reality. The woman whom I met who’d claimed to have met an angel -- that seemed so real to her. I’m not going to tell her it’s not real… (Sarvan 183)

Rivera would use this journalistic approach in the way he constructed many of his future plays, including *Each Day Dies with Sleep* (1990), *Marisol* (1992), and *Cloud Tectonics*. Based on Márquez’s two-week workshop, Rivera also constructed a way of creating a “magic” world.

[Márquez] said to us seven writers, “You know, when you create a work of fiction that is fantastical, you get to lie once. That’s your premise, and you’re granted that”…like in this case that there is a woman who lives outside the field of time [in *Cloud Tectonics*]. That’s obviously not true. It’s never happened, never will happen; but that is the premise of the play…Garcia Márquez would say, “Okay, this premise is the fundamental lie that you are allowed to tell in order to get at the deeper truth or a deeper truth elsewhere.” But from that point on everything else must be consistent within the particular changes in the physics of life… (Hatcher 200-1)
Several of Rivera’s later plays use this premise of telling one fundamental lie, including *Cloud Tectonics* and *Giants Have Us in Their Books* (1997).

In 1990, Rivera moved to Los Angeles. As a financial venture, this was quite a successful move as he was able to work in the television and film industries writing screenplays. However, Rivera was not fulfilled with this work. “I’ve been living in Los Angeles since 1990 and writing screenplays since 1992. And not happily. I did it in order to support my theatre life” (Svich 85). While Rivera ended up having a fairly successful film and television career in the mid-to-late nineties (including producing and writing for the successful NBC children’s show *Erie, Indiana* and writing the teleplay for H.B.O.’s *P.O.W.E.R.: The Eddie Matos Story*, which earned a 1995 Cable Ace Award nomination for Best Children’s Program), Rivera notes most of his work was, “doing rewrites of other writers' works (mostly for Disney)…” and vastly unsatisfying (Rivera, “Split Personality” 89). It was during this time, however, that his plays began earning him awards and notoriety. Rivera won an OBIE Award for Playwriting in 1992 for *Marisol* and again in 2000 for *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*. Rivera also won a Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Grant in 1996 for *The Street of the Sun*, and twice earned a honorable mention for the Joséph Kesselring Award -- again for *Marisol* and also for *The Promise* in 1988. It was also in this period, after his workshop with Márquez, that Rivera’s theatre began containing more and more magical realist traits. *Each Day Dies With Sleep* features an orange tree that grows in the middle of a living room. The fruit acts as an aphrodisiac for the young lovers as their love-life prospers, but turns into gasoline as it sours and literally burns down their house by the end of the play. The award-winning *Marisol* features a world where guardian angels leave their human-hosts to wage war on a senile god, turning the world upside-down. *Cloud Tectonics* features a woman who exists outside the realm of time. For her, a pregnancy can last two years, and a car trip from Long Island to Los Angeles less-than one day. All of these plays, as Márquez suggested, are grounded in reality but contain one “lie” that alters the world of the play into the fantastic.

Since the turn of the century, Rivera career in film has sky-rocketed. In 2002, Rivera was hired to write the screenplay for the film *The Motorcycle Diaries*, based on the early life of Che Guevara. The movie, released in 2004, garnered much critical acclaim. In 2005, Rivera became the first Puerto Rican to be nominated for an Academy Award in screenwriting when he was nominated by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for “Best Adapted Screenplay.”
The newfound success of *The Motorcycle Diaries* led to numerous opportunities for Rivera. He wrote and directed a short movie based on one of his earlier ten-minute plays, “The Tape Recorder.” He was also hired by American Zoetrope (the same company that produced Sofia Copala’s *Marie Antoinette* and *Lost in Translation*) to write a script for a film version of Jack Keruac’s *On the Road*, and is currently in pre-production on a film loosely based on *Cloud Tectonics* entitled *Celestina*.

Despite his recent Hollywood success, Rivera still remains extremely devoted to the theatre. In the past three years he has premiered three new plays. His most recent play, *Brainpeople*, opened in San Francisco on January 30th, 2008. Rivera has talked at length about his continued love towards and hope for the theatre. Rivera has often marveled at the power of language in theatre over film.

Whenever I teach writing, I tell my students that you write a play with your ears and a film with your eyes. Theater is powered by spoken language—though too much of contemporary theater has been sadly watered down, and language in theater imitates the pale, cool language on television. Still, when theater language is hot—in the hands of, say, Caryl Churchill or Sarah Kane—it blows your mind and kicks your ass and takes you to sublime, terrifying, and sexy places. (Rivera, “Split Personality” 90)

Mostly, however, Rivera discusses the power of the connections that can be formed in the theatre. Rivera has stated, “I feel theatre is the most personal of the media, then film, and then television” (Hatcher 195). It is this connection that continues to give Rivera hope for the future of the theatre.

I like to think that we in the theatre can still do things that no one else can do. We still have the talent and the skill to perform, before a live audience, acts of magic, as it were, that no film will ever be able to do…I still count on the theatre to present moments of awe. I count on the theatre to tap into a nightmare, to delight my mind. (Sarvan 184)

Though the vast majority of my research on José Rivera and magical realism will not manifest itself directly onstage in my production of *Cloud Tectonics*, it remains absolutely
necessary. If I hope to respectfully and sensitively portray a cultural perspective and cultural history that I am not a part of, it is necessary that I surround and engage myself with as much information on that culture and history as possible. By gaining a better understanding of Rivera’s positionality in his personal history, cultural history, and artistic history, I better position myself to tap into the pain and beauty Rivera’s script presents. In this way, I am more equipped to handle the challenges that await in directing Cloud Tectonics.

**Cloud Tectonics**

My production of *Cloud Tectonics* will not be the first nor the last time this play has been produced. In order for me to be as prepared as possible in directing this production of *Cloud Tectonics*, it is necessary for me to be well versed in the history of the play. This section of my thesis will look at the development and professional productions of *Cloud Tectonics*. I will first explore why and under what conditions the play was written. I will also briefly note several important professional productions that were staged in the past thirteen years, and note critiques and criticisms the play-script and play-productions have received. Noting the strengths and weaknesses of the play in production, as well as the driving force behind the conception of the play, will only aid in my directorial journey.

José Rivera did not lead a utopian childhood, and is very open about the abuses he faced as the only Latino child in his neighborhood. While he does not consider himself a violent person, or a person obsessed with violence, he freely acknowledges violence’s dominance in society. “I despise violence, but I’ve seen enough of it growing up, and I was subject to it. I know how essential it is to the human condition” (Sarvan 175). This understanding of how “essential” violence is plays itself out in several of Rivera’s work. This is most notable in *Marisol*.

*Marisol* may be Rivera’s most produced, most published, and most heralded play; it may also be his most violent. In *Marisol*, a homeless man is burned onstage by a neo-Nazi dressed in a KKK hood, a man attacks women on the subway with golf clubs, and another man kills his sister because she embarrasses him in front of the woman he has a crush on. Depending on how
it is produced, *Marisol* can be an extremely violent and painful experience for the audience.\(^2\)

Even Rivera recalls such experiences when he saw the show.

> I went to several productions of my plays, especially *Marisol*, in the same year and I felt battered by my plays. That’s why I wrote *Cloud Tectonics*, as an antidote to violence.
> (Sarvan 175)

It was out of these types of experiences, feeling attacked as an audience member, that Rivera felt the need to write a play in response to the work he had created. “*Cloud Tectonics* was written as a response to *Marisol*” (Svich 88). Rivera decided that the opposite, the antidote, to the violence created in *Marisol* would need to be a play about the nature of and defining love. With a directionless goal in mind, Rivera’s inspiration came while looking out the window of an airplane.

*Cloud Tectonics* came from an airplane flight that I took…So I was on a plane and I was looking out the window. I was trying to imagine if you had to define what “love” was or “sexuality” -- how would you do it? I was really stuck. I couldn’t figure out a good definition, and then I realized that trying to do that is very similar to trying to understand the structure of clouds. As I was looking at the clouds going by, I kept trying to ask myself: How do you describe that structure, how do you describe that shape and those myriad shapes and those ever-changing shapes? And I realized you couldn’t do it, but if you tried to and created a science to do that you would call it “cloud tectonics”…
> (Hatcher 196-7)

*Cloud Tectonics* premiered at 19th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays on March 5th, 1995 in Louisville, Kentucky at the prestigious Actor’s Theatre of Louisville. It was directed by Tina Landau, the same director who premiered *Marisol* at the same festival three years earlier. Only four months later it had its San Diego premier at the La Jolla Playhouse, a theatre with which Rivera has held close connections throughout his career. Over the next five

\(^2\) It is important to note that a post-Colonial reading of *Marisol* views the play as a meditation on liberation theology, even though it can be extremely violent.
years it continued to play several regional theatre across the country. It premiered in Chicago at the Goodman Studio in 1996. *Cloud Tectonics*’ New York premier occurred in 1997 at Playwrights Horizon, and it would return to New York nine years later at the Culture Club produced by Out of Lines Productions. In 1998, the play was produced in Miami, Florida, at the New Theatre in Coral Gables as part of the 13th annual International Hispanic Theatre Festival. The following year, 1999, *Cloud Tectonics* returned to Chicago, this time playing at the American Theatre Company. This particular production is especially worth noting because after its Chicago run, it moved to Mexico City and played at La Gruto Teatro. This marked the first all-Spanish production of *Cloud Tectonics*.

Throughout its many productions, there have been many critiques on *Cloud Tectonics*. Though these criticisms are based on numerous productions with very different intents and produced by a wide variety of artists from all over the world, several interesting patterns developed. I will briefly catalogue these patterns.

Many critics noted that *Cloud Tectonics* was a relatively shallow play, and that the beautiful poetic language only masked an otherwise empty play. Stephanie Coen, reviewing the original production in Louisville, called it an, “elegiac but overwrought play about a night when love literally makes time stand still…Rivera [is] a gifted [writer], but…Clouds's lyrical poetry (and powerful staging by Tina Landau) couldn't mask [its] empty center” (Coen 62). Neil Genzlinger, at the most recent New York production, called it, “…a thin play… The playwright doesn't have quite enough here to be worthy of a full-length work…” (E8). Marilyn Stasio had similar remarks to the same New York Production.

…there are limits to the appeal of magic realism, and by failing to provide a key to unlock the fable's meaning, the play asks to be admired just … because… But at some point, one does wish for something more than lyricism from the playwright and something less vague in meaning than the futuristic vision of Los Angeles (as "the new capital of the United States") that comes at the end of the play. (41)

In short, all three critics, seeing two different productions with two different casts and production teams, found the play lacking depth.
In a related but slightly more specific analysis, several critics found the play's political message too derived and seemingly out-of-place. Ed Siegel, reviewing the original Boston production, had this to say about *Cloud Tectonics*, and its relationship to Gabriel García Márquez:

Whereas "One Hundred Years of Solitude" makes the author's political views integral to the story, here it feels tacked on. Celestina is not only a walking metaphor for the timelessness of love, but a harbinger of a new world order centered in Los Angeles. Every time the door of Aníbal de la Luna's apartment opens, sirens go off and flames erupt in a "Day of the Locusts"-like symbol of the end of the world as we know it. Celestina and her child represent something more hopeful and multiracial, which is all to the good, but in terms of the play's development, it doesn't seem like more than wish fulfillment on Rivera's part. The playwright has been criticized for not paying enough attention to development by August Wilson of all people, and it's a fair objection in light of this particular metaphor. Rivera is suggesting something epic but is not making art of epic "Angels in America" proportions. (C1)

Stasio clarified her original criticism of a lack of depth by saying, “…Rivera shows little interest in integrating his love story into the larger metaphysical picture of a world gone mad” (41).

Irene Backalenick, a critic for Back Stage East wrote that the 2006 New York production was confusing. Backalenick said, “[Aníbal] has met a woman who lives in another dimension, and though intrigued, he is also left thoroughly confused. As is the audience… if you're looking for a clear-cut plot and resolution, Rivera doesn't provide them” (42-3).

In a very unexpected way, two different critics from two different productions commented on Nelson’s character being very thin and under-developed. Stasio, again from the 2006 New York production, said the actor playing Nelson was skilled, but, “lost in his underwritten part” (41). Ben Brantley, who reviewed the 1997 New York premier, made similar comments saying the actor play Nelson was, again, talented, but, “doesn’t have much to work with” (C11).

Several critics commented on the production elements specific to the show they saw. Stasio, ever the diligent critic, pointed out that the magical language and fantastic plot elements
seemed lost in the “grounded in the here-and-now reality of contemporary Los Angeles,” of the set (41). Siegel eluded to the fact that *Cloud Tectonics* may require heavy amount of production elements when he said, “Stuart Duke's lighting and Howard Jones's set find just the right intersection of magic and realism, though the spine might tingle a little more if the Merrimack could afford a few more bells and whistles” (C1).

Despite these negative criticisms, several critics had many positive comments about *Cloud Tectonics*. Backalenick called *Cloud Tectonics* a,

strange, haunting play whose effects linger lung after it ends, as one leaves the theatre puzzling over its meaning, searching for its theme and plot… The play certainly has poetry and provocative ideas: Images such as "stars scraping across the sky" resonate beautifully. Rivera…writes some striking lines. (42-3)

Though several critics found it shallow, many critics thought the play walked the line between trite and powerful quite well. Christine Dolen, who saw the 1998 Miami production, said, “José Rivera is one of those stage magicians who can spin an adult fairy tale that is entrancing rather than silly” (33 G). Ben Brantley critiqued both the 1995 Louisville premier and the 1997 New York premier, and had positive things to say about each. Of the Louisville production, Brantley said, “Beneath its ponderous monologues, there’s an appealingly haunted quality that could be brought into relief by editing and more delicate direction” (“Plays” C 17). Of the New York production, Brantley qualified his otherwise negative remarks with,

Do these questions [of love and magic] make you smile or gag? “Cloud Tectonics,” José Rivera’s meditation on love in the time of floods and earthquakes…is strictly for those who like their romance mixed with metaphysics, and metaphysics mixed with heavy doses of whimsy. (“Love” C 11)

Even Siegel, whom it seemed did not enjoy his experience, noted ““Cloud Tectonics" is a pleasingly taut tone poem…” (C1).

Ultimately, I take all the critiques on *Cloud Tectonics*, both positive and negative, with a grain of salt. These critiques of *Cloud Tectonics* and other like them further problematize an
important, complex script. Different artists involved with different intents and performed for
different audiences will create a different experience. For example, comparisons with August
Wilson’s African-American realism and Tony Kushner’s European modernism could be seen as
neo-colonial. Nonetheless, understanding where other productions succeeded and where they
failed can only aid me in my developing a production concept for Cloud Tectonics. Similarly,
understanding why Cloud Tectonics was written and what Rivera was attempting to do with the
piece will only help inform the decisions I make.
Works Cited


Chapter 2: Theory

Hybridity, Border Crossing, and Ghosting: Exploring a Reconnection with Cultural History in José Rivera’s Cloud Tectonics

“Whenever and wherever two or more cultures meet – peacefully or violently – there is a border experience…Today, if there is a dominant culture, it is a border culture. And those who still haven’t crossed a border will do so very soon. All Americans (from the vast continent of America) are border crossers.”

Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Warrior for Gringostroika

“…the hybrid nature of magical realism reveals a particularly intense dynamics of alterity. It does this through the “sustained opposition” of its “two opposing discursive systems” of realism and fantasy, “which are locked in a continuous dialectic with [each] other.””

Wendy B. Faris, Ordinary Enchantments

“Literary ghosts take many forms. For my purposes here, to qualify as a ghost, a literary apparition need not have arms and legs or, for that matter, be limited to two of each. It need only to exist as a spiritual force that enters the material world of the fiction and expresses itself as such…is an archetypal embodiment of cultural memory…behaving according to particular cultural patterns of belief and serving particular cultural (and literary) purposes.”

José Rivera often aligns himself with the properties and tenets of magical realism. This association is more than apt, despite his troubled relationship with the term. His plays confront many issues familiar to magical realist texts, and deal with those issues using strategies often implemented by and with similar goals to magical realists. Magical realism can be articulated as both a cultural response to and an empowering view of reality for peoples/nations that have been historically disempowered, colonized, or otherized. In investigating and reevaluating history in light of disparate power situations, magical realism also frequently explores cultural history and the act of telling history among these peoples/nations. Magical realism, a manifestation of cultural agency, challenges historically accepted positions of political power, undermines previously accepted notions of reality, disrupts causal/pragmatic concepts of a master narrative, and embodies strategies to assert agency and subjectivity.

As a means of locating José Rivera’s voice within a broad context of both magical realism and its historical and cultural connections, I have chosen four seminal theorists to frame the playwright: Luis Leal, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Wendy B. Faris, and Lois Parkinson Zamora. Placing José Rivera in light of these post-colonial cultural connections, I will analyze Rivera’s *Cloud Tectonics* as a magical realist play that explores hybridity, border crossing, and ghosting. Leal most aptly describes and defines magical realism as texts that “seize the mystery that breathes behind things” (121). Rivera shares Leal’s tenets in bringing metaphors to life onstage and personifying cultural memory and cultural borders. Guillermo Gomez-Pena explores the reactions and relationships that occurs at borders and border zones. Rivera explores these border zones in several different ways, most prominently through characters communicating with their cultural history. Wendy B. Faris emphasizes hybridity as the defining aspect of magical realism’s narrative structure. Rivera’s hybrid characters, who exist on and cross several divergent cultural borders, further his objective of magical realism as a vehicle for exploring cultural history. Lois Parkinson Zamora examines ghosts in magical realist texts as the embodiment of cultural memory. Rivera often personifies the cultural past, creating another avenue for his hybrid characters to explore their ghost-rich ancestry.

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3 For an introduction to Rivera’s own opinions on magical realism and his relationship to it, see *The Playwrights Voice* by David Savran, pages 169-187 and Jeffery Hatcher’s *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*, pages 195-203.
4 Rivera also shares with the magical realists a mentor and cultural history. Gabriel García Márquez, perhaps the most heralded and well-known magical realist writer, schooled Rivera in 1989 and Rivera freely admits the great impact García Márquez had on his artistic endeavors, as discussed in Chapter 1 on page 13.
Cloud Tectonics centers on Aníbal de la Luna, a man whose life reflects an existence of hybridity who chooses to neglect the conversation and relationship with his cultural past. When Celestina del Sol, a ghost (the physicalization of his neglected and forgotten culture), confronts Aníbal, he falls in love with her. Cloud Tectonics maps Aníbal’s long forgotten cultural heritage within himself. Understanding Cloud Tectonics as a magical realist text drastically affects the way one reads and interprets the play. Specifically, when viewing Cloud Tectonics through the lens of hybridity/border crossing and politicized ghosts, common traits in magical realist texts, the cultural importance of this play becomes much clearer.

Magical realist texts, in combining the fantastic and the commonplace, explore hybridity and border crossing. For the purposes of this paper hybridity refers to the coexistence of multiple culturally-created realities. Hybridity is therefore the interaction, communication, and coexistence of multiple cultural influences – even if they contradict each other. Accepting the notion of hybridity means to denounce the centrality of and to question the very existence of a monoculture in today’s society. On the same note, for the purposes of this paper a border refers to any place where at least two divergent modes of living and/or thinking come together; these modes can refer to but are not limited to different countries, languages, mythologies, socio-economics statuses, or any aspect of cultural understandings. Border zones, places where borders converge, are by nature conversation locations where people expose themselves to and confront different cultural understandings.

Cloud Tectonics could only have taken place in Los Angeles, the 21st century urban embodiment of hybridity. Los Angeles contains countless histories, peoples, and traditions that often contradict one another. Echo Park, a short distance from downtown Los Angeles where the play takes place, represents a complex border within the city of the “fallen angels.”

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5 Borrowing from Wendy B. Faris’s definition of a magical realist text as “presenting magical qualities in the same matter-of-fact and detailed way that it tells ordinary events,” from page 45 of her book Ordinary Enchantments. Faris’s definition seems to be the most concise and straightforward definition; for a similar but different definition and a more thorough and detailed exploration of magical realism, see Amaryll Beatrice Chanady’s Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy. Furthermore, while hybridity and border crossing are not identical, they are intricately related: one cannot assume qualities of several cultures without crossing a border, encountering a border crosser, or entering a border zone.

6 For a further discussion on hybridity as a contradiction, read Guillermo Gomez-Peña’s Dangerous Border Crossers, specifically pages 11-12.

7 See the opening quote from Guillermo Gomez-Peña’s New World Border, page 12.

8 For more on border zones as conversations, see C. Carr’s On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century, specifically page 195.
Hybridity and Border Crossing

In the world of *Cloud Tectonics*, places and people become border zones, liminal spaces in between locations and times, but these people and places never exist in their own time or place. Hybrid characters struggle with their own multiple coexisting realities. In *Cloud Tectonics*, hybrid circumstances and border zone encounters raise questions about and issues of the culturally specific past, of collective memory, and cultural identity.

Aníbal de la Luna, in his state of hybridity, purposefully crosses many borders. In the beginning of the play, Aníbal has forgotten much of his rich cultural heritage. Aníbal has estranged himself from the most direct link to his cultural past, his family. We hear only one mention of Aníbal’s mother; we know nothing about where she is now nor when he’s seen her last. Furthermore, we know nothing about Aníbal’s father, and we know that Aníbal hasn’t seen his brother in six years. When he tries to tell Celestina about all of the different culturally significant food from his past, he stumbles and cannot remember what they’re called. When he tells stories about his past, Aníbal again can’t recall specifics, all the while questioning and contradicting himself. Aníbal has also forgotten Spanish, retaining only “coño.” When pressed as to how he could forget Spanish, Aníbal tells Celestina merely, “Sometimes…I don’t know…you forget things…” (Rivera 39). Nelson even comments about this, telling Aníbal, “You have no memory” (50). It’s true. Aníbal has forgotten his past and cannot recall it on his own.

Aníbal and his “multi-named” girlfriend purposefully chose to leave their New York home and embrace certain aspects of the Euro-American/Los Angeles culture around them, thereby neglecting aspects of their Puerto Rican heritage. Aníbal makes no qualms about this change: “We decided that night to go to Los Angeles together and start over. Be in the one city where you can really remake yourself…I wanted to get away from the racists who thought of me only as a spik” (42). Aníbal wants to leave his past, wants to start his life over ignoring everything before him, and wants to be seen as something over than a “spik.” Aníbal wants the world not to see him as Puerto Rican. Aníbal’s girlfriend takes this idea even further, changing her name from Epifania Niguayoa Gonzalez to Debbie Shapiro. It is important to notice that while “Debbie” works for Disney, a company that remakes stories, history, and mythology in a

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9 Border zones are always liminal spaces; for further discussion on this, see John Kraniauskas’s article “Hybridity in a Transnational Frame.”
specifically Euro-American mentality, there are no aspects of the Puerto Rican mythologies, histories, or past in Aníbal and Debbie’s apartment. Even the food Aníbal cooks – quesadilla’s, using only tortillas, cheese, salsa, and guacamole – are all tempered Euro-American accepted aspects of his Puerto Rican heritage.¹⁰

Yet Aníbal struggles with his own hybridity.¹¹ He makes a point to tell Celestina that he is ashamed of forgetting Spanish. Aníbal goes out of his way to associate himself physically with his heritage. When he speaks of looking up at fearful, “First Class” passengers as they’re taking off, Aníbal says, “and there we are, making split-second eye contact and suddenly that faceless male in her dreamworld has a pair of eyes…and they are vivid eyes, and they are Puerto Rican eyes, and they are my eyes, Celestina” (17). In this moment, Aníbal crosses many borders: racial borders, socio-economic borders, borders between physical plains of existence. The first thing Aníbal wants that “passenger” to see is his cultural heritage, his Puerto Rican specific eyes. Although Aníbal is doubly othered, uncomfortable with the Euro-American and the Puerto Rican aspects of his hybridity, his cultural pride, though dormant, does exist.¹²

Nelson, Aníbal’s brother, differently struggles with his state of hybridity. When the audience first encounters Nelson, he is very much in communication with both his historical Latino cultural past and the Euro-American cultural present surrounding him.¹³ Nelson moves effortlessly between Spanish and English, saying to Celestina’s unborn child, “You come outta this deep night you’re in, hijo de mi alma, see my big-ass smile, you’re gonna know what sunshine is!” (36). Even his name, combining the Euro and the Puerto Rican to create Nelson de la Luna, reinforces Nelson’s hybridity, something new that carries with it a little of both cultures. Physically, Nelson simultaneously embodies the Euro-American aspects of his self – full army uniform complete with army boots and dog tags – and his Latino heritage – his “little moustache”

¹⁰ This is a very prominent theme in Latino theatre, and carries with it its own interesting baggage and plurality that would require more space than I am able to dedicate to it in this essay. For further reading on the implications of and history behind Latinos/as rejecting the ideologies of their cultural past in favor of the dominant culture in Latin American theatre, see Luis A. Ramos-Garcia’s The State of Latino Theatre in the United States, specifically pages 68-70.
¹¹ For further discussion on turbulent transitional identities and their relationship with hybridity and border crossing, see C. Carr’s book On Edge, specifically his chapter “Rediscovering America.”
¹² Much has been discussed about the relationship between othering and border crossing. Obviously, when one enters into a new and different cultural atmosphere, there will be a distancing and a loss of certain norms. For an in-depth discussion on border-crossing, hybridity, and othering, see Jean-Pierre Durix’s Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discourse, specifically page 157.
¹³ For more on this idea of cultural identity as a communication with the past, again see C. Carr’s book On Edge, specifically his chapter “Rediscovering America.”
Nelson in many ways embodies the Euro-American culture, and exhibits numerous aspects of the traditional, ideal Euro-American life. He is married and going through a divorce. He curses constantly. He is excited to join the army, the one institution that requires a loss of personal self and personal past in becoming the homogeneous “army of one,” though he doesn’t fully understand why he’s fighting. Yet Nelson maintains a large amount his cultural machismo, evident in his constant questioning of Aníbal’s masculinity while conversely proving his own. The first time we see him, it is Nelson, not Aníbal, who connects to and understands Celestina. Nelson physically soothes and connects to Celestina when she is in pain, kneeling before her and rubbing her stomach. It is Nelson who can hear the unborn child in Celestina: “Stars being scraped against the sky!” (35).

When he returns from the war, however, Nelson is a very different person; Nelson loses the connections he once had to his cultural past, and rejects everything from his past. He no longer has a moustache, nor does he proudly wear his army uniform instead hiding medals he won in his pockets. While he still curses and questions Aníbal’s masculinity, it is less frequent and lacks the energy and exuberance it had before, his words “lack his spirit” (48). Instead of understanding and relating to Celestina as he did before, she now confuses and enrages him. The hands that once soothed and eased pain now only cause pain. Nelson’s playful roughhousing from the first meeting now become violent. Since his first appearance in the play, Nelson has crossed borders and entered into cultures and situations he did not intend to encounter: war cultures, death cultures, moral and spiritual destructive situations. As is want to happen when we cross new borders and encounter new cultures, Nelson has retained much of that which he encountered. He struggles with his new hybrid identity unable to come to terms with the new person he’s become, saying “I’m sorry, bro. I’m not myself. Something in myself got taken out sometime as I was watching things blow up. Jesus, shit! I have so much to forget!” (56). In reality, it is not that something was removed from Nelson, but something added; it is not that he is not himself, but that he has not yet come to terms with the new self he has become. So he rejects himself, and will try to create a new self. Just like Aníbal before him, Nelson decides to forget his past: “I have so much to forget!” (56).

**Ghosts and Ghosting**
Ghosts, presenting themselves in countless ways, frequently occur in magical realist texts. On a literal level, ghosts represent magical realism as a combination of the fantastic and the mundane. Ghosts are also border crossers, out of place wherever they haunt, and their appearance among the living further emphasizes the hybridity of that world. On a symbolic level, ghosts exemplify the culturally specific ways magical realism questions “the nature of reality and the nature of [reality’s] representation” (Zamora 500). Ghosts act as carries of tradition and cultural history, as embodiments of societal collective memories, as natural or primordial forces exacting themselves onto a colonizing industrial society, as representations of the oppressed, repressed, and the forgotten.14 Ghosts, according to Lois Parkinson Zamora, can also reiterate and intensify specific cultural problems or histories, making ghosts highly political even beyond their questioning and undermining the colonial, rational view of the world.15

Celestina acts as a ghost in Cloud Tectonics; she carries with her the shared history and cultural memory of the past that Aníbal has neglected. Aníbal’s encounter with her reignites the communication with his cultural past, and invites him to fall in love with his history all over again. Because of Celestina’s apparition, Aníbal is able to reconnect with his disregarded, abandoned past.

Celestina does much to represent this cultural past, this shared collective memory, that Aníbal has chosen to overlook. She carries with her the heritage of cultural music, talking about dancing boleros. She discusses the cultural aspects of religion, making references to the mystical nature of Latin American Catholicism: “They [her parents] thought I was cursed! They really did! ...Papi used to cross himself when he looked at me. Mami wouldn’t breast feed me. They kept eighteen statues of Jesus Christ in my room” (12-3). Only through contact and dialogue with Celestina, connecting to and interacting with his cultural past, does Aníbal remember his history. It is through Celestina’s prodding and help that Aníbal remembers tostones, lechon asado, and manteca. Only through communication with Celestina does Aníbal recall with more clarity the music of Willie Colon and the past life he left behind. While Aníbal cannot remember the past, Celestina, as the personification of that specific past, cannot forget it: “I remember

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14 For further information into Lois Parkinson Zamora’s theories and arguments on ghosts and their relationship to magical realism, see her essay “Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in U.S. and Latin American Fiction.”

15 Stephen M. Hart also discusses the politicized nature of ghosts in magical realism frequently. For his views on ghosts and their relationship to the political in these texts, see the introduction to his book, A Companion to Magical Realism and his essay “Magical Realism in the Americas: Politicized Ghosts in One Hundred Years of Solitude, The House of Spirits, and Beloved".
every moment of that night” (65). Of course Celestina remembers that night, remembers the past; she is the embodiment of the past. She recalls every night and forgets nothing. Whereas Aníbal constantly questions his own past and his own memory, Celestina never questions her memory or ponders what has happened to her.

Celestina also acts an ancient, primordial ghost. Throughout the play Celestina presents her sexuality, rejects restrained societal norms, and challenges the culturally created society surrounding Aníbal. Celestina recounts that in her home in Montauk she would “make love to myself over and over” (12). She removes all personal boundaries, inviting or perhaps demanding that Aníbal, a stranger she only met earlier that night, rub her feet, kiss her toes, and then kiss all the way up her body. She reiterates time and time again her sexual desires and the pleasure and joy she gets from every aspect of sex; “I think about sex all the time…I love the word sex and if I could fuck fuck fuck all day I would!” (18). These urges eventually prompt Aníbal to, in a moment of passion, kiss Celestina on the lips. But Aníbal, constrained by the restrictions of the dominant Euro-American culture he has adopted, immediately apologizes and makes excuses for his actions. This is consistent with Aníbal’s nature. Earlier, Aníbal expressed that instead of intimate relationships, “friendship between the sexes is not only possible, it’s preferable. Makes everything cleaner” (16-7). Even Celestina’s stage directions portray her as a creature of appetite, avoiding constructed rules of etiquette she eats, “hungrily, savoring each bite” (1).

Rivera doesn’t attempt to hide or cover up this description of Celestina, but instead embraces it. Her touch, literally contacting the spiritual world of the past, carries with it an, “instant and electrifying effect on Aníbal” (69). Celestina carries with her religious, spiritual significance for Nelson. Nelson equates repeating Celestina’s name to the protective power of repeating the rosary. He used to say her name, “like a prayer, and you know that was the only thing that kept [me alive] …The unbearable luck of her name” (52). Rivera clearly intends Celestina to be seen as magical and otherworldly. The stage directions describe Celestina in her nightgown as “more unearthly, more angelic than ever” (40). Celestina even points out her own ghostliness: “And if these people don’t progress through space and “time” the same way you do? They don’t age smoothly. They stay a little longer than they should” (23). In describing herself, Celestina defines herself as a ghost.

Not only do these descriptions further demonstrate the hybridity of this world, with rational and magical realities coexisting, but they also reveal Celestina as a walking border zone.
In stopping time, Celestina carries with her a border zone, a place not the past yet not the present. She exists in a place outside of time, and everything around her enters into that liminal border zone around her, especially Aníbal.

To further complicate Aníbal’s hybrid state, Aníbal is doubly reborn at the end of *Cloud Tectonics* through his interactions with the ghostly Celestina. First, Aníbal is reborn as a man in open dialogue with his cultural past. Aníbal recites Celestina’s speech showing that he remembers not only Spanish, but its deeply personal significance. While still confused and mesmerized by her, Aníbal comprehends Celestina, explaining as best he can what she is,

That Celestina del Sol was from a world I would never understand. That sometimes Nature improvises…And that trying to understand such a life, and why love matters to it, why a god [Celestina] would need to be loved too, was like trying to understand the anatomy of the wind or the architecture of silence or cloud tectonics. (70)

Aníbal presents us a woman not just spiritual and ghostlike, though she is those things, but a woman who represents and embodies history, the past, and memory. Aníbal now has a greater connection with that cultural past as he keeps in contact and lives in close proximity to his brother, Nelson. Also, Aníbal represents the surrogate father to Celestina’s child, Aníbal del Sol y la Luna, proving Aníbal’s legacy will continue alongside his cultural history and memory, represented by the mother, Celestina. Second, Aníbal is reborn as the younger Aníbal, Celestina’s child. Aníbal is now a hybrid child of both his former reluctance to and resentment towards his own cultural past and Celestina’s personification of the cultural past. Again Aníbal has the choice to relive his life with the connection to that shared communal memory that is Celestina; he has been given another chance to live with a close relationship to and open dialogue with his cultural past, whom he fell in love with in one night.

*Cloud Tectonics*, like many magical realist texts, relies heavily on ghosting characters and hybridity/border crossing to tell its culturally specific story. In *Cloud Tectonics*, it is only through Celestina, the representative of the communal cultural past, that Aníbal can reconnect with his abandoned past and regain even the smallest bit of his cultural memory. Rivera creates in *Cloud Tectonics* a parable of hope for the future, linked to a very specific culture, and time, and place.
Works Cited


Chapter 3: Praxis

Page-to-Stage: Conceiving and Developing the Simultaneously Ordinary and Fantastic World of Cloud Tectonics

“It [theatre] cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, “live” communion.”

Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*

“…reality is theatrical, in the very best sense of the word. When a director (whom I distrusted in any event) once described the behavior he envisioned for a certain play as being “bigger than life,” I challenged him with, “Do you mean phony?” I truly believe that there is *nothing* larger than life. How often do we greet an extraordinary event with the comment “If we saw that on the stage, we wouldn’t believe it”?”

Uta Hagen, *A Challenge for the Actor*

“When they reproach the contemporary theatre for its kitchen sink and cruelties, this, honourably, is what they are trying to say. They remember how during the war the romantic theatre, the theatre of colours and sounds, of music and movement, came like water to the thirst of dry lives. At that time it was called escape and yet the word was only partially accurate. It was an escape, but also a reminder: a sparrow in a prison cell.”

Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*

This chapter will discuss the journey moving from the theoretical and analytical world into the production world: moving from the page to the stage. Up until this point, this thesis has dealt with background information on and theoretical interpretations about Cloud Tectonics. While invaluable, that information is only beneficial if utilized in production. The question then becomes: how? How do I use that historical and theoretical research to develop a thought-provoking, complex, and insightful production? This chapter will explore what my production
concept was, and investigate how that concept connected to the theory and history relevant to *Cloud Tectonics*, how I intended that concept to be developed. That production concept carried the entire production team through the design process. Additionally, this chapter will detail the entire design evolution, and the rationale behind those design choices.

**Production Concept**

After reviewing all my research, I knew my production concept would have to include two key elements: love and duality. Though hardly ever stated in the play, *Cloud Tectonics* is, if nothing else, a love story. Love, the effect of love, the ramifications of love, and the process of continuing to love had to be central to this production. Also, this production needed to address the coexistence of multiple realities inherent in this play. It was extremely important that this production not come across as two different, disjointed plays: a realistic play about a man working at LAX, and a fantastical play about a woman existing outside of time. The mundane and magical moments had to work together cohesively.

These two vastly different world perspectives are, after all, the same reality. The magical reality of Celestina and the ordinary reality of Aníbal are one and the same. As a production team, we needed to continually think about these two worlds not as separate and disparate, but as jointed and unified: two sides to the same coin. In the end, I presented my designers with two overarching production questions, and a production concept. The three statements were as follows:

How can love survive in a broken, disjointed world?

What is the nature of love in this troubled, fractured world?

Commonplace Magic:
This play needs to be magical, but the magic needs to be as ordinary as a couch sitting in a living room, or using a fork to eat food, or falling in love in one night. In every aspect of this play, we need to combine the normal and the everyday with the magical and the fantastic…and we need to do it in a way where they seem to fit together as if they belong together because in this world the mundane and the wonderful DO BELONG
TOGETHER. The sets, the costumes, the lighting, the music, the acting, the blocking, everything has to include this idea of the natural combination of the ordinary and the majestic.

Simultaneous Realities. \(^{16}\)

Taken together, these three statements would guide all major decisions throughout the entire production process.

It was very important for the production team to view the world of this production as containing simultaneous realities. This idea, in praxis, reinforces the theoretical multiplicity of identity, including concerns such as perspective on reality, history, and “truth” which magical realism is based. It was our task, then, to find the intersections between these realities and present them on stage. What are the connections, both theoretical and in praxis, between the destruction and devastation of early-nineties Los Angeles and the beauty, serenity, and hope Rivera presents in *Cloud Tectonics*? What elements connect these worlds? What shapes, colors, textures, sounds, and movements are present in each of these worlds?

Knowing our audience and using them as a guide would help direct and focus our choices throughout the process. My intention was always to pull the audience into the emotion and action of the story. If this production shunned the audience or pushed them away, it would alienate (instead of welcoming) the audience from the hope that ultimately comes from love surviving. This production needed to create emotional connections and emotional vulnerability wherever possible. There were several moments in particular that, starting from the very first production meeting, we noted as crucial moments in which to engage the audience. It was also very important that there was, like the script required, real cooking onstage. Anything that can grab the audiences sensorial attention will continue to connect with the audience. Not only was the cooking a great way to add specific cultural elements to this production, it also provided another avenue to foster connections with the audience. The most important moment was the magical bed scene. At this pivotal moment towards the end of the play, Aníbal and Celestina make love for two years. Though brief, this encounter is the climax of the play, and the fullest most complete representation of “the love of a lifetime” (Rivera 71). That moment had to invite

\(^{16}\) These quotations are all from the powerpoint presentation I gave to my design team at the first design meeting. This powerpoint presentation can be found in my supplemental materials.
the audience -- emotionally, visually, and aurally -- into the beauty, grandeur, and hope that love can provide.

In addition to the scenic moments, there were two other elements that warranted early consideration: sound and movement. Sound would also play a key role in subtly drawing the audience in throughout the performance. From day one the design team began brainstorming how and when music/sound could continue and create this welcoming, enticing atmosphere. Finally, dance and movement would play an extremely important role in drawing the audience in. Movement is often able to present ideas and themes in a more subtle, stylistic way that excite, mystify, and seduce the audience. These moments were all extremely important in connecting the audience to our production of *Cloud Tectonics*.

The task ultimately became finding concrete ways of producing these ideas. How do we take these themes and intents from the production concept and turn them into a reality that we can see, feel, touch, smell, and hear? While the design team had the task of finding ways to combine the magical and the ordinary in a cohesive way in their own fields, it was my task to find acting techniques for the performers that could manifest both worlds of this production, and then find places of intersection to use both in the production.

**Performative Connections Between the Two Worlds**

While there are numerous 19th and 20th Western century acting techniques, there are two basic, aesthetic categories in which these techniques can be placed: representational and presentational. In presenting these two, coexisting worlds onstage, I thought it extremely important to explore and develop both presentational and representational techniques with the performers. My goal was to find the basic underlying principles between these two essentialized acting modes, find the similarities between them, and find specific ways and moments I could combine and connect these modes onstage.

I wanted the audience to experience both worlds of *Cloud Tectonics*: Aníbal’s world grounded in 19th century pragmatism, and Celestina’s culturally specific magical realist world. Therefore, this production of *Cloud Tectonics* exists on the border. I relied upon realist acting conventions to clarify and constantly remind the audience that these worlds, where time can stands still and beds can “float” onstage, was indeed reality. It became necessary to explore
these two seminal approaches to performance as context for a hybrid, “bordered” production of *Cloud Tectonics*.\(^{17}\)

Representational acting techniques have dominated the Western stage for at least 130 years. Proponents of these techniques include Constantin Stanislavski (born 1863), Lee Strasberg (1901), Stanford Meisner (1905), and Uta Hagen (1919). Though each scholar-practitioner varies their specific acting model or acting theory, all representational acting modes share several key elements. First and foremost, these techniques attempt to recreate a theatre that is based in 19th century pragmatism. Representational acting also tends to be text-based, relying heavily on a playwright to provide cues for transitions and emotions. Lastly, representational acting relies heavily on psychology and thus the inner-life of the character.

In general, representational acting requires that the actor’s own personality, “‘vanishes inside’ his character and the fictional circumstances on stage” (Watson 308). The ideal is for the actor to, “…be transported by a real experience while portraying a character” (Hagen 47). These acting styles require the performer to have a firm grasp on every element of the fictitious life of the character the performer portrays. Uta Hagen explains the “correct” way for an actor to prepare:

> Let’s assume you have rehearsed correctly, are in tune with the character’s needs, have particularized the circumstances and surroundings, defined your relationship to the others, and that all your senses are selectively alert to what moves in on you so that you are involved in the specific conflicts of the scene. (108)

The emphasis is placed heavily on understanding and exploring the material elements of the character’s fictitious world, including great amounts of background information and grounded details on the characters needs and wants. In this way, representational acting has often been described as a process of building a character, “from the inside out” (Hagen 47).

As we can see, representational acting also places a heavy emphasis on psychology and understanding the “inner life” of the character. These techniques, “entail the development of insight into human motivations and the intersection of psychology and behavior” (Hagen 50). This emphasis on human psychology greatly influenced the beginning of Western

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\(^{17}\) See my reflection, page 72, for further discussion on how this production existed on the border.
representational acting traditions, and continues to be greatly influenced by contemporary understandings of psychology.

As we know, Stanislavsky’s discoveries were based on his understanding of how the great realistic actors applied the psychology of human struggles and drives…We cannot ignore the findings of the many behavioral psychologists that have come to our attention since [Stanislavsky’s] death, nor, perhaps even more importantly, the writings of contemporary philosophers and authors who have helped us to understand ourselves, so that we may put ourselves to work in the illumination of the human soul. (Hagen 46)

Representational acting primarily emphasizes an attempt to recreate everyday life onstage by understanding how these fictitious characters would think and feel in their fictitious surroundings.

There have also been several very influential Western, 20th century presentational acting scholar-practitioners. These individuals include Jerzy Grotowski (1933), Peter Brook (1925), and Jacques Copeau (1879). Though they differ in very distinct ways, they too all share several key elements. The performative intent for presentational performers to present themselves in stylistic, symbolic, and/or gestural ways that do not attempt to recreate real-life on stage. In these approaches to performance, emphasis is placed on movement and the body instead of the mind encoded in a written text. Therefore, presentational performances are often created or heavily dependent upon improvisations and rely on bodily-based reactions. Presentational acting techniques are often highly ritualized and attempt to attain or reflect religious, spiritual, or philosophical depths in the theatre.

Presentational acting requires the performer to, “express, through sound and movement, those impulses which waver on the borderline between dream and reality” (Grotowski 35). The presentational performers are “more concerned with self-revelation than portraying a character in fictitious circumstances” (Watson 311). Presentational performers are also, “not concerned with an exploration of text, the playwright’s ruling idea, or bringing a character to ‘life’” (Watson 312). Presentational acting actively rejects the objective truth of realism. Grotowski argues that,
The forms of common “natural” behavior obscure the truth…At a moment of psychic shock, a moment of terror, of mortal danger or tremendous joy, a man does not behave “naturally.” (17)

These acting modes also reject the objectivity of the thinking performer, and of psychology in performance. Peter Brook bluntly states in his experimental work with Vsevolod Meyerhold’s bio-mechanical techniques, “We were denying psychology” (52). Jerzy Grotowski further explains,

…we are attempt to eliminate [the actor’s] organism’s resistance to the psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. (16)

The goal is for impulse and immediate bodily action to replace thought.

Instead of relying on psychology, presentational acting relies heavily on the human body and movement of the body to interest and draw the audience into the performance. Grotowski sees his performances as simplifying theatre to its basic requirements: an audience and performers. Without what Grotowski would call the superficial trappings of the rich, bourgeoisie theatre -- such as lights, electronic sound effects, elaborate costumes, and sets -- Grotowski’s poor theatre approach places all its focus on the performer and what he/she can do with his/her body. “An actor is a man who works in public with his body, offering it publicly” (Grotowski 33). Presentational acting can, therefore, become extremely physically demanding, often requiring a significant amount of training in order that the body is able to perform as one wishes.

Years of work and of specially composed exercises (which, by means of physical, plastic and vocal training, attempt to guide the actor towards the right kind of concentration) sometimes permit the discovery of the beginning of this road…the requisite state of mind is a passive readiness to realize an active role, a state in which one does not “want to do that” but rather “resigns from not doing it.” (Grotowski 17)

Through this strenuous training, the objective is to free the body to move without over-analysis.
The distance between Grotowski or Brook and the average Miami student is enormous. Therefore, this production of *Cloud Tectonics* needed to very clearly demonstrate a perspective of reality that is not shared by the majority of our (Miami) audience. I relied on presentational acting to create an alternative viewpoint, and stretch the audience’s perception of “truth.”

A extremely challenging task as director in the area of performance was to find fluid, natural connections between the representational acting techniques and presentational acting techniques. Again, I wanted the fantastic elements to feel like they fit with the ordinary elements in the production. Neither acting mode should dominate the other, nor should the production feel like two different shows stuck together. To avoid that binary feeling, I looked at the similarities, differences, and confluences between these modes within moments of performance.

The most important similarity between these two modes is the importance each places on the audience, specifically their shared view on audience engagement and on the importance of catharsis. Aristotle defines catharsis as “the proper purgation of these emotions [fear and pity]” (61). While controversial and rejected by such Western 20th century scholar-practitioners as Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal, catharsis remains the primary thrust of many representational and presentational acting theories. The challenge for theatre-artists in performance is to affect the audience so greatly that they are emotionally “purged.” This result is often highly valued by representational theatre-makers, with the intent or knowledge that, “the audience’s catharsis is a real experience prompted by known fiction” (Watson 310). Though less common amongst presentational theatre-artists, many stylistic, presentational performers and theorists, including both Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, are “concerned with altering the audience’s affective state, with achieving catharsis” (Auslander 16). Grotowski says his performances “…culminates in climax. It brings relief” (38).

The importance of the performer-spectator relationship, though varying, is stressed in both presentational and representational modes of performance. The intended audience response in realistic theatrical productions is for a passive connection. By passive, I mean that the audience “takes no active part in the direct and conscious communication between those in the stage reality” (Watson 308). That does not mean the audience is not engaged in the stage business. On the contrary, the audience,
…can still be caught up in the flow of the stage action. It can be transported out of its ordinary reality -- as an audience sitting in a theatre watching actors perform -- into a temporary acceptance of the stage fiction as reality. This transportation often leads to a climactic peak which evokes, and is part of, a cathartic experience. (Watson 309)

Presentational modes of performance can range from the audience maintaining a passive engagement -- like in representational realism -- to performances where audience members become the performers. Regardless of this range, however, there remains an invitation for audience involvement in some way, shape, or form. Grotowski explains:

The spectator understands, consciously or unconsciously, that such an act is an invitation to him to do the same thing…The member of the audience who accepts the actor’s invitation and to a certain extent follows his example by activating himself in the same way, leaves the theatre in a state of greater inner harmony. (37 and 46)

This invitation, whether explicit or implicit, was necessary for this production Cloud Tectonics if the audience was to be emotionally connected to the play, and leave the theatre with a “greater inner harmony.”

Though vastly different in several ways, Presentational and representational acting modes similarly engage the audience. Multiple scholar-practitioners within both modes stress the importance for the performance to be for the audience. Proponents of both presentational and representational acting models argue against anything merely for the performers own gratification; several scholars have written about the dangers of and problems inherent in self-gratifying, indulgent art. Hagen says,

…when, in the actor’s hunt for an emotional experience, he uses the emotion for its own sake, indulging in it, displaying it rather than using it as a springboard to find and feed the selected actions of his character in the given circumstances, he is confusing feeling with doing. (48)
Similarly, when discussing Grotowski’s theatre Watson says it is, “not enough for an actor to experience self-discovery [for Grotowski]: he has to be able to articulate the process to an audience” (312). Also, most all theatre practitioners acknowledge the problematic dualistic nature of the passive audience. Peter Brook explains,

The actor’s work is never for an audience, yet always is for one. The onlooker is a partner who must be forgotten and still constantly kept in mind: a gesture is a statement, expression, communication, and a private manifestation of loneliness -- it is what Artaud calls a signal through the flames -- yet this implies a shared experience, once contact is made. (51)

These divergent viewpoints on theatre generally share a basic concern for audience involvement and the necessity for a live audience in order for theatre to occur.

As previously discussed in my original production meeting, the relationship between the audience and the performance was very important to my production of Cloud Tectonics. My objective in bringing the audience into the emotion of the play would ideally result in a cathartic experience for the audience. Given the density of the text, the communicative relationship between the audience and the performance was extremely important to this production, and needed to be echoed in both the representational and presentational modes of performance.

Keeping the audience’s perception and reaction in mind, it then became my responsibility to find ways within the magical realist world of the play, to bridge the gap between representational and presentational acting, between the performance worlds of realism and stylized movement. It became extremely important to set up the audience’s expectations for both worlds as early in the performance as possible. If I presented examples of both modes of acting early in the play, then the audience would be prepared for and more readily accept both performance styles as “truth.” Also, myself and the cast needed to find moments to highlight each world. Though based strongly in the familiar, popular representational, realist tradition, this production needed to find moments to highlight presentational, stylized movement onstage to encourage multiple perspectives on reality. Lastly, it would be important for the production to find key moments to present both stylized and naturalistic acting on stage at the same time. Though these moments would be rare, they would be necessary to show these worlds as
simultaneous realities and not value one world over the other. Ultimately, truth would be seen in both the concrete and the spiritual realities, as it was for Aníbal.

**Design and Production Process**

Just as it was important that I develop acting techniques for the performers to blend the magical and the ordinary worlds together onstage, it was necessary for the design team to find ways of blending these worlds in their respective design fields.¹⁸ It was their responsibilities to conduct their specific research to create the necessary simultaneous realities:¹⁹ What are the presentational and representational worlds for each design element? Where are the connections between the representational and the presentational? How can these two worlds be combined? How can expectations for each be presented in production? What moments in the play need to be presentational, representational, or some combination of each? It was my responsibility to guide the designers throughout the process so our production would be cohesive and unified. This section will chronicle *Cloud Tectonics*’ design and production journey. I will also discuss my collaborative philosophy and how I implemented that philosophy, my original prompts for each design element at the first design meeting, and describe briefly the voyage and outcome for each design element.

The theatrical arts are communal arts. It is not my responsibility to conceive every detail and make every choice for this production. On the contrary, I would be doing a great disservice to the production if I attempted to make every choice. As director, it is my job to create a clear vision for the production. I highly respect and value my design team’s artistic sensibilities and judgments. It is not my job to tell my production team how to do their work, but to set us all on the same path and guide us together towards a cohesive production. Very early in the design process, I invited the entire production team over to my house for a read-through of *Cloud Tectonics*. This went very slowly, by design, and any member of the design team could stop at any point to or ask questions or make comments of any kind. The intent of the read-through was that a member of the design team would stop at a moment that stood out to him/her for whatever

¹⁸ The design team was composed of the following members: Shiree Campbell was both the scenic designer and the costume designer, Mike Warden was the lighting designer, and Sara Ribar began the process as sound designer, though was eventually replaced by Jay Rozema.

¹⁹ Just as there are representational and presentational acting theories throughout the centuries in the Western theatre, there have been representational and presentational design theories as well. For example, early Renaissance designers were representational designers, whereas the modernists Adolphe Appia (1862) and Edward Gordon Craig (1872) were presentational designers.
reason, and we could discuss that moment. For example: when we came to the first moment when Celestina is alone onstage after first entering Aníbal’s house, I told the production team I wanted to extend and amplify this moment. The designers then threw out ideas about what they saw or heard in this new moment. Questions arose: What does stopping time sound look? Do we hear heartbeats, waterfalls, or metronomes at this moment? What does stopping time look like? What are the shadows in this moment, what colors and at what speeds? This collaborative reading greatly helped put us all on the same page, and gave everyone a voice in our creative discussion and process.

When I first discussed the scenic elements with the set designer, senior Shiree Campbell, I focused very heavily on the specific time and place of Cloud Tectonics: Los Angeles in 1995. I gave a powerpoint presentation during the first design meeting, and I showed several images of L.A. in destruction from that time period: earthquakes damage, collapsed buildings, and riots in the streets. I juxtaposed these images with beautiful contemporary paintings. Specifically, I showed the triptych painting “Echo Park Lake” by Chicano artist Carlos Almaraz. I told Shiree that I wanted the set to somehow combine the broken, disjointed outside world of L.A. with the world magical, fantastic world inside the apartment. I also told her how important it was for the opening of the play to involve creation and destruction in some way. While Rivera’s script calls for Aníbal’s apartment to be set-up during the prologue in a very specific manner, our production did not have to follow these guidelines. We did, however, have to include the idea of creating the world of the play during the prologue in some manner. Similarly, the floating, magic bed did not need to float. However, it did need to be magical, obviously set apart from the rest of the set and special in some distinct way, though still connected to and springing from the rest of the set. I told Shiree that I saw the scenic elements of Cloud Tectonics as a struggle a haven, an escape, and a return; the scenic elements should give the emotional impression of a worn-in shoe, or a wonderful but forgotten landscape.

Shiree really took to and ran with the images from my powerpoint. She used several images, some I used and some she gathered herself, and created a large collage as inspiration for her set design. In her image research she found the colors, shapes, and textures of her destructive images and her magical images were eerily similar: bright oranges, soft reds, popping blues, long edges, and flowing curves. She decided to incorporate these elements into her set design. Also
in her image research, she found an image of a cosmic nebula that ended up guiding most of her choices for the set design.

While early on we had some difficulty in finding the right equilibrium between representational and presentational set design, eventually we came to a balance. Though the set had all the furniture and set dressing of a realistic set, Shiree added a stylized floor pattern and back-wall pattern to remove any expectations for strict realism. She also added a chain-link fence on the back wall in an attempt to connect the internal apartment to the external world of urban L.A. After playing with several options for the bed (including a rolling unit that could enter from the wings, or an inflatable air-mattress that sprang up from the floor), we settled on a wall unit that would appear to be the sink and window for the majority of the play, but could fold down into a bed during the magical bed scene. I really loved this idea because this miraculous bed was always present on stage, a part of the *Cloud Tectonics* world, yet the audience was never aware it existed until it is revealed. Shiree also posed a great idea for the prologue. When the audience entered the theatre, the stage would be in complete disarray with pieces of rubble strewn about the stage. The idea was for the set to resemble an earthquake-ravaged apartment. During the prologue, stage-hands would enter, remove the rubble, and fix the apartment until it resembled an ordinary, representational apartment. I really liked the way this created the world of the play, while establishing expectations for a stylized, presentational, flexible set right from the beginning.

Shiree pulled double-duty, serving as costume designer as well as set designer. I wanted the costumes to show the struggle and the daily grind of each character’s life as well as the magical components of Rivera’s text. I wanted to juxtapose the tired, worn-down feeling of Aníbal’s work clothes and Celestina’s hitch-hiking attire with the magic of Celestina’s nightgown. I wanted the nightgown, only worn right before and during the magical bed scene, to really bring out the magic of Celestina. I also wanted something in Nelson’s first costume to represent his cultural background. Halfway through the play, Nelson leaves to rejoin the army. He returns two years later having lost his cultural history. I wanted the audience to have some sort of physical, tangible evidence to point to and see Nelson losing that heritage.

While Shiree worked very hard creating a delicate balance between the representational and the presentational in the scenic design, the costume designed remained mostly within representational realism. The costumes ended up very much placing the characters in the
physical time and place of mid-nineties L.A. -- right down to the very authentic type of camouflage in Nelson’s costume that was only used during Operation: Desert Storm. Shiree decided to have, as the script suggests, Nelson possess a large moustache for his first scene and not in his second scene. His dark, large moustache looked quite real, even in the intimate space of Studio 88, and worked nicely as a representation of his soon-to-be-lost cultural heritage. Shiree did slightly stretch reality in the size of Celestina’s pregnancy belly. Even with the larger-than-life belly, however, the intent was to keep everything grounded in the physical-representational reality of nineties L.A..

From the beginning I knew I wanted lighting to play a very large role in Cloud Tectonics, and let the lighting designer, senior Mike Warden, know that from the very beginning. Lighting has the uncanny ability to change mood and tone of a play very quickly, and I wanted Mike to really push the limits of the mundane and the fantastic with his lighting designs. I challenged him early on to explore what passing time would look like in lights, and how lights could whisper in this subtle play. I wanted lights to provide a feeling of escapism for this production, and wanted the lighting design to really accentuate the ideas of hope, love, and beauty that were already present in the script.

The company read-through of Cloud Tectonics was especially helpful for Mike because it took him longer to fully grasp how to implement the production concept. However, after working with myself and Shiree, Mike found several images that helped him focus his design for this production. He really wanted to play up the aspect of celestial bodies for the magical moments in the play, and I believe Shiree’s inspiration-image of the nebula really helped Mike. He added air-particles during the magical bed scene to make the entire space seem filled with stars. Mike played with texture and angles in how he combined the commonplace and the wondrous in Cloud Tectonics.

Similarly to light, I also wanted sound to play a very key role in creating the world of Cloud Tectonics. I challenged my sound designer, senior Sara Ribar, to create an entire soundscape for the show, and to have a running score during nearly the entire performance. I challenged Sara to explore what time sounds like, and how those sounds could softly waft in and out during the production. I wanted the sound to create a bridge between the destructive world outside and the peaceful world in the apartment, and find ways to make connections and blur the
distinctions between those worlds. I also wanted the sound design to really embrace the cultural history of Rivera and Cloud Tectonics.

Unfortunately, Sara was unable to finish the design process. Professor Jay Rozema replaced Sara relatively late in the process. Jay ended up using an acoustic guitar, mostly Latin guitar, as the main sound thrust for the performance. I thought this worked well with the tone and rhythm of the production, as well as connected nicely to the cultural history of Cloud Tectonics. Jay also created news clips about Los Angeles in the early-to-mid-nineties to play in and out of the Latin guitar as the audience entered the space before the show began.

While I was active in shaping and leading the production team throughout the design process, I was very aware of each individuals own artistic worth. I tried my best to give each designer their own voice, while still maintaining a focused and consistent production. By being clear with my production concept from early on, meeting with the production team to read the play, and continually challenging my designers to push the limits of reality, I think we achieved our goal of presenting simultaneous realities.
Works Cited

Chapter 4: Production
Breathing Life into the Script: Using Emotional Vulnerability, Music, and Movement to create the World of Cloud Tectonics

“Acting isn't about finding yourself; it's about reinventing yourself with vulnerability.”

Bill Howey (from Jean Schiffman, “Accessing Your Vulnerability”)

“The main purpose of my method is to uncover and bring to the surface the physically perceptive sensibility which performers had originally, before the theatre acquired its various codified performing styles, and to heighten their innate expressive abilities.”

Tadashi Suzuki, “Culture is the Body”

“When you introduce music, it is like bringing another performer onstage. The individual or group must now deal with another artist’s sense of time, and they’ll need to adjust to it and incorporate it. Music is a partner. And also a great gift, because…music leads to an expansion of possibility.”

Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, The Viewpoints Book, page 95

I consider myself a performers’ director, a collaborative artist, and very much the antithesis of a puppet-master. While it is necessary for me to have a hand in shaping every cohesive moment onstage, it is also necessary for me to allow my fellow artists the freedom to assert their own agency, and to allow their own artistic abilities to be seen in the production. Therefore, I have found that the most effective way to get the best work out of myself and my performers is to create a safe space for them to work and experiment throughout the rehearsal process. This does not mean that I allow my performers to make safe choices. On the contrary, by creating a safe space I have found performers are more likely to experiment and take risks. Mary Ann Hunter states a safe space is,
…conceptualized through the rules of engagement that scaffold the creation of new work and, somewhat paradoxically, invite a greater degree of aesthetic risk. The experimentation encouraged to happen within this kind of space therefore becomes a product of the dynamic tension between known (safe) processes and unknown (risky) outcomes.

In this safe space setting, performers more frequently look beyond the safe and expected choices to more risky movements, positioning, vocal choices, and emotional vulnerability. Only in a free, uninhibited space where the performers are completely confident their choices are respected and heard can uninhibited experimentation exist. My goal, then, is to foster this space, to encourage to push the performers to continue experimenting in this space, and then to mold and shape the choices the actors have created.

Theatre is, if nothing else, about communication: between director and performer, between performers, and most importantly between performers and audience members. My role, then, is also a facilitator of communication. I am a guide, helping lead all my co-collaborators throughout the process. It is my job to engage the performers with the material, to confront them with the challenges and demands of the production, and to aid them in their journey to find their own results. Their voice, their wills, and their desires become the central focus of rehearsal, not mine. My job is to create a safe space and through various modes of communication encourage active performers. Active performers are those who have a hand in creating their characters. Active performers are enthusiastic, are energized, are willing to take risks, and are more willing to face challenges head on. Finally, in our safe space, where communication is paramount, I challenge the active performers to be brave enough to be vulnerable on stage. Only in this vulnerability can we, as a production, invite the audience in to share in the story we create.

In this chapter of the thesis, I will look at the rehearsal process with the performers, and explore my evolving role as director. I will address casting, goals and intentions of rehearsal, as well as the rehearsal process up to production performances. I will explore how we engaged Cloud Tectonics to bring out both the commonplace world, and the world of the fantastic. In summary, this chapter will address how we addressed these different aspects of the play, why, and when in the process.
Casting

The most important aspect of casting Cloud Tectonics, a three-character love story, was chemistry between the performers. This production relied heavily on emotional connections propelling the action of the show. If the audience cared about Cloud Tectonics, they had to care about the performers. For the audience to care about the performers, the performers had to be able to relate to each other in meaningful, compelling, truthful ways. That was no small task. Studio 88 is a small, intimate space. The audience is never further then ten yards away from the performers, and is often as close as a few feet away. In this space, the audience can see every shift in body weight, every sideways glance, and every brief physical encounter onstage. We did not have the luxury of a proscenium arch to hide behind if my performers could not relate to each other. While the space’s intimacy lends itself to audience engagement, any forced interactions between the performers would be clearly read by the audience.

The importance of these connections cannot be minimized. The cast had to gel together in a natural, unforced way from the very beginning. That did not mean that the performer’s relationship became the only criterion for casting. The three characters from Cloud Tectonics are layered, difficult, and complex individuals. Casting, therefore, became a juggling act: how do I find performers who fit the roles and performers that can relate and work with each other in a close, uninhibited way that would read in the intimate space of Studio 88?

Therefore, the play deals heavily with issues of othering amongst its Latino characters. Another issue I had with casting was playing ethnicity on stage. The audience needed to read the performers on stage as “others” or outsiders in some way, but I had to be careful how I “othered” these performers. Jose Rivera has written Latino characters dealing with culturally specific issues of identity, memory, and past. Included in this world are all the culturally specific food, language(s), mannerism, histories, and racial slurs that accompany that cultural reality.

In an ideal world, all three performers would have been Latino; August Wilson would argue this would be the only way to perform such a play. He has been vocally against color-blind casting calling it, “an aberrant idea that has never had any validity other than as a tool of the Cultural Imperialists who view American culture, rooted in the icons of European culture, as beyond reproach in its perfection” (Wilson 29). This production worked hard to not impose American Imperialism onto a play rich in its own cultural past.
However Miami University does not exist in the “real” world but in the “highly selective” university world. In the world of 2007 Miami University, only 9.1% of the undergraduate students identify themselves as “ethnically diverse,” while 85% identify themselves as “white.” Less than 2% of Miami’s 2007 undergraduate population identifies itself as “Hispanic” (“Miami”). The reality that I faced throughout the production was though I reached out to several Latina/o groups on campus, very few Latina performers auditioned, and no Latino men. Some would argue that, given the population of Miami’s campus, a play that calls for such specific ethnicity for the characters should be avoided. However, I fail to see how encouraging and celebrating a history that is far too frequently dismissed on this campus does not benefit the entire Miami community. Instead, we should be excited to share and participate in stories from all backgrounds that make up our community. The question was never: should we perform *Cloud Tectonics*? Instead, the question became: how do we both sensitively and powerfully put on this production with its specific cultural history when the people of that culture are by and large absent from the Oxford/Miami theatre community?

The audition process was quite standard: performers came prepared with two contrasting monologues at open auditions, and I prepared short, cold reading, partnered scenes at callbacks. Partnering became an extremely important aspects of auditions because of the intimate, vulnerable relationships this play required. I tried to pair performers with as many different partners as possible in order to see who worked well with whom. Being such a language intense play, and placing such an emphasis on the poetry of the language, I paid special attention to how performers handled the longer, more poetic passages at callbacks. I called back five women and seven men.

During callbacks I gave the performers prompts before or after their reading to see their range and how they handled direction. These prompts included: “look right at him when you speak this line,” “profess this section as if you are a priest giving a sermon,” “give this line as if it is the last thing you will ever say to your child before you walk off to certain death,” and “say this section as if you’re speaking to a goddess.” Could a performer juggle the flowing, poetic lines with the short, choppy, conversational ones? If not, then I could not cast them, because all three characters need to seem comfortable with both types of lines. I also paid special attention to how the performers moved, and gave the performers specific prompts to keep them aware of their movement. I gave the performers specific places in the room to walk and asked them to
float, glide, tumble, or march their way to those places. I also would give performers a path, and ask them to move to these places with the text, to let the words guide them through the space. This was especially important with the women. It was very important to me that Celestina’s movement’s continued that ethereal, unearthly quality that she possesses, and I needed an actress to embody that from the very beginning.

In the end, I was extremely blessed and cast Alex Homer as Aníbal, Jason Howard as Nelson, and Daniella Briseno as Celestina. These choices presented interesting challenges. as a member of the Miami theatre community, I had encountered each of the performers before and was vaguely aware of each of their strengths and weaknesses. I never pictured Alex as Aníbal. I called him back as Nelson mostly because of his stature and had him read as Nelson with Jason as Aníbal. During callbacks, it became instantly clear that neither were comfortable with the character they were reading, so I asked them to switch parts. Instantly, the necessary brotherly relationship popped out. They were playful with each other, naturally joking and teasing each other in their lines. While Alex didn’t have the exact look I thought I wanted for Aníbal, he did have a warm, inviting presence about him, and carried himself heavily, as if there were things weighing him down in the shoulders and the back. This was ideal for the everyman Aníbal who, though happy, longs for something more in his nine-to-five job loading luggage at LAX. Jason was an ideal fit for Nelson: tall, muscular build, and moved with a sense absolute control and assuredness that Nelson possessed. Both men possessed similar physical attributes, so they could believably be brothers. Daniella also seemed a strong fit for Celestina. Daniella moved fluidly and gracefully during her audition. She seemed comfortable in both the more flowing, poetic sections, as well as the more direct, conversational sections. Importantly, Daniella was bi-racial, and one of the few Latina performers to audition for Cloud Tectonics. Most importantly, Daniella had a strong connection with Alex immediately as they read lines together. At one moment during auditions as Alex looked away from Daniella, Daniella stared at him, smiled, and lightly grazed his fingers his arm, softly caressing him. The two were quite comfortable interacting with each other physically, and they played off each others’ vocal and physical alterations nicely. (Both performers needed to be pushed further, into uncomfortable territories as the production went on, but during callbacks they showed promise as individuals and as a pair.)
Given the circumstances, therefore, I did cast both Aníbal and Nelson non-traditionally. I believe that choice was justified in the script. Casting the men in *Cloud Tectonics*, however, became a balancing act: how do I remain culturally sensitive, stay true to the themes of the play, and cast Euro-American males in Latino roles? Could I non-traditionally cast both male roles in *Cloud Tectonics* without altering the intentions of the production? Yes, I could. Both Aníbal and Nelson neglect their cultural past at different points in the play.\(^{20}\) Casting Euro-American performers in those roles, though not ideal, visually communicated this distancing from their each character’s cultural past. As long as Celestina remained noticeably connected to the cultural heritage of the production, I believe the choice to non-traditionally cast males from the dominant cultural background of the audience was justifiable.

Given the Oxford reality, the casting was my ideal choice for each character. Nonetheless, I remained only cautiously optimistic. All three characters were quite challenging, and Celestina and Aníbal were both on-stage for well over an hour. While all three performers were upper-class students (Daniella a senior, and Alex and Jason both juniors), none of them had ever been cast in leading roles in a full-length play here at Miami. Both Jason and Alex had acted in several departmental productions, but usually in auxiliary roles, often having few-to-no-lines. Daniella had been nominated for a KACTF Irene Ryan acting scholarship the previous semester for her role as Cassandra in *Trojan Women*. Even that role, however, did not demand Daniella to carry the show as she only appeared on stage in two scenes. I had seen each performer do strong work outside of auditions, and knew each worked very hard outside of productions to better their craft. I met Daniella the previous year when she volunteered to be in a ten-minute play I directed as part of my directing class. She had to meet for rehearsals during the day because at night had *Shadowbox* rehearsals. Alex and I met the previous summer as we both participated in a Thai movement workshop sponsored by the university. Jason was very active in both theatre and dance in Hamilton, and also filled in for *The Skriker* when an performer had to leave the production. Each performer, I believe, was hungry for a fuller, more difficult role than they had had on the college stage before. Still, how would they respond to that challenge?

**Rehearsal Process Goals and Intentions**

\(^{20}\) As discussed in Chapter 2, pages 27-29.
It was very important throughout the rehearsal process to keep the production concept at the heart of everything the production did. *Cloud Tectonics* could not succeed if the worlds of the magical and the worlds of the mundane existed as two separate, disconnected entities. Instead, this production had to be about blending worlds and finding ways to actively seek out alternate world views in every possible avenue.

It was also necessary for the rehearsal process to mirror the layered structural breakdown of this play. *Cloud Tectonics* is an incredibly dense text. At every moment of the play there are multiple ideas, theories, and histories being told. One of the most difficult challenges as a director was to make sure that these levels of the play were not lost during production, nor did they overshadow the emotional drive of the plot. In that way, the entire rehearsal process was built around slowly adding levels and layers of text so the performers would not feel overwhelmed, nor would an aspect of the play be neglected.

**Rehearsal Process Part 1 – 12/03/07-1/22/08: Calendar and Table-work vs. Movement**

Jose Rivera’s magical realism is very much grounded in reality, and this production of *Cloud Tectonics* was grounded in reality as well. The goal was to make the audience not only relate and identify with the characters on stage, but identify with the situations as well. Yes, there was a magical bed that appears out of the sink, and yes there were blocks of rubble sitting in the middle of Aníbal’s apartment. But those moments would only seem magical and extraordinary if juxtaposed with the mundane, ordinary “real world” with which the audience was familiar. I therefore decided that the beginning of the rehearsal process would be firmly grounded in realism. We focused very strongly in rehearsals on beats, objectives, concrete blocking and picturization. By creating a safe, comfortable space for the performers, the process began with tangible concepts and processes.

The largest challenge we faced as a cast early on was the impact of the calendar on the process. *Cloud Tectonics* opened very early in the spring semester. In order to have the allotted number of rehearsals before performances, we needed to have a rehearsal before separating for winter break. This meant we would rehearse as a cast for one week, then leave and not work together for nearly a month, then regroup and begin rehearsals again. This created several logistical problems. If I used that week for blocking and intense emotional digging, it would give me more time to explore each scene and give the performers more time to develop their
characters. However, it could also become stagnant when we didn’t rehearse for nearly a month. The other option would be to do light scene and text work, leading the performers towards their characters but leaving open interpretations. The downside of that option would be losing a week of rehearsals, and then only be able to work each scene two-times in rehearsals instead of three. In the end, I chose the latter option, merely playing with the text and doing slight movement and vocals exercises that first week. I did, however, add the stipulation that my performers came back from winter break off-book. It was absolutely necessary in this production for the performers to be off-book before we started any intense scene-work. We had a relatively short rehearsal period after Christmas break: seven rehearsals before the designer slog-through, and seven rehearsals after that before tech weekend.

The emotional intensity and connective relationships that this production necessitated would have been impossible to create with performers buried in their scripts. So much of this production was about the subtleties between the characters: how they looked at each other, when they looked at each other, how they touched each other, and when they refused to touch each other. This production depended on delicate exchanges which we needed to begin working on from the very beginning, all of which required the performers to return to campus off-book. However, the danger of having the performers learn their lines on their own, away from rehearsal, was that they might have developed something about their character that was contrary to or even the antithesis of the production. So, that first week of rehearsals, before winter break, became extraordinarily important. I needed to clearly lead my performers in a specific direction as to who their characters were while leaving room for them to find their characters for themselves. A delicate balance was necessary.

I believe very strongly that plays are meant to be performed, and as such the vast majority of text discovery should occur on our feet, exploring the play, and not in a classroom setting that one might approach a novel. Numerous theatre practitioners approach the creation of theatre in a similar way: on one’s feet, doing. In The Viewpoints Book, Tina Landau describes a situation in which she didn’t have the proper room to begin rehearsals up and doing:

…I sat down with the students, begrudgingly introduced myself, and asked them how their first day of school way the day before. They told me it was good except they sat around and talked too much. Between the talking yesterday and the cold in the air on this
morning, they couldn’t wait to get up and move. Oh no! I thought for a moment, and then told them how I was about to cancel the session -- and just talk -- but that would be against everything I wanted to share with them. I took a deep breath, and got us up on our feet to begin training. (Bogart and Landau 63)

However, this particular play necessitated more sit-down discussion than most plays my performers or I have been involved with. Though I was clear that the text was merely a map for us and we would deter from the script at many points, I reiterated several times that Rivera did not make “mistakes” when he wrote this play. *Cloud Tectonics* is a beautifully crafted play, and each line is there for a specific reason. In this richly layered play, there are no throw-away lines, no filler sections. Every moment in *Cloud Tectonics*, grand or small, has meaning and a reason for existing. The challenge we faced as a cast was discovering the rationale in each moment, and then deciding how we wanted to produce that moment on stage. While there is a great danger in becoming too heady early on in the process with any play, we did have lengthy discussions the first week of rehearsals on everything from reality, to physics, to celestial movements, to memory, and history. These rehearsal days were by no means merely sit-down discussions. On the contrary, we began each rehearsal on-our-feet, working, and spent the majority of our time together acting: doing. However, these discussions were intense and necessary in guiding and shaping this production.

Though I came to rehearsals with a rough idea of how I wanted each moment to progress, I rarely pre-blocked entire scenes before rehearsals. Often I would have rough ideas of where I wanted performers or specifics places they had to be at one particular moment. Mostly, I wanted the performers to experiment with the space and with each other and find the movements and pictures they created on their own, naturally.

My job as director was more of shaping the pictures they created than forcing movement and ideas onto them. More often than not I would challenge or push performers in one direction asking them to try this or try that, then see how it looked, and then ask how it felt for the performers. While asking if the performers are comfortable in a scene is problematic in that it can lead to a self-indulgent production that disregards the audience, I felt for this production it absolutely necessary that the performers were comfortable in what they were doing throughout the entire process. If they weren’t comfortable, that uncomfortably would read in the intimate
Studio 88 space, crush the believability of the scene, and break any connection the performers had in that moment. That’s not to say each moment and every movement in the production was a safe, comfortable choice. On the contrary, I asked my performers to take risks in every rehearsal above and beyond the challenges inherently in the script: monologues about sexual abuse, racial slurs, and watching people die as well as very intimate moments where personal space and personal boundaries practically disappear. My challenge, then, was to find ways of coaxing and persuading my performers out of their comfort zones in ways where they still felt supported. One example of this was with Daniella.

Early in the play, Celestina accompanies Aníbal back to his apartment, and she is alone onstage for a moment as Aníbal turns on the lights (Rivera 11). I wanted to extend this scene and have Celestina explore the space alone onstage in a way that the audience knew she was unearthly and spiritual. So we played with the idea of having Celestina dance in the space, uninhibited. While we discussed why Celestina would do this and what prompts such movement, Daniella had a difficult time committing to the actions. Understandably so: I was asking her to do something that wouldn’t have normally happened in a strict American realist play. As we continued through the rehearsal process it was these kinds of moments, as well as the moments that dealt with some of the more difficult and darker moments, that we began to flesh out in some more unconventional ways.

Rehearsal Process Part 2 – 1/22/08-1/31/08: Exploring Cultural History & Emotional Depth

Before we all separated for Christmas break, the last thing my cast did together as a group was have dinner together cooking the same food Aníbal either cooks or references in Cloud Tectonics. While this did had practical implications (Alex needed to learn how to cook for the show), it was more an entry point into the histories of this play. I began surrounding my performers with Latina/o cultural elements early on in the rehearsal process. Even if they were slight, it was necessary for the performers to see, feel, taste, and hear the history and memory of the world of Cloud Tectonics. This play and this production required the performers to view the world from a perspective they were unfamiliar with, and any added avenue into this other perspective, however small or minute, was helpful to them.

Another aspect of that different perspective was language; Cloud Tectonics relies heavily on Spanish. Spanish is everywhere from Celestina’s monologue to Nelson’s brief message to
Celestina’s baby or Aníbal’s oft-repeated “cono.” Even the quotes that introduce Cloud Tectonics appear in Spanish. Though she had classes and some familial experience with Spanish, this still proved to be a great challenge for Daniella. Fortunately my stage manager, Meg Haven, came from a bilingual family. She spoke fluent Spanish and routinely helped translate passages that needed clarification or tutor the cast on pronunciation issues. One thing I did tell Meg early on, however, was that I did not want Meg to correct Alex’s Spanish. If Aníbal is disconnected from his cultural past, his culturally specific language skills would be lacking. Even though he is working towards reconnecting that relationship during his final monologue, I still wanted the impression that this is a journey for Aníbal, a work-in-progress. Aníbal has not yet finished his journey back to his ancestral roots. Therefore, I wanted Alex’s softly spoken Spanish during the epilogue to still be rough, still be slightly off, and still lack that total fluency that he will never regain. Odds are, Aníbal will never reconnect with all the aspects of his past that he has lost.

One avenue into the fantastic and magical elements of this show was the body and how we used the body onstage. Far too often performers rely on merely their voice, their face, and their arms to convey emotion. But we have an entire body with which emotion can be expressed, life can be experienced, and memory can be stored. Tina Landau and Anne Bogart stress the importance of “[learning] to listen with the whole body, with the entire being. Until you experience listening with the whole body, you do not realize what a rare occurrence it is” (Bogart and Landau 32). Being aware of actions, intensions, and objectives, and playing them strongly on stage is an excellent start to this production. If the performers were unable to control their bodies, their entire body, in the same way they were able to control their voice and their concentration onstage, then this production would fail. This production required the integration of multiple aspects of the performers, the psychological as well as the physical., just as it required integrating multiple worlds. In trying to tap into the near limitless possibilities bodies provide onstage, we tried multiple activities.

First, we would start every rehearsal with simplified sun salutations. Early in rehearsal process I kept warm-ups very low-key and individualized: the performers did whatever worked best for themselves to warm-up their bodies and voices, and we did would do a focus activity as a group that varied depending on what we were working on for that day. After the designer run-through, however, I wanted the performers to become more aware of themselves, more aware of
their bodies, and more aware of each others body in relation to their own. By rotating leaders and reminding the performers to stay in tune with the leader, these warm-up exercises fulfill multiple goals. It loosens the muscles and prepares the body for the movement rehearsal necessitates. It also focuses the performers on both an individual and group level. As Anne Bogart describes,

In the traditional yoga practice the focus is internal. [By keeping soft focus] the focus of each individual is on the group. It is important to sense the consent of the group as a whole and learn to enjoy unison movement. (Bogart and Landau 23)

I also wanted the performers to perceive the space as not just a living room, but a smaller piece of a world where anything is possible. This is a play where time literally stands still, where, magical worlds are created and destroyed before our very eyes, and floating beds appears as if from nowhere. If this is a world where such extraordinary events exists side-by-side with the mundane world of futons and stoves, then aspects of the fantastic world are omnipresent. I wanted my performers to begin to recognize this world in our performance space and interact with this world. I also wanted to find tangible moments of the play to illuminate this other world, keeping these aspects of the production grounded and not just theory that never finds its way onto the stage.

Daniella had several longer sections within the first twenty pages of the play, and was having trouble differentiating between them. One day at rehearsal I filled the performance space with all sorts of materials: chairs stacked on top of one another, tables turned on their side, and rehearsal blocks stacked in odd shapes. Daniella began rehearsal by herself, and I asked her to focus herself and explore the space. I wanted her to interact and become familiar with the objects around her: how tall they were, how their texture felt, what the smelled like, and how they moved. After she had explored the space for several minutes, I added music and asked her to move within the space to the beat of the music. I encouraged her to move however the music moved her. After a minute or two, I asked Daniella to interact with the materials in the space while still moving in beat with the music. After another minute or two, I would change the music, and have Daniella repeat the process. After we did this three or four times with different songs, we stopped, and Daniella and I discussed the process. How did she feel when she
explored the space? What did she notice? How did she feel when she danced with the different songs? How did she move? How were the movements different? I then told her which monologue I thought each song represented and why, discussing the different levels of tempo, rhythm, intensity, and emotional qualities each song brought. Daniella and I then discussed what movements both she liked and I thought were appropriate for each of those monologues, and found ways to implement them into the blocking.

This exercise is derived almost exclusively from Anne Bogart and Tina Landau’s *The Viewpoints Book*. In it, Bogart and Landau discuss how music can be “a partner” and “a great gift, because…music leads to an expansion of possibility” (95). The key word here is “expansion.” The intension of this exercise was not to strictly direct Daniella to a specific rhythm or style for her monologues, but to open up possibilities for her, perhaps possibilities she had not yet thought to explore. Through music, Daniella may find herself moving, speaking, and interacting in ways she never envisioned for Celestina in those moments. However, possibilities that are not forced upon Daniella, the performer, in an unnatural way. Music can be a powerful ally in finding these intuitive rhythms. Bogart and Landau discuss the

…cause and effect relationships between music and movement are natural. Both are organic, springing from intuition and inborn body rhythms, and also deeply associative, springing from a vast and (probably) reservoir of cultural images. (95)

The intent was for Daniella to find her own rhythms and movements for Celestina on her own through music.

Not only did this change how Daniella moved in the space during these monologues, but it also greatly affected the way she interacted with the other performers onstage during those moments, as well as the way she delivered her lines. While still keeping the same objectives and actions she had before, acting tools she was quite familiar with, her movement increased the stakes of her scenes, gave the other performers around her more to play off of, created stronger connections onstage, and added this omnipresent magical dimension to the scene.

Later in the rehearsal process I again used added materials in the space to help performers relate to one another in scenes that were not working quite right. Again I would add materials to the space that were not normally found there. After exploring the space on their own
I would add a specific song and again and ask the performers to move within the space to the music, and eventually interact within the newly created space to the music. At this point, however, I changed the exercise and asked a specific performer to deliver a specific monologue from the play to the beat of the music. After saying the monologue out loud to him or herself to the beat of the music, I asked the performer to say their monologue to a specific performer to the beat of the music. After that, I asked the performer a third time to say the monologue, still to the beat of the music, still to that same person, but now physically interacting with that person. After that, I changed the song and repeated the process for each performer in the cast. This was intended to give the performers a different perspective on scenes or moments they were having difficulty with, and give them tangible ways both with their bodies and with their voices to adjust those moments. And it worked wonderfully for Jason, who was struggling with the monologue when Nelson meets Celestina for the first time, and aided Daniella in bolstering several of her monologues.  

For Alex, however, the experiment was not as helpful, and we attempted to find other ways for him to connect in a deeper way to some of his more difficult moments, both physically and emotionally. Part of the problem with Alex’s struggles directly related to his difficulties specifically identifying Aníbal’s arch in the show. To help with this I had Alex draw a graph that we agreed upon as to where Aníbal should be at very specific moments in the play. We then used that graph at rehearsals when Alex or I felt uncomfortable with how Aníbal was reacting in a given moment. Also, I gave Alex a song to listen to, Counting Crows’ “Anna Begins,” that I thought mapped Aníbal’s arch well. This song connects it to the world of the play coming from the early 1990’s California culture, though it did not come from a Latino artist. Both of these activities forced Alex to look at his character from another vantage point he may not have considered beforehand.

Together we discovered a discrepancy in Aníbal’s character arch. Alex had been playing Aníbal as a sad, depressed man whose life found meaning when he met Celestina. It would be more compelling, more true to the character, and much more difficult to play Aníbal as a content and happy man from the beginning. Aníbal then discovers how much his life lacked and how

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21 I do not discuss nor explore Jason’s process nearly as much as I discuss Alex and Daniella. Jason Howard had a smaller role than Alex and Daniella, and possessed the uncanny ability connect his movements with voice and his emotions quickly. Jason also took direction extremely well, and fearlessly challenged every obstacle placed before him. Because of all these reasons, Jason had far fewer issues to work though than Alex and Daniella, and will not be discussed for the remainder of this chapter.
much he had been missing before he encountered Celestina. Though these activities did not translate to distinguishable differences in the way Alex played Aníbal, it completely changed the way Alex approached his character.

We tried several different exercises to find concrete ways for Alex to put into practice his newfound understanding of Aníbal. These activities were designed to further help and deepen the connections that were already present between Alex and Daniella onstage. These activities were also designed to keep the actors working on instinct.\textsuperscript{22} To help the performers physically embody the connections between the characters they played, and to make the performers more comfortable with physical contact between each other, we would run scenes with excessive amounts of physical contact or excessive amounts of eye contact. For example, we would run pages 9-16, pages where the sexual tension between the characters is muted-to-non-existent, requiring the performers to remain in physical contact for the entirety of the scene. Yes, it was awkward, and yes they laughed and were unable to run the entire scene the first few times through, but it forced them to acknowledge the physical relationship between them, and made the performers much more comfortable to take physical risks. As Stanford Meisner explains, “if you take your time, the change in [the actor] which is…spontaneous will happen” (30).

The last activity I did with Alex to get him to adapt his body physically was during his monologue about his cousin Eva. That section was always difficult for Alex, as he had to describe his first sexual encounter, which was an act of molestation. While we tried it several ways, nothing seemed to help Alex adequately show the severity of that moment. It was difficult for Alex to physicalize both the enormity of that moment. I wanted Alex to feel as if a great weight had been taken off his shoulders when he finally said “I liked Eva on top of me,” and I wanted the audience to recognize that this was the first time Aníbal had ever said that, and only after coming to grips with this moment from his past would he be able to fully embrace Celestina (43).

Alex was thinking through the process too much. He was planning how he would say lines and what he would do while saying those lines. This pre-planning was preventing him from reacting impulsively to the lines and memories of his character. My objective was to remove the psychological, and make “impulse and action…concurrent” (Grotowski 16). Jerzy

\textsuperscript{22} I’m using the term here as Stanford Meisner used it. For further discussion on Meisner’s use of “instinct,” see Stanford Meisner on Acting especially pages 28-36.
Grotowski has written and experimented extensively with physicality and impulse. Grotowski firmly believes the performer must be free from all resistance and restrictions. He wrote the actor, “must learn to perform [without resistance] unconsciously in the culminating phases of his acting” (38). My objective was to help Alex remove everything holding him back, while still using his body and presenting this physicality to the audience.

One night at rehearsal, I had Alex begin his monologue. I told him to be aware of his breathing, and to continue running the monologue regardless of what happened. During the section when he begins to talk specifically about Eva I had Jason grab Alex from behind, constricting his breathing. Then, right when Alex said, “I liked Eva on top of me,” Jason released the pressure. The way Alex contorting his chest and his face and his shoulders and the way that affected how he was able to say his lines, both before and after Jason let go, was quite moving. So Alex and I talked afterwards, and we both agreed that was much more powerful than previous attempts at that moment. The challenge then became for Alex to duplicate that moment, that restriction, without Jason holding him. While I’m not sure Alex ever felt quite as confined as when Jason gripped him, the scene read much stronger and became clearer once Alex became aware of his body and had a very specific intention for his body.

Rehearsal Process Part 3 – 2/1/08-2/4/08: Tech Weekend

The first performative element of the play we worked on during tech weekend was the movement during the prologue. Shiree and I had discussed using stagehands to move set pieces and small properties in Aníbal’s apartment as a way of creating the world of the play.23 Though the importance was placed on what was being done on the stage (the creation of a world), I also was very specific on how I wanted this interaction to happen onstage. Cloud Tectonics relied heavily on flowing poetry, and I did not want this opening section of the play to detract from that poetry. On the contrary, it was necessary that this symbolic act of creation, as the first thing the audience sees, sets up fluid, poetic expectations for the rest of the show. I knew for a while that I wanted the “magical movers” to circle and wrap the stage in a way that resembled the movement of celestial bodies. I also wanted the movements of Celestina and Aníbal indirectly connected to the creation movements on stage, showing how the lovers are involved in creating their own

23 As discussed in Chapter 3 page 45.
world. Getting these desired results depended heavily on what I could do with the stagehands and actors together in a limited amount of time.

I wanted the “magical movers” to be more dancers and performers than utilitarian stagehands. I decided to have two movers represent Aníbal, and move only in straight, angular paths, and two movers represent Celestina, and move only in curved, circular paths. I also wanted the movers to move in different beats and rhythms, but still rhythms that were discernable from the audience. I decided to have two movers -- one who represented Celestina and one who represented Aníbal -- to move in short bursts about four or five steps long that took up about a quarter of the stage. The other two movers -- again, one representing each character -- would move in long bursts about ten steps long that took up almost the entire length of the stage. I divvied up steps and roles to the movers. We rehearsed their paths several times, paying special attention to how they were moving, if they ended their movements in synch with each other, and where they were looking. While these movement patterns were not created organically in improvisation workshops, I wanted this moment to resemble the presentational acting style borrowed from Anne Bogart’s exercises. I wanted the movers to “listen” with their entire body as they moved through the space.

In the end, the four movers made two passes through the stage. On the first pass, they would stop, pick up rubble from the stage, and move it off stage. On the second pass, they would pick up properties and set dressing that was strewn about the house, and place them in their appropriate place in the apartment. The space turned from an apartment with debris scattered about to a clean, neat apartment, all during the prologue.

Though tech weekend is set aside to work on the technical elements of production, I continued to work with the performers to strengthen and polish parts of the play that needed more work. One section of the script that never flowed was during Celestina’s monologue on page 14. The monologue begins with Celestina briskly and delightedly describing her first lover, Rodrigo, and morphs its way into describing the startling revelation of finding her parents dead on the floor. Daniella often expressed difficulty with this section, and the rhythm and flow to this scene was always slightly off. During tech-weekend my advisor, Dr. Paul Jackson, pointed out that while Daniella had been describing a rape scene between Celestina and Rodrigo, she had not been letting the impact of such a traumatic event affect her. Daniella maintained an even, steady breathing and vocal pattern, and even smiled a bit while saying her lines. These lines,
without an emotional connection behind them, read as insincere, as “conventional pushing and illustrating, in other words, false theatrics,” and lead to an uneven flow in Daniella’s monologue (Hagen 90). Dr. Jackson challenged Daniella to emotionally invest herself in that moment of being raped. Much like Hagen asserts, the challenge Daniella faced was to

…strip the cover, the hard-boiled mask, the thick skin used as a protective covering around the soul if we want to regain an artist’s innocence and the intuitive responsiveness necessary for a limber, truthful, emotional instrument. (84)

This change in approach from Daniella altered a hesitant transition from an exciting sexual encounter into the revelation of finding one’s parents dead, into a vulnerable moment of recalling two horrific events in Celestina’s life.
Work Cited


Extended Bibliography

This directing process comes from seven years involvement in university theatre. In that time I’ve been involved in productions with numerous directors, read many plays, taken multiple directing classes, and read multiple directing literature, both in and out of the classroom. My directing process did not develop in a vacuum, but is directly linked to the people, texts, and productions I’ve worked with in that period. Much of my process is taken from various sources, often combining or modifying exercises, activities, or procedures in order to address the hybrid nature of my production concept. Because of this amalgamation of directing styles and processes, it became difficult-to-impossible to pinpoint exactly which influence affected certain specific directing choices. Therefore, I have provided an additional bibliography at the end of this chapter that marks critical texts in my directorial development in addition to the sources cited.


Reflection

Directing *Cloud Tectonics* was a two-year-long artistic learning experience. I was, first and foremost throughout this process, a student director. This was a learning experience as part of my educational development here at Miami University. In keeping with that spirit, it is important for me to be incredibly self-critical of the entire process. In this section I will look back at and reevaluate some choices that I made throughout the process. In particular, I will address: the ways I combined the presentational and representational acting, how I worked with the longer monologues, and how the multiple performances in the production ran. In each of these instances, there were moments where I could have done more as a director.

I was disappointed in the limited amount of purely presentational acting in the final production. Through my research I found several ways and numerous places to combine representational and presentational acting onstage. However, ultimately the production contained fewer instances of presentational acting than I had originally anticipated. The moments Daniella, Celestina, and I worked on where she interacted with the space, moving with music, slowly were weaned out of the final performance. The small amounts that were left mostly occurred when Celestina first enters and explores Aníbal’s apartment. While pushed further than the text indicates, this moment was pushed much further during rehearsals than it ended up on the stage. Increased amounts of presentational movement, especially early on, could have established more clearly Celestina as a fantastical woman. Also, the moment when Nelson dances with Celestina the first time he enters the apartment could have more closely resembled Celestina’s earlier movement. The intent was to physically and presentationally show a connection between Nelson and Celestina. This connection was developed and fostered in rehearsals, but slowly altered into a much more representational flirtatious courting dance when it was eventually performed. This was yet another instance when the presentational eventually morphed into the representational.

I was also disappointed in how the presentational movement and representational scene in the prologue never cohesively gelled onstage. The movement during the prologue was one of the few moments where I wanted to combine representational and presentational acting styles at the same time. Originally I wanted the representational conversation between Celestina and Aníbal to have an active part in shaping how the magical-movers created the space of Aníbal’s
apartment. The intent was for the representational Celestina and Aníbal to be intricately connected to the presentational movers. This proved far too difficult. By placing Celestina, Aníbal, and the movers in the same space the audience lost all sense of location. Aníbal and Celestina were no longer at a stoplight waiting to continue driving; there were in some confusing void. Were they in the apartment? Why were they discussing driving? Also, Celestina and Aníbal often became lost in a sea of movers. The stage looked less like creating a world and more like a complete mess. My solution was to remove Celestina and Aníbal from the space. This not only created a disconnect to watch -- where should I be looking -- but more importantly a detrimental and unintentional disconnect in realities -- the presentational world of creating the apartment was separate and unique from the representational world of Aníbal and Celestina in the car. The theoretical disconnect between these worlds went against everything I was trying to create in my “simultaneous realities.” While I’m sure it went unnoticed by the audience, and I still have no solution for this problem, I remain disappointed that I was unable to blend these worlds more fluidly in the opening moments of the production.

Ultimately, I believe this problem of combining the representational and the presentational derived from the way I constructed these realities. During my thesis defense one of my readers, Dr. William Doan, pointed out that my discussion of representational and presentational acting styles in Chapter 3 positioned these styles as oppositional and in contention with each other. Dr. Doan continued to point out that, in a magical realist reading of Cloud Tectonics, these styles should be complimentary, not combative. By neglecting to view these modes of performance, these worlds of existence, as complimentary, I was in fact neglecting my research on hybridity and border crossing, and creating problems for myself and my production. Cloud Tectonics could not have multiple realities co-existing on-stage if I constructed these realities in my mind as binaries. This disconnect was obvious in production: The magical movers did not co-exist with Celestina and Aníbal onstage, and the magical bed came across as existing in a very different world as the mundane apartment. In the end, this erroneous mentality created unnecessary problems in production, and lead to disjointed moments on the stage.

The performers and I worked very hard to find tangible, concrete ways to link their long monologues to the immediate action of the performance. For example, some of the more successful monologues were Jason’s (who played Nelson) toward the end of the play. Nelson returns from war a changed, distraught, and disturbed man. Immediately after Aníbal discusses
the past experience of finding a purpose to continue living while surrounded by death, Celestina appears onstage. I had Jason fall to his knees and embrace Celestina immediately when he sees her. Celestina was what kept him alive while at war, and the sight of her instantly moves Nelson. This movement affected the emotion with which Jason said his lines. It was important to find these kinds of tangible connection between what he talks about in the past and what he experiences in the present. Too often the performers and I failed to find an immediate connection between their retrospective monologues and the immediacy of the scene. Finding these specific, tangible moments could have strengthened certain scenes, and provided another emotional, vulnerable avenue to engage the audience.

Lastly, as an inexperienced director I had difficulties maintaining the necessary high levels of emotion and vulnerability throughout the run of the performance. This production required the performers to always be open, aware, and connected to each other and the script while onstage. This is not a simple task. While the cast did do an admirable job, there were obvious times when they were unable to stay focused and connected. For example, when Daniella would lose focus her monologue about Celestina being raped returned to the safe, dismissive choices instead of deeply exploring that moment. In those instances, Daniella closed herself off and distanced herself from the audience, instead of becoming vulnerable and communicating with the audience. Small things like this lead to large discrepancies in performances. Opening night, Wednesday, February 6th, was not one of the cast’s stronger performances. Throughout the performance, audience members were shifting in their seats, rustling back and forth, and coughing, general signs on audience is disconnected. Similarly, during the matinee performance of Saturday, February 9th, audience members were checking their watches and cell phones throughout the performance. These audience responses were in marked contrast to the casts’ stronger performances, when they remained engaged and connected. By far the strongest performance the cast gave was on Friday, February 8th. On that night, the entire audience immediately stood up and gave a standing ovation to the three performers once the play ended. Another strong performance was the final performance, a matinee on Sunday, February 10th. Even though the audience was filled mostly with students required to see the performance for a class, the audience remained silent and invested throughout the performance, and a large amount of the audience again gave the performers a standing ovation. There are countless factors that helped and hindered the performers from maintaining
the levels of concentration required for a show such as this. A more experienced director may have been able to find ways during the rehearsal process to more fully train the cast for performances, or engage the cast before each production in a way to prepare. In the future, perhaps I will also be able to adequately enable the cast to preserve their emotional vulnerability through the run for a more fluid, even production run.

There are no perfect productions. In the theatre there are always adjustments and alterations that can be made. As theatre practitioners, we continue to learn, to change, and evolve as we continue to make art. I am confident that this directing venture will make me a better director in the future. This exceedingly powerful and positive experience will help to make me a better communicator, a better collaborator, a better scholar, and a better leader for future productions.

The journey of *Cloud Tectonics* was by no means short nor easy to navigate. It provided countless obstacles and challenges for myself, as well as with everyone I worked. I was also a greatly enjoyable, rewarding, and vastly educational experience. While there were many things I would change about the production, there are a great many more things I would keep the same. I was privileged to have worked with all those who participated in the journey with me. Though not perfect by any means, I am exceptionally proud of my process in directing *Cloud Tectonics*. 
Cloud Tectonics
“I despise violence, but I saw enough of it growing up, and I was subject to it. I know how essential it is to the human existence...That’s why I wrote Cloud Tectonics, as an antidote to violence.”

Jose Rivera
Major Dramatic and Production Questions

How can love survive in a broken, disjointed world?

What is the nature of love in this troubled, fractured world?
Los Angeles in 1995
Rodney King Beating: 1991
Rodney King Trial Riots: 1992
55 people are killed and an estimated $785 million in property damage.

http://www.laalmanac.com/history/hi01j.htm
Gang Activity

• In 1999, California reported over 254,000 gang members making it the highest of any state. Illinois, second, reported just over 75,000

• In 1999, California also reported 4 of the top 5 cities by number of gang members, with LA County and LA the top 2 cities

• Estimated gang membership in LA rose from 50,000 and 70,000 estimated in ’83 and ’88, to 127,000 and 140,000 in ’91 and ’95

• Gang related homicides rose from an average of just over 200 a year from ‘82 to ’85 to just under 800 a year from ’92 to ’95
  – www.streetgangs.com
North Ridge Earthquake: 1994
OJ Chase and Trial: 1994-5
Disasters in LA from 1990-1995

From the country of Los Angeles: http://lacoa.org/PDF/LADisasters.pdf

• 1990
  – Santa Barbara Fires, Upland Earthquake, Mexican Fruit Fly
• 1992
  – Winter Storms, Severe Flooding, Civil Unrest
• 1993
  – Southern California Firestorms
• 1994
  – Northridge Earthquake
• 1995
  – Severe Winter Storms, Severe Flooding
Music From LA

• West Coast Rap/Gangsta Rap
  – N.W.A (Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, etc.): 1988’s *Straight Outta Compton* with “Fuck tha Police”
  – Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg: 1992’s *The Chronic* with “The Day the Niggaz Took Over”; 1993’s *DoggyStyle* with “Murder was the Case” and “Who am I?”
  – Warren G and Nate Dogg: 1994’s *Regulate…G Funk Era* with “Regulators” and “Gangsta Sermon”
  – Tupac Shakur: 1995’s *Me Against the World* with “If I Die 2 Nite” and “So Many Tears”

• Alternative Rock
  – Beck: 1994’s *Mellow Gold* with “Loser”
  – Sumblime: 1992’s *40oz to Freedom* with “We’re Only Gonna Die for our Arrogance” and “Get Out!”
  – Korn: 1994’s *Korn* with “Daddy” and “Shoots and Ladders”
How do we move from this...
...to this?
Production Concept

Commonplace Magic

This play needs to be magical, but the magic needs to as ordinary as a couch sitting in a living room, or using a fork to eat food, or falling in love in one night. In every aspect of this play, we need to combine the normal and the everyday with the magical and the fantastic…and we need to do it in a way where they seem to fit together as if they belong together because in this world the mundane and the wonderful DO BELONG TOGETHER. The sets, the costumes, the lighting, the music, the acting, the blocking, everything has to include this idea of the natural combination of the ordinary and the majestic.

Simultaneous Realities
Scenic Elements

• Combing the broken, disjointed outside world of L.A. with the world magical, fantastic world inside the apartment
• Cooking on stage (?) Create and destroy (?)
• “Floating bed” doesn’t need to “float”, but it does need to be magical, special in some way
• …a struggle…a haven…an escape…a return…soft…comfortable…worn-in shoe…been forgotten…left behind…
Lighting Elements

• Combine the natural/realistic with the fantastic
• Passage of time
• Escapism
• …beauty…love…hope…the future…youth…continuance…joy…family …remembering…
Sound Elements

• Provide a connection to the past cultural background

• Develop the world that exists outside Anibol’s apartment

• ...despair...struggle...something just out of ear-shot that you can’t quite hear...a face or a name *you know* you know but can’t remember why or how...memory
Costumes and Make-up

• Bring to the forefront the conversation with the cultural background at play (Nelson’s moustache)

• Show the struggle and daily grind that these people live in

• Some way to bring out the magic and angelic in Celstina even more…pow!

• …tired…worn-out…searching…longing…hoping…discovering…missing…
Anibol

• Anibol needs: to understand his past, to understand who he is, to feel full and complete, to understand his surroundings logically
• Anibol wants: Debbie to be the love of his life (but he knows she’s not), to be more financially successful than he is, to have a better understanding of his cultural background without having to make a big deal or a large effort for it
• Anibol: has forgotten Spanish, has moved around much in his life (does he really have a place to call home?), sexually abused by cousin in first sexual act, his cultural background is nearly all forgotten, in a serious relationship with (Americanized) Debbie but feels unfulfilled
• Anibol: everyman, sad, lost, insecure, avoids, unsure, confused, content but not happy, moves at a moderate pace, his body takes a second to respond to his thoughts
• Anibol is a child, not knowing where he is, or came from, what he wants or what he needs….he’s unable to see above the counter even when someone lifts him up…he is our link into this world, he is the audience
Celestina

• Celestina needs: sex, to be loved, to love, to experience life fully, to not be alone, to express herself
• Celestina wants: to be happy, to enjoy life, to eat, to be full, to take everything in, to find the father of her child, to spend the rest of her life with Anibol, her feet rubbed, to be touched, to touch back
• Celestina: watched her parents wither away, became pregnant from the first boy to have sex with her, abandoned by lover, does not understand time, understands she is different
• Celestina: glides, light on her feet, lights up the room, glows, smiles, makes everyone around her either happy or uncomfortable (if they aren’t secure in being unimaginably happy), floats, moves as if being pushed by the air around her
• Celestina is a cloud or a sunrise over the ocean, an anomaly one cannot hold, or grasp, or love without having her slide away as easily as she wafted in, never to be seen again...she must be experienced and cannot be explained
Nelson

- Nelson needs: to be a man, to be with a woman, to convince himself he’s an individual
- Nelson wants: to be heard, to be the center of attention, to be carefree, to forget, to relax, to live the American dream (but has no idea what that means), to be loud, to be right
- Nelson: does not have strong ties to his brother, wounded in the war, really plans on marrying Celestina when he returns, a violent and poetic man who doesn’t know how to express his poetry in a world that stresses and glorifies violence
- Nelson: (first time we see him) solid, firm, broad shoulders, feet close together – he’s so in control and powerful he doesn’t need to take wide, broad steps, happy-go-lucky, jovial, quick, precise, fleet of foot, bounding, (second time we see him), weak, beaten down, still solid but not as proud of it, shoulders in, base wide, he might lose his balance at any moment, he knows how to move but his body no longer responds, tired, lonely
- Nelson is the bull in a china shop…he’s able to enjoy and appreciate the delicacy and the beauty all around him, but he’s unaware of the damage he can do until after he does it…he is the most socially created character in this play…society makes him more bull
Literary Style

• long, flowing passages
• representing multiple locations on stage at once
• using stylized, presentational stage business to produce setting on stage
• poetic stage directions rife with metaphor
• “static” moments on stage
Familiar Character Types

• ghost-like, wandering female
  • “Literary ghosts take many forms. For my purposes here, to qualify as a ghost, a literary apparition need not have arms and legs or, for that matter, be limited to two of each. It need only to exist as a spiritual force that enters the material world of the fiction and expresses itself as such...is an archetypal embodiment of cultural memory...behaving according to particular cultural patterns of belief and serving particular cultural (and literary) purposes.” Zamora

• strong, assertive, independent female
• imposing, elder familial figure
• characters representing cultural backgrounds
• physically imposing male
Thematic Concerns that Emerge

• dealing with multi-cultural and cross-cultural backgrounds
  – “I read one review that described my characters as urban wanderers. I guess that’s true, they wear several kinds of clothing, but they don’t really fit anywhere.”

• living in a world both fantastic and natural
  – “What makes magical realism are the unpredictable events produced by myriad common causes…These are the extraordinary effects from common, everyday, substantial, realistic causes.”

• being haunted by the past/cultural heritage
  – “My plays are exorcisms in reverse, they’re bringing to life things that are dead or may have been considered dead, but aren’t dead, and we didn’t know they weren’t dead.”

• surviving/thriving in a world gone mad
  – “In nearly every play (I write) the world is out of balance in some fundamental way, sometimes subtle, often not.”
Criticisms of *Cloud Tectonics* in Performance

- the play comes across as choppy and uneven
- the language gets in the way of things; too wordy
- too much nothing ("static") on stage
- no reason for Nelson to be in the play
Cloud Tectonics

Sometimes nature improvises

By José Rivera
Directed by Mike Mellas

February 6-9, 8 pm
February 9-10, 2 pm

Studio 88 Theatre
Department of Theatre
MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Theatre is committed to developing passionate, creative thinkers with artistic vision through a program of study that emphasizes the interplay between critical thinking and artistic practice.

• We situate ourselves within a strong liberal arts tradition, celebrate its interdisciplinary resources, and encourage multiple connections to our surrounding communities.

• We enable and require our students to study, test and explore theatrical practice, cultural contexts, and the ethical and social concerns of art makers in a plural and global society.

• We are committed to helping our students identify and develop their own personal strengths, provide them with the tools to realize their potential, and embrace the challenges of independent thinking, global awareness, and artistic and scholarly passion.

Adopted 8/29/00

Department of Theatre • 112 Hiestand Hall
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For updated information on the season or to view this program guide visit:
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www.arts.muohio.edu

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THEATRE ETIQUETTE
• Please turn off all cell phones and pagers.
• The taking of photographs or use of recording devices is strictly prohibited.
• If you have candy to unwrap, kindly do so before the show begins.
• Please note the closest exit in case of an emergency.
• Please discard all food and drinks before entering the theatre.
• As a courtesy to the audience and performers, latecomers will not be seated until an appropriate break in the performance.

2007-08 MU Theatre Season
Main Stage – Gates-Abegglen Theatre

October 4–6, 11–14
The 9th Annual John D. Yeck Production
The Trojan Women
by Euripides, Translated by Edith Hamilton
Directed by Bekka Eaton

November 15–17, 29–30, December 1–2
The Skriker
by Caryl Churchill
Directed by Roger Bechtel

April 10–12, 17–20
A Night of One Act Plays
by Miami Alumni and Students
Directed by Howard Blanning

SecondStage – Studio 88 Theatre

February 6–10
Cloud Tectonics
by Jose Rivera
directed by Mike Mellas

March 5–9
The Insanity of Mary Girard
by Lainie Robertson
directed by Nicole Wilder

Special Events

October 10
Shame the Devil! An Audience with Fanny Kemble
by Anne Ludlum
directed by Jane Wilson
Studio 88 Theatre

October 19
A Visit with Madame Curie
Gates-Abegglen Theatre

In residency January 24–28
Cromer/Flory Artist-in-Residence

Plasticene
Performance by Plasticene
Friday, January 25 Gates-Abegglen Theatre

Performance of student work developed in residency with Plasticene
Sunday, January 27 Gates-Abegglen Theatre
Miami University Department of Theatre presents

Cloud Tectonics
by José Rivera

Director
    Advised by
Scenic and Costume Design
    Advised by
Lighting Design
    Advised by
Sound Design
Technical Direction
    Advised by

Mike Mellas
Paul K. Jackson
Shiree Campbell
Gion DeFrancesco and Lin Conaway
Michael Warden
Jay S. Rozema
Jay S. Rozema
Josh Clabaugh
Steve Pauna

Produced by special arrangement with Broadway Play Publishing Inc.
Cloud Tectonics

CAST LIST

Daniella Briseno .................................................. Celestina del Sol
Alex Homer ........................................................... Anibal de la Luna
Jason Howard ....................................................... Nelson de la Luna

This play is 85 minutes in length and will be performed with no intermission.
The setting is Echo Park, Los Angeles. The time period is early 1990's.

PRODUCTION CREW

Stage Manager ......................................................... Meg Haven
Asst. Stage Manager ................................................ Val Stone
Scenic Charge Artist ............................................... Julie Lemieux

RUNNING CREWS

Deck Crew ............................................................ Jake Carr, Wendy Jobes,
Ryan Oder, Ben Thomas

Property Crew ........................................................ Joe Rinaldi
Wardrobe Crew ...................................................... Monica Morse
Make-up Crew ........................................................ Emily Giant
Light Board Operator ............................................... Matt Harr
Sound Board Operator ............................................. Seth Fahncke

With special thanks to William Doan, Julia Guichard, and Bryan Schmidt.
DIRECTOR’S NOTES
by Mike Mellas

"I despise violence, but I saw enough of it growing up, and I was subject to it. I know how essential it is to the human existence... That's why I wrote "Cloud Tectonics", as an antidote to violence."

José Rivera

José Rivera’s first play to receive large-scale recognition, and probably still his most popular play, was Marisol. It premiered in 1992 at The Actor’s Theatre of Louisville’s prestigious Humana Festival. It has gone on to be produced internationally, and has won several awards. It is a beautiful and haunting play. It is also very violent. After watching one production of Marisol, Rivera felt so affected by the violence on stage that he became physically ill. So moved by this experience, Rivera felt it necessary to write a play in response to Marisol.

Cloud Tectonics. This play.

Cloud Tectonics is Rivera’s response to violence. It is an antidote to violence. Cloud Tectonics is a play about love. About love surviving. About hope. A play about not neglecting, forgetting, or shielding ourselves from the violence in the world. A play about recognizing the joy, the peace, and the magic that is born out of the rubble and destruction every day.

This is also a play about memory. About the past. About cultural heritage. About finding yourself and coming to grips with who you are in relationship to who you once were. This is a play about the collective past. About hauntings, and ghosts, and choosing between exorcising or embracing those ghosts. Cloud Tectonics is a play about borders. About crossing borders. About what we do when we encounter a border. It is about empowerment and finding a voice.

True.

However, above all else Cloud Tectonics is about love surviving in a broken, disjointed, and fractured world. Perhaps there has been no better time in American history to explore the enduring, rejuvenating powers of hope and love than right now.
THEMATIC CONCERNS EMERGING FROM CLOUD TECTONICS

Excerpts from an Interview with José Rivera¹

- **Dealing with multi-cultural and cross-cultural backgrounds**
  "I read one review that described my characters as urban wanderers. I guess that’s true, they wear several kinds of clothing, but they don’t really fit anywhere."

- **Living in a world both fantastic and natural**
  "What makes magical realism are the unpredictable events produced by myriad common causes... These are the extraordinary effects from common, everyday, substantial, realistic causes."

- **Being haunted by the past/cultural heritage**
  "My plays are exorcisms in reverse, they’re bringing to life things that are dead or may have been considered dead, but aren’t dead, and we didn’t know they weren’t dead."

- **Surviving/thriving in a world gone mad**
  "In nearly every play (I write) the world is out of balance in some fundamental way, sometimes subtle, often not."


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ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

José Rivera is a recipient of two Obie Awards for playwriting, for Marisol and References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot, both produced at The Joseph Papp Public Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival. His other honors include the Imagen Foundation’s 2005 Normal Lear Writing Award, a Fulbright Arts Fellowship in Playwriting, and a Rockefeller Foundation grant. Rivera’s plays have been produced worldwide and translated into seven languages, and include Cloud Tectonics, Each Day Dies with Sleep, Sonnets for an Old Century, Sueno, Giants Have Us in Their Books, Marciela de la Luz Lights the World, Marisol, Adoration of the Old Woman and Massacre (Sing to Your Children).

The Puerto-Rican born Rivera, a playwright and screenwriter, earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay for The Motorcycle Diaries, directed by Walter Salles, as well as a British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award and a Writers Guild Award. The screenplay also garnered Spain’s Goya Award and Argentina’s top award for screenwriting.

His School of the Americas premiered at the Public Theatre in New York in July of 2006 in a co-production with the LAByrinth Theatre Company. Rivera is also writing The Untranslatable Secrets of Orlando Corona and a screen adaptation of Jack Kerouac’s On the Road for Walter Salles. He will make his feature film directing debut with Celestina, based on his play Cloud Tectonics which is soon to be released.

<http://theatreschool.depaul.edu>
FROM MAGICAL REALISM TO MARVELOUS REALITY
by Shelly Jarrett Bromberg

The history of the term “Magical Realism” begins with the German art critic, Franz Roh, who first coined the phrase to describe the work of Post-Expressionist painters such as Bathus and Chagall working in the 1920s. For Roh, the term explained best how many of these works pushed the limits of reality through shifts in perspective and incongruent imagery.

In the 1940s the term surfaces again, this time in Latin America where its two main proponents, the Venezuelan writer and critic Arturo Uslar Pietri and the Cuban author Alejo Carpentier, examined the value of Magical Realism for describing Latin American experience and expression. While Uslar Pietri followed Roh’s definition of Magical Realism as a conscious manipulation of reality, Carpentier was more interested in the marvelous elements of Magical Realism. In the prologue to his 1949 novel The Kingdom of This World, Carpentier explains that it was while he was in Haiti that he first realized the need for a way to describe the unique blend of history and culture omnipresent in Haitian reality. Far beyond terms, such as surreal, Carpentier concludes that the day-to-day shifts in reality he experienced might be best described as marvelous for there is nothing out of the ordinary about Haitian existence; at least not for Haitians (“Prólogo” El reino de este mundo 7-12).1

Carpentier’s insistence on the quotidian peculiarities of Marvelous Reality is central, for what he is talking about is a philosophical disjunction that began with the arrival of Europeans in the New World. From the earliest letters that Christopher Columbus sent back to Queen Isabella of Spain onwards, much of the early history of Latin America written by Europeans tells of magical beings never before seen and marvelous places just beyond the horizon. Indeed, we know that much of what these explorers saw was simply outside their realm of experience or expression. Unable to comprehend or even describe the New World from an Old World perspective, tales of the marvelous became the norm and “the history of America” became “a chronicle of Marvelous Realism” (“Prólogo 12).

Thus, rather than “Magical Realism,” Carpentier proposes the term “Marvelous Reality” to stress the idea that this augmented reality is not an artists’ creation, but simply a reflection of Latin American experience: “Marvelous Reality, is our Marvelous Reality, it is that which we find in a brutal, latent, omnipresent state throughout Latin America. Here the uncommon is quotidian and always was quotidian” (“Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso” 130). This shift from Magical Realism to Marvelous Reality proved pivotal for many Latin American writers, including the Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez who, like Carpentier, saw a direct link between Latin American existence and Marvelous Reality. In his 1982 Nobel lecture, García Márquez goes further, suggesting that the sense of solitude and alienation felt by many Latin Americans is a direct result of this difficulty to communicate the incommunicable. Speaking of the “unbridled reality” of Latin America, García Márquez says, “we have had to ask little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable” (Nobel Lecture trans. A. Ruch).

This difficulty in conveying the unusual as usual explains, in part, the often-heated debates centered on a clear definition of Magical Realism. Even in contemporary criticism Magical Realism has as many detractors as supporters. For many, it is simply a reworking of existing terminology for describing everything from fantasy to science fiction. For others, Magical Realism has become the default term for creative expressions that defy these same conventional categories. Yet, if we follow Carpentier’s life-long evolvement of the term we begin to understand how Marvelous Reality operates on a deeper more complex level that challenges us all to rethink and reconsider just what constitutes our reality.

1 All translations from the Spanish are mine, unless otherwise noted.
FROM MAGICAL REALISM TO MARVELOUS REALITY
continued from the previous page

WORKS CITED:
- - - . "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" La novela latinoamericana en vísperas de nuestro siglo.

Shelley Jarrett Bromberg received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Texas, Austin.
She is an Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Miami Hamilton and an affiliate in American
and Latin American Studies. While her research interests continue to focus on 20th century Latin American
literature and culture with a specialization in Caribbean Studies in Spanish, French, and English, she is
involved in several ongoing public engagement projects with students and in the Latino community in the
Greater Cincinnati area.

SOUND DESIGN
by Jay Rozema

The sound design for this production focuses on several aspects of the play. First, I looked at the
two primary characters and what they go through in this production. Their love for one another, inability
to fully understand each other, and how the two actually mesh were all influences in the music choices.
Second, using a fairly typical Latin instrument, the acoustic guitar, the music choices reflect the Latin
society, characters, and their perspectives. Although other musical instruments are also associated with the
Latin society (trumpet, violin, etc.) the guitar came across as the most emotionally expressive instrument.
Third, the rhythms and instrument choices themselves were crucial. I asked if the musical piece has one
guitar or two, or even more, and did the guitar have to be acoustic and how that choice reflected the
action of the play.

Does "time" have a sound?
What vibrating string played by what virtuoso accompanies the passage of "time"?

José Rivera explores the idea of time in Cloud Tectonics with these questions. This exploration has
been a fascinating and wonderful journey for the sound design. How can the sound design explore the two
different "times" that intersect within the play? Where do you and I hear our internal "time" sounds? You'll
find that we made one choice for this production, but it should not be the only choice. José Rivera asks a
fascinating question that I hope all of us will explore.
LIGHTING DESIGN
by Michael Warden

What is magic really? Is magic something that is unattainable by most of us? Is it a stretch of reality? Is it imagination? Part of daily life? Is it an illusion; smoke and mirrors? Magic is what we want it to be. Tonight, magic is a stretching of reality with a bit of imagination, and a little help from the tried and true smoke and mirrors effect.

The lighting in this show is far beyond the pure need for illumination, colors pull you into different worlds, allowing the real world and the magical world to mix very carefully. While blue, gold, and purple give a mystical shine to one world, sharp lines with yellow, orange, and red, make another world feel harsh and broken.

This design evolved from a need to discover what exactly makes things feel magical and mystical in everyday life, be that a blooming flower, a castle in the distance, or a star bursting millions of miles away. I only hope that you see the magic that I see tonight.

DON'T MISS THE NEXT SECONDSTAGE SHOW!

The Insanity of Mary Girard
March 5–8, 8 pm
March 8–9, 2 pm
by Lanie Robertson
directed by Nicole Wilder
Studio 88 Theatre

What does it mean to be insane? Is it a state of mind or a state of circumstance? Set in 1790 Pennsylvania and based on actual events, “The Insanity of Mary Girard” explores the plight of a woman confined to an insane asylum by her husband. She might have been sane when she arrived, but how long before she believes the voices telling her that she doesn’t belong in the outside world? How long can her mind endure?

Tickets: $9 Public, $8 Srs, $6 Students
MU Box Office
513-529-3200
www.tickets.muohio.edu
COSTUME AND SCENERY DESIGN NOTES
by Shiree Campbell

Designing the scenery and costumes of Cloud Tectonics has really been a journey of discovering the relationships between three worlds and seeing how those three worlds coexist in our world, in the space of the play, and in the characters themselves.

The first world is on the outside (LA 1995). It is a time of earthquakes, fires, political upheavals, gang violence, and murder. The evidence of this harsh world is present in the outer parts of the main scenic design. It is in the rubble left over from the earthquakes, the harsh sharp edges of the linked fence in the background, and the warm and dirty colors of the outer parts of the floor. It is a damaged world that is in pieces.

The second layer is where Anibal lives. His very simple home with hand-me-down furniture represents the everyday. In this space there are everyday items: a refrigerator, a stove, a sink, table, and chairs. It is an ordinary, perhaps slightly boring, and very comfortable space. This is represented in the combination of circular (comforting) shapes and in everyday (ordinary/boring) square objects.

Finally there is the third layer; the magical layer. Paintings by Carlos Almaraz are the kind of beauty and magic aimed for. A particularly lovely piece of Echo Park in LA has been the most inspirational to both the director and myself. This magic is revealed fully in the climatic magical bed sequence, however is still present throughout the show in the painted spheres both on the floor and back fence.

It is important that the magic or the chaotic harshness never fully disappear. These two worlds combine and coexist with the mundane. Through my process I was surprised that my research of destruction and beauty did not become a strict dichotomy. I was expecting my research to build up into destruction on one side and beauty on the other. I soon realized how much the two really coincide and soon found that my research took the shape of a nebula; with destruction being represented in sharp diagonals around the outside, the normal world by circular and comforting colors in the middle, and finally this epicenter of magical color and light at the center.

This analogy works well because of the importance of celestial bodies in the play. Anibal de la Luna is very much the moon and Celestina del Sol is the sun. In the set I chose the magic to be presented in colorful spheres to further emphasis this importance. I also took the idea of the celestial bodies into mind with the analysis of the characters in terms of their costumes.
Celestina, the sun is representative of the magical world. She is unearthy and brilliant. This translated into a beautiful yellow color as well as long elegant lines. She is at her least celestial moment when Anibal first picks her up, and at her most celestial when she changes into her nightgown, which also gives her even more grace in the movement with the longer material. Anibal is the moon and Celestina's counterpoint. He is your everyday guy who comes home every night just to go to bed and get up the next morning to do it again. He works for the airport and leads a simple existence in his navy blue uniform just like a hundred other guys.

In contrast to both of these celestial bodies, there is Nelson. Nelson is the Earth and the outside destructive world in the play. He first comes in representing all of the loudness and violence of the outside world and it is fitting that since he is going into war that he is also dressed to serve. His camouflaged pants are yet another representation of the outside destructive world. When Nelson later returns he is beaten down and stripped of his personal identity. In his former place is a weakened man no longer striving to be an individual but a man who has bought into a very American and homogenized identity. His new calmness is shown in a blue shirt and his new commercial identity in the polo and khakis.

These three worlds, celestial bodies, and characters come together to make up the world of the play and even our own real world. Overall, in the scenery and costumes what is important to me is not that the audience gets all of the metaphors and personal meanings that I have derived from this play, but instead that at the very least they will not only see the destruction and chaos around but also see and appreciate the rich and beautiful magic that is pervading the simplicity of their everyday lives.
WHO’S WHO IN THE COMPANY

Daniella Briseno (Celestina del Sol) is a senior theatre major who was recently seen at Miami as Cassandra in The Trojan Women, and as Steve in The Shadow Box. She has been nominated for a KCACTF award for her role in The Trojan Women, as well as her makeup design for The Shadow Box. Daniella is excited to participate in this show with such a talented cast and would like to thank Alex, Jason, Meg, Val, and Mike for an amazing experience. She would like to thank her loved ones for their support.

Sheree Campbell (Scenic and Costume Designer) is in her final semester here at Miami. She has worked in the costume Shop, scene Shop, and as a house manager for MUT. She has performed in Scapin, How I Learned to Drive, and The Shadow Box, was the dramaturg for The Shadow Box, assistant technical director for Candide, an assistant costume designer for The Skriker, and has found that her passion is in theatre design. She hopes to be attending graduate school this following fall for Costume Design in particular.

Josh Clabaugh (Technical Director) a junior theatre major, is a veteran of many stage and electrics crews. He also served as assistant technical director and deck crew chief for Candide and as assistant props master for The Trojan Women.

Lin Conaway (Costume Design Advisor) is Professor of Theatre at Miami who specializes in costume design and movement for the actor. She is a charter member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) on which board of governors she served as chair of the Theatre Movement Program. She has been chair of the Association of Theatre Movement Professionals and has served as conference planner and editor for this group both for the University/College Theatre Association and ATHE. She is a former regional chair and member of the national committee for the Kennedy Center/ American College Theatre Festival (KC/ACTF) and served as a member of a National Selection Team for the National KC/ACTF Festival. Lin served on the Executive Committee of KC/ACTF Region III for more than a decade. Lin was honored for outstanding contribution to theatre education as a recipient of the Kennedy Center Gold Medallion. Currently she is the Regional Representative to the National Partners of the American Theatre, (NAPAT).

Gion DeFrancesco (Scenic Design Advisor) joined the faculty of Miami University in the fall of 2001 and teaches courses in scene design, design communication skills, scene painting and American musical theatre. He also designs scenery and serves as scenic charge artist for MU Theatre productions. Favorite designs at Miami include Pentecost, In Quest of Love, As Bees in Honey Drown, A View From the Bridge, and The Good Person of Setzuan. Regionally he has designed and painted at a number of theatres including Big River at the Gallery Players of Brooklyn, I Love You! You’re Perfect! Now Change! at the Florida Repertory Theatre, and The Magic Flute at the Illinois Opera Theatre. His 2006 design for Ovation Theatre’s production of The Little Foxes earned a Cincinnati Enquirer Acclaim Award.

Meg Haven (Stage Manager) is excited to finally get to work on a Rivera play. Meg would like to thank Mike for his trust and honesty, Val for doing so much amazing work, and the cast and crew for their hard work. Above all, thank you to Meg’s family, friends, and wonderful coworkers: without your support, none of this would be possible.

Alex Homer (Anibal de la Luna) is a junior theatre major hailing from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. Alex was last seen on Miami’s Mainstage as Rawheadandbloodybones in The Skriker or down in Studio 88 as the straight man in Clown Logic: Truth is a Joke. Alex would like to thank his parents and family for all their support. Mike for giving him the opportunity to act, Dr. Doan and the rest of the faculty for teaching him, and Daniella and Jason for being a part of this amazing experience with him.

Jason Howard (Nelson de la Luna) This is Jason’s fifth production with Miami University. He is a fourth year theatre major, who has also worked with The Mad Anthony Theatre in Hamilton, Hamilton Civic Theatre, Tanze Art Studio under the direction of Susan Moser, and the Miami Valley Ballet Company under the choreographer, Kevin Bell.
Paul Jackson (Directing Advisor) is Professor of Theatre at Miami University. Prior to coming to Miami, he was Associate Professor and Chair at Spelman College. His theatre and performance interests center on the African Diaspora, post colonialism and issues of race, class, gender and sexuality. In 2002, he directed Suzan-Lori Parks’ Venus. He is co-editor of “Intersecting Boundaries: The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy.” He has also been guest professor at Mount Holyoke College. He is an active member of National Association of Schools of Theatre, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, of which he presently serves on the Strategic Planning Committee, the Black Theatre Network, and the Modern Language Association. He is the editor of “Blackstream,” a journal devoted to conference papers of the Black Theatre Association (ATHE). A recent production he directed at Miami University, Bourbon at the Border was selected for regional entry for the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival.

Michael Mellas (Director) is a second year masters of theatre student at Miami University. He received his B.A. from Bucknell University with a double major in english and theatre, and a minor in education. Some of his projects at Miami include performing in a staged reading at last year’s NAWPA conference, participating in a Thai movement workshop, and directing the one-act A Dead Man’s Apartment. Mike would like to thank his cast and crew for a wonderful and beautiful experience with Cloud Tectonics.

Steven R. Pauna (Technical Advisor) joined the department of theatre as faculty technical director in 2000 and has also served as department properties master since 2002. He is an active presenter at United States Institute for Theatre Technology national conventions and currently serves as secretary for the regional branch, USITT Ohio-Valley. He is also a participating member of the Popular Culture Association and the League of Historic American Theatres. Professional credits include the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and five seasons of technical direction and/or scene design with the Porthouse Theatre Company, which performs on the grounds of the Blossom Music Center near Cleveland.

Jay S. Rozema (Sound Designer and Lighting Design Advisor) is the resident Lighting and Sound Designer and Assistant Professor for the department of theatre at Miami. He has earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from The Florida State University School of Theatre and a BFA from the University of Arizona. Jay has recently designed for the La Comedia Dinner Theatre, ColeBeanBay Theatre Company, and for the City of Germantown, Tennessee. Beyond designing Jay has worked for the Peterborough Players, Interlochen Arts Academy, The Freed Center for the Performing Arts, and was the production manager for the Givens Performing Arts Center. Jay regularly teaches courses in Lighting and Sound Design, Stage Management, and Script Analysis.

Valerie Stone (Assistant Stage Manager) is a junior theatre major who doubles as the president of Miami’s student branch of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a medieval reenactment group. Her technical theatre experience includes running the light board for The Skriker, being a set run crew member of Candide, as well as operating the fly rail and being on the props run crew for The Good Person of Setzuan. She thanks her fiancé and parents for their support in all her endeavors.

Michael Warden (Lighting Designer) is a senior theatre major, launching his first large-scale actualized design tonight. He hopes your imagination enjoys it as much as his does. Some previous work he’s done includes design elements and assistant work in: The Skriker (lights), Last 5 Years with NSC in Cincinnati (set), Candide (lights), and work on Rhinocerous, Pentecost, The Goat and All’s Well that Ends Well. Mike would, above all, like to thank his mother for her everlasting love, support, and kicking.
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

Artistic Director/Producer: Elizabeth Reitz-Mullenix
Production Manager: Gion DeFrancesco
Technical Director: Steven Pauna
Scene Shop Supervisor: Tom Featherstone
Scene Shop Staff: Chrissy Alaimo, Jacob Carr, Brandon Cirillo, Brian Farkas, Matthew Forrest, Kerri Heidkamp, Caroline Kristoffersen, James Lees, Bryan Schmidt, Catherine Turco
Scenery Construction: Chelsea Cameron, Tanisha Charles, John Crowley, Caroline David, Kaleigh Dillingham, Taylor Fenderbosch, Laura Ferdinand, Ashley Goos, Scott Hoskins, Jason Howard, Olivia Ifergan, Matt Jolly, Erica Keeney, Rosemary Marston, Stephanie Mater, Andrea Medaas, Monica Morse, Abby Petrasko, Ryan Ruggard, Jim Siegel, Countney Stahl
Electrics Supervisor: Jay Rozema
Electrics Staff: Alex Bozworth, Matt Harr, Scott Hoskins, Michael Warden
Electrics Crew: Zach Bohnson, Sarah Burns, Tommy DeSalvo, Kara Ferguson, Colin Kelly, Eric Lesch, Freddie Meyer, Keven Nelson, Andrew Nilsen, Ryan Singer, Drew Thiele, Josh Wonser
Property Master: Steven Pauna
Property Construction Crew: Josh Clabaugh, Katelyn Hawthorne, Emily LaFratta
Scenic Charge Artist: Gion DeFrancesco
Scenic Artists: Tyler French, Julie Lemieux
Costume Shop Supervisor: Meggan Peters
Costume Shop Staff: Mel Brenner, Shiree Campbell, Allie Kunkler, Shannon McGill, Kelly Morton, Rose Reynolds, Abigail Rudolph
Costume Construction: Kristin Anderlie, Nicole Claire, Cody Dick, Kevin Donnelly, Karli Eirich, Nick Federico, Zach Gaver, Jessica Jambor, Eric Neiderhelman, Brittany Radic, Elizabeth Reinglass, Maria Sostrom, Heather Weaver, Erik Zachwieja, Cody Ziler
Marketing Manager: Jeannie Harmeyer
Curricular Connections: Susan Thomas
House Managers: Mel Brenner, Shiree Campbell
Audience Development Crew: Susan Baker, Sarvesh Chelanvanambi, Nicole Davis, Davia DeFries, Lucas Frazier, Emily Giant, Ashley Goos, Jesslyn Harris, Tom Hurst, Christina Karam, Lauren Kelly, Katherine Kozelski, Sharon Louallen, Heather Nihiser, Maura Person, Stephanie Sacks
Administrative Assistant: Karen Smith
Senior Accounting Assistant: Angela Clark
Student Office Assistant: Kelli Hughes
Student Production Assistant: Rosemary Marston
Vocal Coach: Julia Guichard
The Kennedy Center
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The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival
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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KC ACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KC ACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KC ACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KC ACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KC ACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2008.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KC ACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KC ACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.
Coming in April...

An Evening of One Act Plays
by Miami Alumni and Students
Directed by Howard Blanning

April 10-12, 8:00 pm
April 17-19, 8:00 pm
April 20, 2:00 pm
Gates-Abegglen Theatre

Compact, concise, direct. These features often lead playwrights to write one-act plays. Our evening will highlight a unique group of voices from around the world, all with one thing in common. Each of our playwrights is or has been a student at Miami University. Meet a diverse range of characters, consider new perspectives, and celebrate the work of our students.

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Department of Theatre
Above: The set as it appears before *Cloud Tectonics* begins, as the audience enters.

Right: The set as it appears by the end of the prologue.
Left: Aníbal comforting Celestina, page 8.
“I promise not to touch your knees, okay?”

Below: Celestina dancing as she enters Aníbal’s apartment for the first time, page 11.
Above Left: Aníbal tries to sooth Celestina’s contraction pain, page 13. “Celestina, please…if you…if you sat down I’d feel a lot better…”

Above: Celestina caresses Aníbal’s neck, page 18. “I think about sex all the time…”

Left: Celestina explains who she is to Aníbal, page 24. “Papi told me he was twenty-five when I was born. Before he died, we celebrated his seventy-ninth birthday.”
Above: Nelson excitingly prepares for the ‘mysterious’ woman Aníbal has ‘hidden’ in the bathroom, page 29. “What? I’ll have that bitch howlin’ at the moon!”

Above: Nelson professes his love for Celestina the only way he knows how, page 34.
“And if you ain’t found that baby’s father, I just might ask you to marry me.”

Right: Nelson listens to Celestina’s unborn baby, page 35.
“I can hear the ocean! Stars being scraped across the sky!”
Right: Celestina and Aníbal steal a glance during their silent dinner, page 38.

Below: Aníbal kisses Celestina’s toes at her request, page 45.
Above and Left: Celestina and Aníbal express their love for each other on their “magical” bed, page 48.
Left: Nelson attacks Aníbal, page 56.

Below: Nelson begs forgiveness while Celestina tends to the injured Aníbal.
“I’m sorry, bro. I’m not myself. Something in myself got taken out sometime as I was looking through the sights of the tank, lining up targets, watching things blow up. Jesus, shit! I got so much I gotta forget!”
Left: Aníbal, now an old man, regains his memory when Celestina rubs his feet, page 70.
“It took me years, but I finally understood that I had encountered a true mystery that night, that I had taken a living miracle into my house. That Celestina del Sol was from a world I would never understand. That sometimes Nature improvises.”

Below: Celestina leaves Aníbal, again an old man, and ends the play as she began it – hitchhiking in Los Angeles, page 71.
Cloud Tectonics

By José Rivera
Directed by Mike Mellas

Sometimes nature improvises

February 6–9, 2008, 8 pm
February 10, 2 pm
Studio 88 Theatre
$9 Public, $8 Seniors, $6 Students/Youth

MU BOX OFFICE, 513-529-3200
www.tickets.muohio.edu
Cloud Tectonics
Ansley Valentine

Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2008 1:29 AM
To: DeFrancesco, Gion A. Mr.; Mellas, Michael J. Mr.

Michael and Gion--

Thanks again for a great evening in the theatre. I really enjoyed CLOUD TECTONICS. And I came back to my hotel room, thinking I could quickly write up my comments. But, I have been writing and thinking for a good hour and a half, and have three pages on set and costumes--and I am just starting. I see that as I think more about this play, my response and thoughts are continuing to unfold--particularly in relationship to the text and the images you created.

I will continue to work on this as I drive home in the morning. (I have a little digital recorder.) I find that this play and your production raise so many questions and thoughts for me--and that is great. It is not often that I feel quite so challenged.

I would stay up all night and continue to write. However, since I am still recovering, I best not over do it. Nonetheless, I will do my best to get you a speedy response--before tech and other things take over my life at the end of next week.

Best wishes for your final performance. And thank you for taking on this play.

Yours truly,

Ansley Valentine
Associate Professor
Co-Vice Chair, Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Region III
College of Wooster Film Studies Program Chair

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PROLOGUE

(Los Angeles. Night. A bare stage with:)

(A floating bed, high in the air, tilted so the upstage headboard is slightly higher than the downstage footboard.)

(A glass wall. Water drips down the side of the glass wall. It represents a city bus stop during a rainstorm.)

(A pair of microphones on C-stands, downstage, a few feet apart.)

(The Prologue begins with bolero music: Los Panchos singing "Por El Amor De Una Mujer.")

(CELESTINA DEL SOL is standing at the bus stop. There’s the sound of rain. CELESTINA is soaking wet. She carries a small shopping bag. She wears a thin maternity dress and she shivers. She looks exhausted, as if she’s been wandering on foot for days. It’s impossible to tell her actual age. It’s impossible to tell if she’s rich or poor. She’s very, very pregnant.)

(As the bolero plays, CELESTINA holds her thumb out, hoping to catch a ride, but there doesn’t seem to be any traffic in Los Angeles tonight. She reaches into a pocket, pulls out some saltine crackers, and eats them hungrily, savoring each bite.)

(Car lights wash over CELESTINA. She sticks her thumb up higher. The lights cruise past her and disappear. Disappointed, CELESTINA eats another cracker.)

(We wait for the bolero to end or fade out.)
CLOUD TECTONICS

(A moment’s silence, then another car’s headlights pass over CELESTINA. This time they stay on her. She holds her thumb up expectantly. The car’s horn beckons her, and she happily leaves the wall and goes to one of the microphones.)

(The microphones are suddenly awash in red light.)

(ANÍBAL DE LA LUNA enters and goes to the other microphone. ANÍBAL is a pleasant-looking man, thirties, dressed in an American Airlines ground crew uniform. ANÍBAL and CELESTINA perform the following scene into the microphones. At no time do they pantomime being in a car. During the Prologue, ANÍBAL’s house in the Echo Park section of Los Angeles is loaded in. This takes as long at the Prologue takes to perform.)

CELESTINA

(Shivering) Thank you so much for this.

ANÍBAL

Jesus, you’re soaked. There’s a jacket in the backseat.

CELESTINA

(Putting on jacket) Thank you.

(Short beat)

ANÍBAL

I can’t believe anyone’s out in that deluge. They’re calling it the storm of the century.

CELESTINA

Where am I?

ANÍBAL

Los Angeles.

CELESTINA

(Troubled) Los Angeles?
PROLOGUE

ANÍBAL
Corner of Virgil and Santa Monica.

CELESTINA
(Means nothing to her) Oh.

(CELESTINA says no more. She just rubs her pregnant stomach and stares ahead. Her silence makes ANÍBAL a little nervous.)

ANÍBAL
Can you believe this rain for L.A.? Coño! Raging floods on Fairfax...bodies floating down the L.A. River...L.A.X closed...if the Big One came right now, forget it, half this city would die. But that's L.A. for you: disasters just waiting to happen.

(ANÍBAL laughs. No response from CELESTINA.)

ANÍBAL
I lived in New York. Lived in every borough except Staten Island. And Brooklyn. And Queens. And the thing is, New York kills its people one-by-one, you know? A gun here, a knife there, hand-to-hand combat at the A T M, little countable deaths. But this? This L.A thing? We're talking mass death, mass destruction. One freak flood at the wrong time of year and hundreds die...the atmosphere sags from its own toxic heavi ness and thousands perish...the Big One is finally born, eats a hundred thousand souls for breakfast. And I'm not even talking fire season!

(CELESTINA looks at ANÍBAL for the first time.)

CELESTINA
Why don't you go back to New York?

ANÍBAL
Are you kidding? I love it here. I have a house here. I have gorgeous fucking incredible-looking women
falling outta the sky here! Coño, I've made a commitment to that!

(No response from Celestina. She eats a cracker quietly, her mind far away. Aníbal looks at her a long moment.)

Aníbal

You all right?

Celebrina

The trucker that dropped me off kept touching my knees and I screamed.

Aníbal

How long were you out there?

Celebrina

I don't know.

Aníbal

You don't know?

Celebrina

I don't have a watch...I don't keep a watch...I don't keep "time".... "Time" and I don't hang out together!

Aníbal

(Not understanding) Oh. Where can I take you?

Celebrina

I don't know.

Aníbal

Where were you hitching to?

Celebrina

Nowhere. I'm not going anywhere. I don't know where I'm going, I'm sorry.
PROLOGUE

ANÍBAL
You're just out there hitching? In a hurricane? Pregnant? For fun?

CELESTINA
Are you going to ask me a lot of questions?

ANÍBAL
Why don't I take you to a hospital? Get someone to check out your baby.

CELESTINA
No! No! Don't do that! I don't want doctors asking me a lot of questions!

ANÍBAL
Maybe the police could....

CELESTINA
No police! Please! No police! I don't want to go to the police!

ANÍBAL
No friends or family in L A?

CELESTINA
No one. I have no one. You're the only one I have!

ANÍBAL
(Choosing to ignore that) Well, you're in my car, I gotta take you somewhere....

CELESTINA
Take me to this baby's father. I'm looking for this baby's father. His name is Rodrigo Cruz. Do you know him? He's a very handsome and dishonest man.

ANÍBAL
No, I don't think I....
CELESTINA
Nobody knows him. I ask everybody. That trucker took me to every state looking for Rodrigo Cruz!

ANÍBAL

...I'm sorry....

CELESTINA
I started my journey on Montauk Point: a room in a house, very small, my Papi sailed boats for tourists, it was some distance back—but I—I lost all track of "time"—I hate to use that word—"time"—but it's the only word I have, isn't it?

ANÍBAL
Coño, I'm not following this....

CELESTINA
I can give you details of Rodrigo Cruz. He worked for Papi, repairing the boat. His eyes were ocean-green. His back was wrinkled. But I can't tell you when he was like that, okay? He might have changed, you see? I can't tell you his age. Do you know how hard it is to find someone when you can't tell anyone their age?

ANÍBAL
Well, it's not a problem I ever....

CELESTINA
All this traveling has been a blur! It's a huge country! I never should have left my house in Montauk! I was safe in my house! Papi and Mami had it all worked out for me! They took away all the clocks!

ANÍBAL
(completely lost) The clocks?
PROLOGUE

CELESTINA
But I was sleeping when that gorgeous son-of-a-bitch Rodrigo Cruz came into my room! He knocked me up! He left! Now look at me! I’m starving and lost and sick of these soggy FUCKING crackers...and I’m just so tired of being **pregnant!!**

ANÍBAL
(Worried) Take it easy...

CELESTINA
You can let me out right here, I’m sorry!

ANÍBAL
But we haven’t moved. Light’s still red.

CELESTINA
Please, I don’t want to bother you anymore.

ANÍBAL
I don’t want you sleeping outside. Not with a baby coming.

CELESTINA
I’ve done it before!

(The relentless rain slaps the car as ANÍBAL contemplates his options.)

ANÍBAL
Coño, okay, listen: if you promise me you’re not an axe-murderer...I promise you I’m not an axe-murderer too, okay? You can stay in my house tonight, okay? Just tonight, okay? I’m right up here in Echo Park, okay?

CELESTINA
I can? I can’t.
ANÍBAL

I promise not to touch your knees, okay?

(Celestina looks at Aníbal.)

CELESTINA

What's your name?

ANÍBAL

Oh, I'm sorry. Aníbal de la Luna. Nice to meet you.

CELESTINA

I'm Celestina del Sol.

(She reaches out her hand. Aníbal and Celestina shake hands. She smiles.)

CELESTINA

Okay. Let's go to your place.

(The light turns green.)

(The lights go down on Aníbal and Celestina. The crew finishes assembling Aníbal's house. Aníbal and Celestina exit.)

(The microphones are struck.)

END OF PROLOGUE
CLOUD TECTONICS

(The lights are dark in ANÍBAL’s house, a modest pre-W W II wooden bungalow, working class, not Hollywood.)

(The living room, kitchen, and small eating area are basically one room full of sentimental family pictures, and second- and thirdhand furniture. The door in the living room leads to the front porch. Another door leads to the bathroom.)

(There are a couple of subtle plaster cracks on the walls from a recent earthquake.)

(Everything—sink, television, stereo, refrigerator, microwave, V C R, telephone, O’Keefe & Merrit stove, etc.—should be fully functional. There’s a Sparkletts water dispenser in the kitchen; the bottle is empty.)

(The only light in the house comes from the glowing digital clocks on all the appliances. It’s 8:05 P.M.)

(The glass wall has been incorporated into the house. Two ladders have been placed next to the floating bed to make it accessible to the living room.)

(We hear footsteps. The sound of keys unlocking the front door. The door opens. Suddenly all the digital clocks turn off and come back on blinking a new time: 12:00. It stays 12:00 for the rest of the scene.)

(CELESTINA and ANÍBAL enter from the porch. Both are dripping wet. CELESTINA now wears a thin suede jacket. ANÍBAL carries in a five-gallon bottle of Sparkletts water.)
(With the door wide open we hear distant police, ambulance, and fire truck sirens. CELESTINA closes the door, and the sirens stop.)

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Watch your step.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It's a pretty house.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>It's a craftsman. Built in the Forties.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Is that old?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>In LA it's the Middle Ages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(Not understanding) Oh.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(ANÍBAL puts the water bottle on the kitchen floor as CELESTINA takes off the wet jacket. They both take off their water-logged shoes.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(Re her shoes) Just leave them anywhere.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(Looking around, smiles) I'll never forget this as long as I live.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Let me turn up the heat. Get some light going here.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(ANÍBAL turns up the heat and turns on some lights.)</td>
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José Rivera

(ANÍBAL looks over at CELESTINA—getting his first full view of her. She's much more pregnant, and much more beautiful, than he realized. She smiles warmly at him.)

CELESTINA

You have the most beautiful house, Aníbal.

ANÍBAL

It’s dry at least. More than I can say for you.

(ANÍBAL goes to the bathroom and comes back with a towel, which he tosses to CELESTINA. She dries her face, arms, and feet.)

CELESTINA

You're the kindest, most beautiful man in the world! And this is the happiest night of my life!

ANÍBAL

(Smiles) Can I get you anything to drink?

CELESTINA

(Eager) Water. Please.

(ANÍBAL goes to the kitchen.)

ANÍBAL

So please make yourself at home. Sit. Relax.

(ANÍBAL puts the full Sparkletts bottle on the dispenser. He takes the empty bottle out to the porch. Again, as he opens the door, we hear distant sirens, which stop when he closes the door.)

(Too happy to sit still, CELESTINA starts exploring the house, checking out pictures on tables, books on bookshelves, etc.)

CELESTINA

Everything is so beautiful. Everything in order.
My little room in Montauk had no order. It wasn't big, but it was my whole world. Things were everywhere, on top of everything: I'd sleep in my clothes, and eat in bed, and read detective novels; hardly ever sleep, dream wide awake, make plans that were never fulfilled, watch storms coming in, laugh at the moon's neurotic phases, moon stars being scraped across the sky, dance, sing boleros, make love to myself over and over, live a whole life in one room! (She laughs as she holds herself and does a little dance around the room.)

(Giving her a look) You want a quesadilla?

And my Mami and Papi worked so hard for me. They loved me so much, they thought I was cursed! They really did! They put everything in its proper place for me!

(Aníbal looks at Celestina a long moment, not sure what to make of all this.)

Your parents thought you were cursed?

Yeah. They're dead. I'd love a quesadilla.

Wait.

ANÍBAL
José Rivera

CELESTINA
Papi used to cross himself when he looked at me. Mami wouldn't breast feed me. They kept eighteen statues of Jesus Christ in my room!

ANÍBAL
Wait. Why did you live in one room...?

(CELESTINA looks at ANÍBAL, aware of his look. She laughs.)

CELESTINA
I'm not a lunatic. Hey. You're in no danger, stranger. It's just hard for me to tell a story, Straight.

ANÍBAL
(Worried; re her baby) Just take it easy. For both of you.

CELESTINA
(Touching her stomach) This baby must think I'm a lunatic too!

But I don’t—

CELESTINA
I wonder what this baby hears. Oh God! This baby must’ve heard me talking to that trucker, and all his dirty words! Ugly, filthy man!

(CELESTINA suddenly gets a fierce contraction that doubles her over. ANÍBAL goes to her and takes her hand.)

ANÍBAL
Celestina, please...if you...if you sat down, I'd feel a lot better...

CELESTINA
(Pain) Why?
ANÍBAL

'Cause if you get too agitated, you might...I mean, I don't want you having that baby all over my floor tonight....

CELESTINA

And your floor is so clean!

ANÍBAL

Yes...I mean, you're not, like, coño, due tonight, are you?

CELESTINA

(Pain subsiding) I don't know.

ANÍBAL

You don't know?

(The discomfort goes away, and CELESTINA straightens up again. She smiles as if nothing happened.)

CELESTINA

I don't think so.

ANÍBAL

Well, wait. How pregnant are you? Exactly.

CELESTINA

(Defensive) What do you mean?

ANÍBAL

How far along are you?

CELESTINA

I'm not really sure.

ANÍBAL

You're not sure?

CELESTINA

This is the warmest, most enchanting house I've ever....
José Rivera

ANÍBAL

Wait. Isn’t knowing how pregnant you are...a little basic? Like knowing your age?

CELESTINA

Yes...yes it is...but you should never ask a woman’s age, you might not like what you hear! (Smiles at him) Can I have my water?

1. (ANÍBAL looks at CELESTINA—then goes to the Sparkletts dispenser and pours CELESTINA a tall glass of water. He gives it to her.)

2. (CELESTINA drinks the water very fast, almost choking on it, like she hasn’t had water in a long time. Finished, she holds out her empty glass for more.)

(As ANÍBAL takes CELESTINA’s empty glass and goes back for a refill, CELESTINA finds a framed picture of a young woman on a table.)

CELESTINA

So do you have a lot of “gorgeous fucking incredible-looking women” in your life, Aníbal?

3. (ANÍBAL hands CELESTINA the glass of water.)

ANÍBAL

(Re photograph) Well, no. Well, one. That one.

CELESTINA

She’s beautiful.

ANÍBAL

That’s Debbie.

(CELESTINA looks at the photograph a long time. ANÍBAL waits for her to say something.)
ANÍBAL

She's at her office now. She sleeps there a lot. She works for Disney. She answers phones. She's gorgeous. She's Puerto Rican too, but she changed her name from Epifania Niguayona Gonzalez to Debbie Shapiro. They still don't respect her. She thinks they do. But she's deluding herself. I can tell. I know guys. I know when a guy is thinking pussy, and every guy she works with at Disney is thinking pussy, she thinks they're thinking brain cells. They're not going to make her an executive like she thinks. She's going to remain a receptionist until she turns thirty, then they're gonna fire her and get a younger, prettier, whiter-looking Latin girl to replace her.

CELESTINA

Will she mind my being here?

ANÍBAL

She'd hate it except you're pregnant. Deb doesn't believe in friendship between the sexes, she believes in sex between the sexes. Being pregnant makes you safe.

CELESTINA

(Surprised) I'm safe?

ANÍBAL

Guess so.

(CELESTINA puts the photograph down, finishes her glass of water, and looks at ANÍBAL.)

CELESTINA

What do you believe? Sex or friendship?

ANÍBAL

I believe friendship between the sexes is not only possible, it's preferable. Makes everything cleaner. But
then I don’t work in the movie business. I load luggage at LAX. There’s no sex in that job.

CELESTINA

(Shocked) None?

(Beat. ANIBAL isn’t sure how far he wants this conversation to go, but there’s something about CELESTINA. He can’t help but open up to her.)

ANIBAL

The closest is...I look up at an airplane sometimes and it’s full of people going to New York and sometimes I make eye contact with a woman at a windowseat in First Class. And she’s looking down at me, daydreaming, maybe she’s afraid of the flight, thinking this could be her last hour on earth, wondering if she’s done enough, dared enough, eaten enough, and everyone around her seems dead already. And that fear of crashing is bringing all her latent sexual dreams up from their deep well, and she’s getting all excited by her own images—and there we are, making split-second eye contact and suddenly that faceless male in her dreamworld has a pair of eyes...and they are vivid eyes, and they are Puerto Rican eyes, and they are my eyes, Celestina.

(A short silence. CELESTINA goes to ANIBAL. She gets close to him—so close her huge belly gently touches his stomach. She looks into ANIBAL’s eyes. The intensity of this makes ANIBAL a little nervous.)

ANIBAL

What are you doing?

CELESTINA

Can I see?
ANÍBAL
Can you see? What? Can you what?

CELESTINA
Your vivid, Puerto Rican eyes, Aníbal, can I see them?

ANÍBAL

CELESTINA
Just because. Let me.

ANÍBAL
Coño, I brought you here on faith, now. That you’re not a killer. Not a psycho. Not a hypnotizing, blood-drinking Scientologist...

(CELESTINA looks deep into ANÍBAL’s eyes.)

CELESTINA
I think about sex all the time, though I’ve only had one lover in my life, only one time. Rodrigo Cruz. And I almost had two! That despicable trucker who kept touching my knees. But I ran away from him. I took my chances in the rain. But even he couldn’t stop my endless daydreaming and nightdreaming about sex: about Rodrigo’s wrinkled back, my legs wrapped around his face...this obsession of mine. This tidal wave that started sometime when I was younger, when I lived in that one room. When Papi bought me a bicycle to give me something else to think about besides my body, and one glorious day I was allowed to ride around and around the house, because my Papi wanted me to count numbers, count numbers, over and over; he said it would teach me about the nature of “time,” and I tried and tried, I really did, but I didn’t learn anything, I was just so grateful to be outside my little room for once! (Beat) Then Papi hired Rodrigo to work on his boat, “The Celestina.” And I would stare at him...
José Rivera

from my window as he worked. He was beautiful. I wondered if I was in love. Is that what it felt like? And he would look back at me and stare, and his hair was so long and black. And I wondered, is that what love looks like? And I don’t know how many years passed. I didn’t know the word “years” then. I learned it on the road when the trucker taught me all kinds of words like, “years” and “now” and “yesterday” and “minute” and “century”) ...and it must have been years, because years are longer than days (I learned this!), and Rodrigo’s hair was long and gray, and he snuck into my room and did his dirty thing and left me...and my parents died in the other room, and I went out to see because the house had grown so quiet, and there they were in their little bed, holding hands, the green bedspread half covering their wrinkled bodies, they were naked and pale and covered in long gray hairs and very, very dead. That’s the one time I stopped dreaming of sex, when I called the police and told them Mami and Papi were dead, then I got dressed, and I lost all track of “time” and I got scared, and I ran out into the rain because I was sure they’d blame me, and in my endless stay in my one room I didn’t learn much, but I learned by reading detective novels that when somebody dies the police always come to take you away and kill you with a lightning chair. That’s when I hit the road, pregnant, looking for Rodrigo Cruz, angry and excited because he was the only man I ever had sex with and I keep thinking about sex with Rodrigo and I love the word sex and if I could fuck fuck fuck all day I would!

(ANÍBAL impulsively, quickly kisses CELESTINA. She gasps. ANÍBAL turns away.)

ANÍBAL

Let me start those quesadillas for you!
(ANÍBAL quickly turns on the griddle and busies himself in the kitchen.)

CELESTINA

1. I should leave. (She starts to go to the front door.)

ANÍBAL

2. I don’t want you to leave.

CELESTINA

3. You don’t think I’m strange?

ANÍBAL

4. I do think you’re strange. But I don’t want you to leave.

CELESTINA

But I don’t know how long I’ve been here. I don’t know if it’s been too long! I should go!

ANÍBAL

(Re the kiss) I’m sorry I did that! I never do that!

CELESTINA

Have I been here minutes? Days?! Shit! I knew this would happen!

ANÍBAL

4. A half hour at the most! Twenty minutes. Not days.

CELESTINA

Are you sure?

(ANÍBAL looks at his watch.)

ANÍBAL

My watch stopped.

CELESTINA

(Knew this would happen) I really have to go before Rodrigo turns into an unrecognizable old man and dies!
José Rivera

(ANÍBAL looks at all the digital clocks in house—all are blinking 12:00.)

ANÍBAL

The clocks have stopped....

(CELESTINA goes to put on her shoes and the wet jacket.)

CELESTINA

I can’t miss my chance to make that bastard do right by me!

(CELESTINA goes to the door, opens it. We hear sirens.)

(ANÍBAL grabs CELESTINA’s arm, physically stopping her from running out.)

ANÍBAL

Celestina, wait a second—

CELESTINA

I can’t wait a second; I don’t know what you mean!

ANÍBAL

You’ve been here only a few minutes. Just minutes. Tomorrow morning, when the sun comes up, it’ll be only a few hours.... (Beat. She looks at him.)

CELESTINA

Hours? Is it a lot?

ANÍBAL

Coño...I think something has happened to you, Celestina, some kind of trauma, and you’re not making any sense....

CELESTINA

(Offended) I have not lost my mind.
ANÍBAL

Please. Eat dinner. Sleep on the sofabed. In the morning, we'll have a big breakfast and I'll give you some money. Drive you wherever you want, okay?

(ANÍBAL goes to the kitchen and comes back with another glass of water. He holds it out for CELESTINA. Still thirsty, CELESTINA comes back in and takes the glass of water.)

CELESTINA

Your beauty is overwhelming, Aníbal.

(ANÍBAL closes the door. The sirens stop. CELESTINA takes off her shoes and the jacket.)

(Keeping a watchful eye on CELESTINA as she drinks the water, ANÍBAL goes to the kitchen, opens the refrigerator, and takes out packets of tortillas, cheese, salsa, and guacamole. As ANÍBAL prepares dinner, he can't help looking at her in wonder.)

ANÍBAL

Who are you, Celestina?

(CELESTINA smiles at the inevitable question, then thinks a moment. She starts setting the table for dinner as ANÍBAL puts the tortillas and cheese on the hot griddle.)

CELESTINA

How do you know what “time” feels like, Aníbal?

(ANÍBAL looks at her a second.)

CELESTINA

In your body? You feel it, don't you? Pushing at your heart muscles. Pricking the nerves in your brain. Turning some on, turning some off. Is that what “time” feels like? And where is “time”? Is the organ for “time” the heart? Is it the spinal chord, that silver waterfall of nerves and memories: is “time” in there? Is it the gonads? Does “time” have a sound? What bells, Aníbal,
José Rivera

what vibrating string played by what virtuoso
accompanies the passage of “time”? Is “time” blue?
Does it taste like steak? Can you fuck it? Or is it just
the invisible freight train that runs you over every
single day...breaking you into smaller and smaller
pieces...pieces so small they can’t hold your soul to the
earth anymore, and that’s why you die? C’mon, Aníbal,
help me out here!

Aníbal

We just know. Common sense tells us.

Celestina

Well, then...what if there are people born who don’t
have that sense? Don’t have that inner clock telling
them when a moment has passed, when another
has started, how a day feels different from a year.
What would you say to such people?

Aníbal

Coño: your imagination....

Celestina

And what if these people don’t progress through space
and “time” the same way you do? They don’t age
smoothly. They stay little far longer than they should.
Or the rhythms of the day mean nothing. So they sleep
for weeks at a “time.” They stay awake all winter
scaring the shit out of their parents. They can make
love for two weeks straight without a break!

Aníbal

I don’t know.

(Beat)

Celestina

No. Of course not. How could you?
(Dinner is ready. The table is set. CELESTINA looks at the table appreciatively.)

CELESTINA

I should wash my hands.

ANÍBAL

(Re bathroom) That way.

1) CELESTINA starts to go off. Then she looks at ANÍBAL. She goes to him, kisses him on the cheek, and embraces him.

2) He holds her close.

CELESTINA

Papi told me he was twenty-five when I was born. Before he died, we celebrated his seventy-ninth birthday. When the trucker picked me up outside of Montauk Point, I was pregnant and starting to show. When we crossed the frontier into Los Angeles, before he touched my knees, he put two candles on a little cake and said we were celebrating two years together.

3) (Beat) So that’s who I am: I’m a fifty-four-year-old woman, Aníbal, and I’ve been pregnant with this baby for two years.

(CELESTINA goes to the bathroom and closes the door.

ANÍBAL is alone. ANÍBAL goes to the telephone in the living room. Picks it up. It’s dead. ANÍBAL slams it down.)

ANÍBAL

Shit.

5) ANÍBAL goes to the TV and turns it on. All he can get, channel after channel, is static. He turns on a radio. More static.

6) ANÍBAL goes back to the kitchen and hides all the knives.

(There’s a knock at the door. ANÍBAL looks at the door, worried. A second knock. ANÍBAL goes to the door and opens it. Sirens.)
José Rivera

1) (ANÍBAL’s younger brother, SGT NELSON DE LA LUNA, is there. NELSON is taller, broader than his older brother: He has a sweet baby face, short hair, and a little mustache. NELSON wears an army-issue raincoat and army boots.)

3) NELSON

4) (Big smile) Brother!
(NELSON laughs and scoops up ANÍBAL in a big bear hug. The brothers kiss and pound each other’s backs.)

ANÍBAL

Son-of-a-bitch, Nelson, what the fuck are you doing here?!

NELSON

5) Surprise! Nice house!
(NELSON comes in, takes off his rain coat. Underneath he wears army-issue T-shirt, khakis, dog tags, etc. ANÍBAL still can’t believe his brother’s there. He closes the door. Sirens stop.)

ANÍBAL

Look at you. Fucking amazing. Are you alone?

NELSON

No, I got half the company out in the Grand National, asshole! Man look at you. You old.

ANÍBAL

Fuck you too. What an asshole; didn’t even call me....

NELSON

8) Surprise, surprise, how much you pay for this dump?
ANÍBAL
What a dickhead! So what's up? I thought you were in Germany.

NELSON
Not any more, bro. They shipped my ass to Fort Benning, Georgia, six months ago. Then they sent my ass out here for two days.

ANÍBAL
Are you in training for something? Getting ready to invade some hapless third world country?

NELSON
"Hapless." What a home. You got a beer? (He goes to the refrigerator and helps himself to a beer.)

ANÍBAL
Have a beer.

NELSON
I'm fucking out in Death Valley now. It's a fucking lake. I thought you lived in sunny Southern California, jerk-off.

ANÍBAL
It rains out here too, asswipe. Coño, it's great to see you, Nelson.
(They embrace exuberantly again, pound backs.)

NELSON
So yeah, got my ass shipped to Death Valley, I'm good to go, bro, desert training for the Middle East or some towelhead shithole with oil underneath it...fucking tanks all over the place, blow up anything stupid enough to get in our way, mostly stray sheep and coyotes—'cause we're men, Aníbal, not pussies like you: men, MEN!
José Rivera

ANÍBAL

(Laughs) Get outta my face with that shit.

NELSON

Yo, it beats jerkin' off all day like you, so this is your house finally, I gotta get me one of these, I guess loading luggage really pays, what: you helpin' smuggle drugs-n-shit?

ANÍBAL

(Laughs) How long are you staying?

NELSON

Man, I'm hosed. I gotta be back in Death Valley oh-five-hundred tomorrow morning for a fucking dipshit meeting with my C O that's only supposed to last five minutes. So I can only hang 'bout an hour, 'cause the roads suck tonight.

ANÍBAL

(Disappointed) An hour? Nelson, I haven't seen you in six years.

NELSON

Time flies, motherfucker!

ANÍBAL

So why can't you call the guy—?

NELSON

No way. Gotta be there. They gotta see my ass in front of the C O, in person. It's really fucking stupid.

ANÍBAL

The army's perfect for you.

NELSON

(Re ANÍBAL) What a waste of a human being. Man, you get uglier and stupider all the time.
ANÍBAL

1. You're just pissed my mother loved me and she didn't love you.
   (NELSON starts looking for the bathroom.)

NELSON

2. Aw shit, where's the head, man? All I've eaten is beef jerky and I gotta take a massive dump.

ANÍBAL

3. You're a poet, Nelson, you know that? A poet of our time.

NELSON

4. Yo, eat me!

ANÍBAL

5. There's somebody in the bathroom. A woman.

NELSON

6. (Surprised) You got a woman in your bathroom, Aníbal?

ANÍBAL

7. Her name is Celestina. I picked her up tonight.

NELSON

8. (Big smile) Brother! You're not a total waste!
   (NELSON high-fives ANÍBAL.)

ANÍBAL

9. No, she's pregnant, Nelson, and she's...I think...mentally disturbed or something...or she's living in a dreamworld, I don't know.

NELSON

10. Women.
José Rivera

ANÍBAL
She looks like she's twenty-five years old but she says she's fifty-four.

NELSON
That's fucking LA, bro.

ANÍBAL
And she says she's been pregnant for two years.

NELSON
And you picked her up? You're not an asshole!

ANÍBAL
She was hitching. In this storm. I can't drive by somebody like that.

NELSON
A total fairy. What a liberal. Is she cute?

ANÍBAL
She's gorgeous.

NELSON
Oh well, that's cool. I could fuck an insane pregnant girl if she's gorgeous.

ANÍBAL
Don't be a pig, Nelson—

NELSON
What? I'll have that bitch howlin' at the moon!

ANÍBAL
She's not—
NELSON
Hey, I’ve been in a tank nine weeks, bro, I’m ready to seduce goats. Swear: my mother must’ve been exposed to radiation when you were born.

ANÍBAL

(Laughs) Fuck you through the head.

NELSON
You’re the fucking poet of our time! Asshole! Liberal! I’mma fuckin’ bodyslam you!

(NELSON lunges at ANÍBAL. ANÍBAL fights him off. They wrestle around the living room, knocking furniture around, laughing. NELSON catches ANÍBAL.)

(NELSON lifts ANÍBAL over his head and prepares to bodyslam him.)

ANÍBAL
NELSON—DOOOOOOON’T!!

(CELESTINA comes in. She’s got a gun. She aims it at NELSON’s head. Both men freeze.)

NELSON
Oh shit.

ANÍBAL
Celestina...?

NELSON
(Already admiring her) Training and instinct tell me that’s a gun.

CELESTINA
Put him down. (NELSON quickly puts ANÍBAL down. CELESTINA continues pointing the gun at NELSON.)
ANÍBAL

Celestina. Could you please put that away—it’s fine....

CELESTINA

Who is he?

ANÍBAL:

—this is my brother—Nelson—this is Nelson, it’s okay....

(CELESTINA reluctantly puts the gun in a pocket. Both men are greatly relieved. NELSON laughs nervously.)

NELSON

Whoa. Fuck me. I love L.A.!

ANÍBAL

I didn’t know you were armed, Celestina. Christ.

CELESTINA

I stole it from the trucker while he was sleeping.

NELSON

Whoa.

ANÍBAL

(Still shaken) Jesus.

CELESTINA

I’m sorry, Aníbal, I....

ANÍBAL

It’s cool. It’s just—coño. Heart attack.

CELESTINA

I wanted to protect you.

NELSON

(To Aníbal) She wanted to protect you, asshole!
ANÍBAL
(To NELSON) I'm not crazy about guns.

NELSON
(To CELESTINA) I am. (Sotto to ANÍBAL) She's gorgeous, man. Introduce.

ANÍBAL
(Wary) Fuck. Nelson, this is Celestina. Celestina, this is my little brother, Nelson.

(CELESTINA goes to shake NELSON's hand.)

CELESTINA
(To NELSON) Nice to meet you.

NELSON
(Big charming smile) So, Celestina, what's up?!  

ANÍBAL
(Sotto to NELSON) Nelson...slow....

NELSON
(Sotto to ANÍBAL) Step back or I'll bodyslam you....

ANÍBAL
(Sotto to NELSON; re CELESTINA) ...disturbed...?

NELSON
(To CELESTINA) ...I'm married, okay? But. I'm separated from my wife. Bitch left me. Got drunk one night, said: "You know, Nelson, deep inside o' my heart, I just don't like you fucking little greasy Puerto Ricans!" I said, "fuck you, ho'" and threw a hand grenade at her.

CELESTINA
(Amused) You threw a hand grenade...?
José Rivera

ANÍBAL

(Horrified) You threw a hand grenade...?

NELSON

(Defensive) It didn’t go off! We filed for divorce. That little baby got a father?

CELESTINA

I’m looking for him. His name is Rodrigo Cruz.

NELSON

You married to him?

CELESTINA

No, but I’m going to make him!

NELSON

You love this man?

CELESTINA

I don’t know.

NELSON

Well, if you don’t find him, let me know. I love children. I understand children. You have beautiful eyes, Celestina.

CELESTINA

Thank you.

ANÍBAL

I may vomit.

NELSON

I can’t stay too long, Celestina. I’m serving our country in the armed forces of the U S. Protecting us from... uhm...not communists...uhm...illegal aliens, drug kingpins, and Arabs. It’s dangerous work. My life is on the line each and every day. But I’m good to go! And
the thing is, I gotta be back in Death Valley tonight—
Death Valley, so appropriate, huh?—I have very
important meetings with high-ranking officers—
then I go to Fort Benning, Georgia, Monday to finalize
my divorce from my cracker wife. And then, in about
two years, I'll be getting my discharge from the Army.
What I'm saying is...I won't be back this way for awhile.
But I'm gonna come back in two years and look you up,
okay? And if you ain't found that baby's father, I just
might ask you to marry me, 'cause no woman should
raise her baby alone. You understand? This cool with
you, Celestina? Can I ask you?

CELESTINA
(Not knowing what to say) Uhm. You can ask me.

NELSON
Yes! Good! Well, my work is done here. Bye.
(He goes to his raincoat and starts putting it on.)

ANÍBAL
What do you mean? What are you doing?

NELSON
I gotta get back to Death Valley. Duty calls.

ANÍBAL
Right now?

NELSON
(Looking at his watch) No! My watch died! Fuckit. Yes.
I gotta go. I'll take my dump on the road. I'm fucked
I'm not there.

ANÍBAL
This is happening too fast—
José Rivera

NELSON

What's life? A fucking blink. Get used to it. And thanks for introducing me to the woman of my dreams, homeboy.

(CELESTINA smiles. Then she gets another pain in her belly.)

CELESTINA

Ohhhhhhh.

(NELSON and ANIBAL quickly go to CELESTINA.)

ANIBAL & NELSON

1. You okay??

CELESTINA

2. (Still in pain) It's okay. Thank you. (Another jolt) Why is my baby doing this? Why is he tapping my spine with his fingers? What code is that? What words?

(NELSON looks at her pregnant stomach.)

NELSON

May I?

(CELESTINA nods yes and NELSON kneels at her feet and rubs her belly. The pain slowly subsides. CELESTINA smiles with relief.)

CELESTINA

3. Thank you, Nelson.

(NELSON puts his head on her stomach, listening to the sounds inside.)

NELSON

4. Check it out. I can hear the ocean! Stars being scraped across the sky!

CELESTINA

(Delighted) You can?
NELSON

I hear a little body searching for the way out. Little bones. (To her stomach) Yo in there. I'mma wait for you, little man. Be the father of your dreams. You come outta this deep night you're in, hijo de mi alma, see my big-ass smile, you're gonna know what sunshine is! That cool? And you tell your beautiful mami to wait for me, okay mio?

(NELSON kisses CELESTINA's stomach. Moved, CELESTINA gently kisses the top of NELSON's head.)

NELSON gets up. NELSON and ANÍBAL have a long embrace.

ANÍBAL

Six years, Nelson. Six f*cking years.

NELSON

This is the happiest night of my life!

(NELSON opens the door. Sirens. He disappears into the rain. ANÍBAL goes to the door.)

ANÍBAL

You'll never get to Death Valley in that rain....

NELSON

(Off) A man would!

(ANÍBAL watches NELSON driving away, his back to the audience. ANÍBAL sadly waves goodbye. CELESTINA looks at ANÍBAL.)

(ANÍBAL closes the door. Sirens stop.)

(CELESTINA is watching ANÍBAL, who is quiet a long moment, his mind far away.)

CELESTINA

You okay?
José Rivera

(Beat. He tries to smile. He starts clearing up the kitchen table.)

ANÍBAL

Are you really going to wait for him? Two years?

CELESTINA

I don’t know what “two years” means, Aníbal.

(ANÍBAL rubs his tired eyes—then look at his watch—then realizes it’s not working.)

I don’t even know what time it is. It could be next week. I don’t remember this morning. I don’t remember kissing Debbie goodbye or working or eating or driving from L.A. X or finding a hitchhiker in the storm of the century. And was my fucking little brother really here? I can’t believe he’s a man already! Ten minutes ago, I was bodyslamming him!

CELESTINA

Why don’t we eat?

ANÍBAL

(Trying to focus) Eat. Yeah. Eat.

(ANÍBAL and CELESTINA sit at the kitchen table. CELESTINA can hardly wait and immediately stuffs her mouth with food, eating with the passion of a starving person.)

CELESTINA

(Mouth full) This is the best food!

ANÍBAL

(Concerned) Easy...Celestina...easy....

(ANÍBAL and CELESTINA continue their dinner. This should take its natural time—despite the speed with which CELESTINA attacks her food—and should happen in silence.)
(All the while Aníbal and Celestina may make periodic eye contact—smile—look away—sometimes Aníbal finds himself staring—sometimes Celestina does.)

(Suddenly, the house is rocked by several claps of harsh thunder. The lightning outside lights up the house through the windows brighter than could possibly occur in nature. Celestina looks at Aníbal.)

Celestina

Me pregunto...me pregunto como será haberte amado en cada etapa de tu vida, Aníbal.

(Beat. He looks at her and she continues in Spanish.)

Celestina

Amar al niñoito que fuiste, y tomarte de la mano, y ayudarte a cruzar la calle, y besar tu barriguita gordita de bebé, y peinar tus gretitas de chiquillo. Y luego, mas adelante, amar al anciano en que te convertiste, y besar tus arrugas profundas, y suavizar tu pelo canoso, y deleitar tu sabio y cansado corazón, y mirar fijamente hacia adentro de esos ojos misteriosos, mas alla de las cataratas, y muy adentro de ti, hacia los verdes prados donde uno nunca envejece. ¿No te parecería lindo tener ese tipo de amor, Aníbal? ¿El amor de toda una vida?

(Beat. Aníbal smiles nervously.)

What?

Aníbal

What?

Celestina

I didn’t know you could speak Spanish.

Celestina

(Smiles) Solamente hablo Español cuando estoy enamorada.
Aníbal

What?

(Beat)

Celestina

Don’t you speak *any* Spanish?

Aníbal

(Sad) I don’t.

Celestina

You don’t?

Aníbal

I don’t.

Celestina

Why not?

Aníbal

Sometimes...I don’t know...you forget things...

Celestina

But how do you forget a *language*?

Aníbal

It happened, Celestina. It’s not nice, and I’m not proud of it, but it happened.

Celestina

I’m sorry.

Aníbal

All I know is *coño*!

Celestina

(Laughs) Well, *coño*’s useful.
(CELESTINA laughs sadly. ANIBAL laughs with her. He looks at her. She reaches out a hand. He takes it and holds it a moment.)

ANIBAL

(Pulling away) I’ll get the sofbed ready for you.

CELESTINA

(Beat) Okay. I’ll help you set up.

(During the following, ANIBAL goes to the sofbed, pulls it out. He goes to the closet and comes back with pillows, blankets, and sheets. Together he and CELESTINA make the sofbed. If necessary for timing, ANIBAL could go through whatever bedtime ritual he needs: turning off lights, locking the door, turning on the security system, taking out the trash, etc.)

(Toward the end of the speech, while ANIBAL is deeper in his memories, he stops looking at CELESTINA. Behind ANIBAL, facing upstage, CELESTINA takes off her maternity dress and slips into a nightgown she keeps in her shopping bag. She lets her long hair down. She looks more unearthly, more angelic than ever.)

ANIBAL

I made love with Debbie just last night. Or was it this morning? (Beat) I had to talk her into spending the night, instead of sleeping in her office again. It seems like a million years ago. (Beat) I know Debbie from high school in the Bronx. We went out. Then she went out of state for college and I couldn’t afford college so I stayed behind and worked. She married her English professor and moved to Ohio. I wanted to kill myself. I spent the next five years getting into these other relationships. The first one, I was twenty-two. The woman I fell in love with was thirty-nine. We had a great time together. But I took her home to meet my parents and my father made a pass at her and it was over. Then I fell in love
with a blonde. She was a real beauty. But she came from this fucked-up home and she had a drug problem and she drank too much and the night I told her I didn’t love her anymore she tried to throw herself out of a moving car on the Belt Parkway. Then I fell in love with a series of Lesbians. Every woman I liked turned out to be gay! Then one night, New Year’s Eve, I’m living in the Lower East Side, the phone rings, it’s Debbie. She left her husband. She left Ohio. She was staying at her sister’s in Harlem. Would I like to get together. (Beat) I went to her place. I didn’t know what to expect. She was staying in one of those worn-out tenements with the steam heat up too high and the steel radiators that clamored all night, and Willie Colón and laughing and partying and loud kissing coming at you from all the apartments all over us. People just exploding! Going nuts! I remember the smell of

tos—tos—

CELESTINA

Tostones!

ANÍBAL

Tostones! And rice and beans and garlic and oregano and lechón—lechón—

CELESTINA

Lechón asado!

ANÍBAL

Lechón asado! You know: everything cooked with a lot of man—

CELESTINA

Manteca!
ANÍBAL

Manteo! And I held Debbie all night long. We didn’t fuck. I kissed her a lot. We touched all over. But we didn’t go to bed; we were starting over. I was figuring out this new body. She seemed richer. All the years we hadn’t seen each other, miles she’s traveled, all this married wisdom and experience she had that I didn’t have. I felt like a boy, a child, in the arms of this mature woman. We decided that night to go to Los Angeles together and start over. Be in that one city where you can really remake yourself. Pan for gold in the L A River. She wanted to get rich on the movies. I wanted to get away from the racists who thought of me only as a spik. (Beat) As we were holding each other, touching each other, I started to remember something I thought I had forgotten. It was when I was a little boy. I don’t even remember how old. We were living in Newark, New Jersey. We were visiting my cousins who lived in a big house in Patchogue, Long Island. My child’s memory makes that house enormous, like a Victorian haunted house, but maybe it wasn’t. They had thirteen kids. We used to watch lucha libre together, professional wrestling, all the time. One time my cousin Ernesto got carried away watching Bruno San Martino on T V and he punched me in the stomach. Ernie liked to inflict pain. He had long, black curly hair and a thin black moustache, freckles, large, red lips, crooked teeth. He was the cousin that looked most like me. Another night, after a party, my cousin Cheo told me how he could feel his balls flapping around in his pants when he danced to American music. His balls went flap-flap-flap when he danced to rock-n-roll. I liked Cheo. He never punched me like Ernesto did. Cheo taught me about exponents and square roots. He went to Vietnam. Everybody thought Ernesto would get into drug dealing. (Beat) One night I was on the second floor of my cousins’ house, I remember walking past a dark
bedroom: the door was open. I thought I heard a voice inside calling my name. I went in. My cousin Eva was there. She was older than Ernie or Cheo. Much older than me. I remember her standing by the window. I could see her face lit up by a streetlight—or was it the moon? I remember there was a heavy smell in the room. And I don’t know how I eventually got there... but I ended up lying in bed with Eva. I was on my back, looking at the ceiling. Eva was kneeling next to me. Then Eva lifted her dress and she was straddling me and pressing her pelvis into me. I think she had her underwear on. I had my pants on and I didn’t know why she was doing this to me, though I knew I had to do this because she was my older cousin, therefore she had authority. I remember her legs being smooth. I remember her face. She was looking out the window. I don’t remember how long this lasted. I don’t remember if anyone came in. I don’t remember if anyone ever knew about this, though, later on it seemed that everybody knew. I liked Eva on top of me. I remember her weight. I liked her weight. I don’t remember if I got hard or not: I was only a little boy! I liked watching Eva’s face, the way she looked out the windows. How the light struck half her face. I wish I could remember her mouth! I think it was open. But I don’t remember. Was there a smile? Did she bite her lower lip? Was she talking to me? Did she say something in Spanish? I remember her eyes. (Bat) So I fell in love with Eva. She was all I thought about. And I think my mother suspected something and she was worried about us, though first cousins had married several times in my family. One night my mother and I were washing dishes together, side-by-side. And we had the only conversation about sex we were ever to have. Without looking at me, she said: “Aníbal, remember: there is some fruit you are not allowed to eat.” And that’s all she said. And I knew exactly what
she meant. And it was all she had to say to me. (Beat)

I’ve never forgotten Eva. Even in Debbie’s arms after five years of missing her and wanting her, I thought easily of Eva. It’s like...the space around my body was permanently curved—or dented—by Eva’s heaviness.

I wonder if love sometimes does that to you. It alters the physics around you in some way: changing the speed of light and the shape of space and how you experience time.

**CELESTINA**

What do you think made you fall in love with those women?

**ANÍBAL**

Do you think I know? (Beat)

(ANÍBAL turns around to look at CELESTINA who has changed into her nightgown. She smiles at him.)

(Beat)

**CELESTINA**

Would you rub my feet?

**ANÍBAL**

What?

**CELESTINA**

Would you rub my feet? They’re freezing. (Beat)

Uhm, sure.

(Beat)

(CELESTINA sits on the sofa bed and puts her bare feet up expectantly. ANÍBAL sits with her, her feet on his lap. He gently rubs her feet. She closes her eyes in bliss.)
CELESTINA

Hummhum...yeah....

ANÍBAL

Buenas noches.

CELESTINA

Kiss my toes.

ANÍBAL

...What?

CELESTINA

Just once?

ANÍBAL

Kiss your—what—?

CELESTINA

Please? Just once?

(Beat)

ANÍBAL

Okay.

ANÍBAL

Okay.

(ANÍBAL kisses her toes one by one. She smiles with each little kiss, trying not to giggle, eyes still closed.)

(ANÍBAL finishes and starts to leave.)

CELESTINA

No you don’t.

ANÍBAL

Now what?
Higher.

...Higher?

Up the body.

Okay.

(ANÍBAL kisses her knees. CELESTINA sighs deeply, stretching out.)

Little higher.

(ANÍBAL kisses her thighs. CELESTINA whispers.)

Up.

(ANÍBAL kisses her enormous stomach.)

More up.

(ANÍBAL kisses her breasts.)

Keep going.

(ANÍBAL kisses her neck.)

...Home, traveler. You’re home!

(ANÍBAL kisses CELESTINA lightly once on the lips. They hold each other a long moment. We hear the sound of the rain beating against the house. They don’t look at each other as they talk.)
I'm afraid.

Don't be.

Not about bodies. I'm afraid we're going to be mixing my sad dreams with your wild ones.

(Smiles) Maybe they'll have beautiful children, Aníbal.

(ANÍBAL kisses her gently on the lips. She opens her mouth to him and takes him in, kissing him back with all the passion in her body.)

Celestina.

(CELESTINA speaks to ANÍBAL as she holds him.)

I'm a stranger in my own body, Aníbal. A stranger to my own past. My memories don't make sense to me. I doubt everything. I don't even believe what people verify for me. I even wonder if my real name is Celestina del Sol! (Beat) Sometimes you're with somebody and you don't seem so strange to yourself anymore. Somehow, by luck or chemistry or divine intervention or insanity, you collide with another life, and there's an explosion followed by peace. For a second, a year, fifty years—whatever those things mean—you feel you've reached some kind of home. Sometimes there's no "time"—only an endless now that needs to be filled with life. To be rescued from habit and death. (Beat) C'mon.
Cloud Tectonics

Aníbal

Okay.

(Aníbal takes Celestina's hand and leads her to the ladders that go up to the floating bed.)

(As they climb the ladders, the rest of the house seems to disappear and be replaced by vague twinkling stars and crescent moons and dark, silvery clouds.)

(As they reach the bed, there's another knock at the door.)

(The house instantly changes back to its normal state, like a spell broken. Aníbal looks at the door.)

Celestina

(Sotto) Who's that?

Aníbal

(Sotto) Stay.

(Aníbal climbs down the ladder. Celestina stays up on the bed, partially hidden from view by the downstage footboard.)

(Aníbal opens the door. Sirens. Aníbal is surprised by the sight of hundreds of Sparkletts water bottles covering the porch.)

(Nelson is there. Nelson looks different. His hair is slightly longer. His moustache is gone. His army clothes have been replaced by blue jeans, sneakers, and an old jeans jacket. He walks with a cane.)

(But that's not the only thing that's changed. Something childlike and happy has been taken away from Nelson. Though he mouths some of the same old lines, they lack his spirit.)

Nelson?

Aníbal

Backs up to UC S

Nelson enters 5 R
José Rivera

NELSON

(Tired smile) Brother!

(NELSON scoops up ANÍBAL in a bear hug and pounds his back.)

ANÍBAL

(Confused) What are you doing here?

(NELSON holds ANÍBAL for a long time. ANÍBAL has to pull away. NELSON won’t let him.)

NELSON

Look at you! You get older and uglier all the time!

ANÍBAL

Everything okay?

NELSON

Fucking just wanna hold you, man.

(ANÍBAL, worried, pulls away from NELSON.)

ANÍBAL

What happened? Couldn’t you get back to Death Valley? Are the freeways closed?

NELSON

Death Valley? What are you talking about? Everything’s great. Hey, I’m a free man! I can do whatever I want now!

ANÍBAL

(Noticing) Hey, what happened to you? Why’s your face like that?

(NELSON comes into the living room, closing the door behind him. Sirens stop. NELSON looks around.)
CLOUD TECTONICS

NELSON

1. Fuck me, the old place hasn’t changed at all. Everything’s just the way I remember it!

ANÍBAL

2. Wait. Wait a minute. What happened to you? You look totally—why are your clothes like that?

NELSON

3. Jesus, will you get over my appearance? What are you, gay? I’m lucky to be alive, motherfucker. I need a beer. (He goes to the refrigerator to get a beer.)

ANÍBAL

(Still confused) Have a beer.

NELSON

I was pissed at you, bro. I don’t mind telling you. All my letters to you came back, your phone’s been disconnected, I thought, “that asshole moved without telling me! He makes me drive cross country—three fucking days—and he’s not there, I’mma kill him!”

(Beat)

ANÍBAL

6. You’ve been driving three days?

NELSON

7. Hello? From Georgia? Have you gone stupid? You have no memory? What did I tell you two years ago? Soon’s I get to Benning, get my discharge and my divorce from Mein Kampf, I was comin’ back here, find that girl, and ask her to marry me.

(A short beat as ANÍBAL looks at NELSON.)
José Rivera

ANÍBAL

Two years? Nelson are you drunk? That was only a few minutes ago you left here and said that.

NELSON

(Laughs) You gotta get outta L A, bro. Your brain!

ANÍBAL

A half hour—.

NELSON

Maybe to you! Mr. Lalaland! You still got on the same boring clothes you had that night and wasn’t it raining then?

ANÍBAL

(Nervous, worried) Cut the shit, Nelson...

NELSON

You cut the shit or I’ll body slam you! Where’s Celestina? You hiding her? Did she have her baby? Does the baby know who I am? Does he ask about me? I bet he loves me!

ANÍBAL

(Trying to focus) She...she uh....

NELSON

And you! You fuck! Why did all my letters come back? You think it was fun being out in fucking Bosnia and not hearing from you all that fucking time!? Fuck you!

ANÍBAL

Bosnia?

NELSON

Yo, the war? The Battle of Mostar? Are you stoned or what? Don’t they get the news in L A? He reaches into his raincoat and pulls up a handful of medals. He throws
(CELESTINA is in the living room. NELSON turns to face her.

NELSON
They had to fucking put me in a fucking army hospital because I have a fucking nervous breakdown. I thought I'd live through this so I can see my bride and my child again. And I said this to myself. ANIBAL, over and over, like a prayer, and you know that was the only thing that kept some fucking Serbian sniper bullet from finding the back of my head or some landmine from erasing my legs. The unbearable luck of her name.

(CELESTINA sits up in the bed and climbs down the ladder to the living room during the following.)

NELSON
How can one night be two years? Choose your words carefully — you're going to break her heart — ANIBAL, ANIBAL, ANIBAL, ANIBAL, ANIBAL, ANIBAL. You're going to break her heart.

ANIBAL
But "no," I said, "I have the most beautiful girl named Celestina waiting for me in the States."
José Rivera

CELESTINA

Hi, Nelson.

(A long pause as NELSON just takes her in and smiles.)

NELSON

Hey.

CELESTINA

How are you?

NELSON

That's really you.

CELESTINA

It's really me.

NELSON

(Answering her question) I'm a little tired. Ass hurts from driving three days from Georgia.

(NELSON starts to cry. CELESTINA goes to him.)

CELESTINA

Hey, hey, what is it?

NELSON


(CELESTINA wipes NELSON's eyes.)

CELESTINA

I heard what happened to you in the war. I'm really sorry.

NELSON

It's over. I lived. I'm gonna forget it as soon as I can.

CELESTINA

(Touching her stomach) I have a lot to tell you... as you can see....
NELSON

Oh yeah! Uh-huh! I can see a lot has happened in your life, Celestina!

ANÍBAL

(To CELESTINA) Do you know what’s going on here?

CELESTINA

(Torn) Don’t be afraid, Aníbal, please...

NELSON

(Not listening) But what’s weird? I’m looking at you. It’s like you never aged a day!

CELESTINA

That’s because I haven’t!

NELSON

And you’re pregnant again. Just like that night!

CELESTINA

It’s not—Nelson—that’s what I have to tell you—and you know I’d only tell you the truth. You left Los Angeles. You went to war...but here, in this house, time didn’t pass; it’s still the same night; you left a little while ago. And this baby...it’s Rodrigo’s baby...do you understand that ...?

NELSON

(Laughs) Fuck you!

CELESTINA

It’s the truth!

NELSON

I can’t believe you would lie to me!
CELESTINA

And Aníbal—two years have passed—whether you want to believe it or not!

ANÍBAL

How is that possible?

CELESTINA

It’s me, Aníbal. I’ve infected you! I’ve changed the “time” around you—.

ANÍBAL

But—who’s been paying the light bill?! Who’s been paying the rent?! Where’s Debbie been?! What happened to my job?!

NELSON

What the fuck are you two trying to do to me?!

(To both men) Things have happened....

CELESTINA

(Overlapping with CELESTINA) Look, I know that’s Aníbal’s baby! Okay?! I can see what happened!

CELESTINA

Nothing happened!

NELSON

You two fell in love! It’s cool! And I guess we didn’t make any promises to each other, huh Celestina?

CELESTINA

I’m sorry, Nelson....
NELSON

So I just want to see that little baby before I go! Where is he? Where's that little boy I talked to? Did something happen to him?!

CELESTINA

He hasn't been born—!

NELSON

(Angry) Man, I don't need to hear this doubletalk BULLSHIT any more! Fuck you both! I don't give a fuck if you two fell in love with each other! I was stupid to think you would wait for me! But you didn't! You didn't wait for me, did you?

(NELSON makes a move toward CELESTINA. ANÍBAL tries to protect her.)

(NELSON grabs ANÍBAL, lifts him up, and bodyslams him into the floor.)

(CELESTINA goes to ANÍBAL and holds him. ANÍBAL writhes in pain, speechless. NELSON is breathing hard, instantly sorry he hurt his brother.)

(Silence)

(NELSON quietly cries.)

ANÍBAL

(In pain) Oh my God.

NELSON

I'm sorry, bro. I'm not myself. Something in myself got taken out sometime as I was looking through the sights of the tank, lining up targets, watching things blow up. Jesus, shit! I got so much I gotta forget!

ANÍBAL

Jesus Christ, bro....

NELSON x to ANÍBAL, helps him onto futon. ANÍBAL sits. NELSON sits SR on ANÍBAL. CELESTINA x to ANÍBAL.
José Rivera

(NELSON goes to ANÍBAL, lifts him, and puts him gently on the sofabed. He holds ANÍBAL.)

NELSON

I'm sorry, bro, you know I fucking love you, man!
I'm a total asshole! I shouldn't have come here! You got something good with your woman, man, that's cool, that's great! I gotta step aside and let your happiness be, man. F*ck me! I'm sorry! You're my fucking brother and I'm sorry!

ANÍBAL

Nelson....

(NELSON wipes his eyes and goes to the door. He opens it. Sirens. NELSON runs out into the night.)

ANÍBAL

Nelson? Nelson!

(ANÍBAL gets up to follow NELSON.)

CELESTINA

ANÍBAL—don't leave me alone!

(ANÍBAL goes to the door.)

ANÍBAL

I gotta talk to him!

(ANÍBAL runs out into the night to chase down NELSON, closing the door behind him. CELESTINA is alone.)

(She goes to the door and waits for ANÍBAL. She closes the door. She opens it again. She closes it again. She sits.)

(In moments she has no idea how much time has passed since ANÍBAL left. For all she knows it could be days, weeks later. She's getting more and more nervous. Nervousness gives way to panic. She shakes. She looks around.)
(Unable to bear the pain of waiting any longer, Celestina gets quickly dressed. She puts on her shoes and Aníbal’s suede jacket. She goes to the door.)

(Celestina runs out into the night, leaving the door open.)

(The digital clocks stop blinking and a new time comes on: 8:06.)

(Aníbal comes in. He’s got his arm around Nelson, who is soaking wet and looks disheveled. Aníbal helps Nelson sit. Nelson sits with his face in his hands. Aníbal closes the door behind him. Sirens stop. Aníbal looks very shaken.)

Aníbal

(To Nelson) ...it’s okay...it’s okay, bro...you’re home....

Nelson

Thanks, man.

Aníbal

Celestina! I found him! Bet you thought we’d never get back! Took all night but I got him! (No answer. He goes to the offstage bathroom. Celestina? (No response. He goes back to the living room.) Celestina!

Nelson

Celestina!

Aníbal

Goddammit.

Nelson

Where is she?

Aníbal

Her shoes are gone...the jacket...all the clocks are going...she’s taken off...shut!...stay here.... (He grabs a coat, and runs out into the rain. From offstage:) Celestina!
(The door closes with a slam! NELSON is left alone on stage. Lights start to go down on him.)

NELSON

Celestina.

(Lights to black. The sound of the rain stops. NELSON calls out in the dark, silent house.)

NELSON

Celestina!

(Black out)

END OF CLOUD TECTONICS

EPILOGUE

(In the dark, the bolero from the Prologue starts again, though quieter, distorted if possible. Lights come up downstage.)

(During CELESTINA's speech, the crew comes on and disassembles the house. By the end of CELESTINA's speech, there should be nothing left of ANIBAL's house in Echo Park.)

(The ladders next to the bed are removed and the bed is lowered to the stage. The glass wall is removed from the house and left free-standing, to the side. Water drips down the side of the glass wall, as in the Prologue.)

(A microphone on a C-stand is placed downcenter.)

(It's forty years later.)

(CELESTINA enters and goes to the microphone. She's no longer pregnant. Her clothes are nicer than before. But otherwise she looks the same. She's pushing a stroller. He wears ANIBAL's aged suede jacket.)

(She's talking to the baby. She's in mid-conversation.)

CELESTINA

Can you believe this rain for L A? Coño! (Beat) The last time I was here it was raining just like this, right before you were born, and Los Angeles has changed so much, miyo. I can't get over it. The Big One was finally born—a monster with seven epicenters—releasing unimaginable waves of energy and killing many unprepared people—the six active oil fields on Pico exploded—glass came
down from the towers in Downtown and Century City and Burbank like floating guillotines—there were fourteen million refugees—and Los Angeles died for a while. People went back to New York and the Midwest. There was a long sleep. (Beat) But people came back. They came back for the things they loved about L A for the first time. They rebuilt the city. And the city was reborn—and now it's better than ever. Look, mijo, you see? That building over there? That's the White House. They moved it from Washington D C and put it on Wilshire Blvd. And there's the United Nations building and the World Trade Center. All of it is here in the new L A. The new capital of the United States. The capital of world culture and trade. The capital of the Third World, boy, they really fixed this place up, Aníbal! The largest subway system in the world is here, connecting everything from Catalina Island to the Angeles National Forest. The air is clean! It's chic to read! All the street signs are in Spanish! They integrated all the neighborhoods! There are no more poor sections! No more big earthquakes for another one hundred and fifty years! In L A, that's forever!

(The house has been completely dismantled and removed from the stage. It looks like the opening of the play. The bolero ends or fades out.)

(In the dark, ANÍBAL enters and lies on the bed.)

(CELESTINA pushes the stroller to the bed.)

(Lights on the bed go up. We can see clearly that ANÍBAL is an old man in his seventies. ANÍBAL lies in bed, reading a book.)

(The light around the bed goes very dark, leaving the bed in limbo. The vague twinkling stars, crescent moons, and dark, silvery clouds of the earlier scene could return: it should seem as if once again the bed were floating in space.)
EPILOGUE

(Celestina goes to Aníbal's side and she looks at him a long moment.)

Celestina

(Big smile) Is that really you, Aníbal?

Aníbal

(Looking up from his book) Huh?

Celestina

It's me, Aníbal! I'm back! I just got into L.A! I didn't think I'd remember how to get to Echo Park—but that bus stop at Virgil and Santa Monica is still there—and your house is exactly the same—the earthquake didn't hurt it—I can't believe my luck!

(Aníbal looks at Celestina a long moment. He doesn't remember her.)

Aníbal

Are you the new nurse?

Celestina

It's me. It's Celestina! I'm back!

Aníbal

You're not the new nurse? Who's going to give me a bath?

...I'm Celestina.

Aníbal

Who is Celestina?

Celestina

Aníbal, stop it.
ANÍBAL

Who are you?

(Beat)

CELESTINA

Celestina del Sol.

(CELESTINA waits for the name to click in ANÍBAL’s memory. It doesn’t. ANÍBAL holds out his hand.)

ANÍBAL

I’m Aníbal de la Luna. Nice to meet you.

(Disappointed, CELESTINA shakes hands with ANÍBAL.)

CELESTINA

Nice to meet you.

ANÍBAL

Are you here for the house? It’s a craftsman. Built in the last century. In the forties.

CELESTINA

Don’t you remember me at all?

ANÍBAL

When did we meet?

CELESTINA

I think it was forty years ago, but I can’t be sure.

ANÍBAL

Forty years! Coño! Memory doesn’t go back that far!

CELESTINA

It’s just like yesterday for me! You picked me up by the side of the road. I was pregnant. You took me to this house. We had quesadillas! You rubbed my feet!
EPILOGUE

ANÍBAL

I did?

CELESTINA

I remember every moment of that night! I never stopped thinking about you! And I meant to come back sooner, but I just lost track of the "time"!

ANÍBAL

It couldn’t have been forty years ago. Eyesight isn’t so hot—these damn cataracts, you know?—but—you’re a kid. What’re you, twenty-five? Twenty-six?

(Slight beat)

CELESTINA

I’m not really sure.

(This response seems to jog something in ANÍBAL’s memory, but he isn’t sure what.)

ANÍBAL

Well, if you’re here for the house, make yourself at home, look around—it’s a craftsman!

CELESTINA

I know it’s a fucking craftsman, Aníbal!

ANÍBAL

(Laughs; re baby.) And who’s that little guy?

CELESTINA

My son. I think I was in labor with him for six months!

ANÍBAL

Again, please?

CELESTINA

Never mind!
ANÍBAL
How old is he?

CELESTINA
Do you think I know?

ANÍBAL
Why do I feel like I’ve had this conversation before?

CELESTINA
His name is Aníbal. Aníbal del Sol y la Luna. His father’s dead. Rodrigo’s body was pulled out of the L.A. River in the storm of the century.

ANÍBAL
Coño!

CELESTINA
It was the night that we met, Aníbal. Your brother was in the army. You had a girlfriend named Debbie.

ANÍBAL
Debbie? You’re a week too late. We buried her last week in Anaheim. Disney did a fucking hell of a job burying my wife. Let me tell you. Those people know how to throw a funeral! They are true merchants of death!

CELESTINA
So you married her, huh?

ANÍBAL
Had to. Knocked her up.

CELESTINA
And Nelson?
EPILOGUE

ANÍBAL
He's a war hero, you know. Lives up the street. Married a beautiful girl many years ago...a Bosnian. They have thirteen kids!

CELESTINA

(Smiles) Good.

(ANÍBAL stares at CELESTINA a long moment.)

ANÍBAL
You look...coño...you look so familiar. You look vaguely like...there was a young woman...on a night that seemed to last forever...she was...crazy...and very fat....

CELESTINA

I was pregnant!

ANÍBAL
...but it was some forty years ago...before the Big One...before they moved the capital...something happened to me back then...I blacked out for a couple of years...nobody could explain it...I woke up and it was two years later. I had dreams in my coma that made no sense! (Laughs) But you know what? It was so long ago and so much has happened since then, so much life, so much dying, so many changes, it just gets buried under all the time between now and then, you know? It's like, somewhere in my mind is a ditch, a very dark and deep hole, and time keeps filling this hole with all the debris of my life, the details: every name, face, taste, sound: gone! Down the hole! Outta reach! Coño! What's the point of that, huh? Does that make any sense to you?

CELESTINA

No.
ANÍBAL
No. You’re very beautiful, though. Kind. It would be nice to remember you. To have been in love with you.

CELESTINA
We were in love, Aníbal.

ANÍBAL
How do you know we were in love?

CELESTINA
We lived together for two years, didn’t we?

ANÍBAL
We did?

CELESTINA
They were the happiest two years of my life.

ANÍBAL
You sure it was me?

(Beat. CELESTINA wipes her tears, then reaches out, touches his hand, and kisses it.)

CELESTINA
I should probably let you get some sleep. It’s been great seeing you again, Aníbal.

ANÍBAL
Yes.

CELESTINA
You take care of yourself, okay?

ANÍBAL
Thanks for dropping by. Listen, this house is a steal at this price! Great place to raise a family!
EPILOGUE

CELESTINA
I’ll keep that in mind.

ANÍBAL
Yes. Good.

CELESTINA
Is there anything I can do for you before I go? (Beat)

ANÍBAL
Yes, there is.

CELESTINA
What?

ANÍBAL
Would you rub my feet? They’re freezing.

(Beat)

CELESTINA
(Smiles) Okay. (smiles)

(CELESTINA gets into bed with ANÍBAL. He puts his feet up on her lap. She rubs his feet gently. The feeling of her hands on his feet has an instant and electrifying effect on ANÍBAL. When he talks, he sounds like a young man again.)

ANÍBAL
I searched Los Angeles for days and days after she left me. I went to that bus stop on the corner of Virgil and Santa Monica and waited there day and night. I called every hospital and went to every police station in L A County. (Beat) I imagined finding her. Living with her forever. I imagined long moments of silence between us when we didn’t have anything to say. I imagined enduring the terror of a Los Angeles gone out of control because these quiet moments would be like iron wings and we’d be sheltered inside them. We wouldn’t hear
the noise of the earthquakes or the screams of a dying culture. But she never came back to me. I never saw her again. All I kept were memories of that extraordinary woman and a night that had that dream feeling to it, you know that feeling: there's a sound like suspended music, air that doesn't move, time that doesn't add to itself. It took me years but I finally understood that I had encountered a true mystery that night, that I had taken a living miracle into my house. That Celestina del Sol was from a world I would never understand. That sometimes Nature improvises. That Nature created a woman that lived outside the field of time and may never die. That someday everyone who ever knew her and remembered her would be gone. That she would live forever in that physical perfection like some kind of exiled and forgotten goddess. And that trying to understand such a life, and why love matters to it, why a god would need to be loved too, was like trying to understand the anatomy of the wind or the architecture of silence or cloud tectonics. (He laughs.) Yeah. What better way to respond to a miracle than to fall in love with it?

(During the following, lights start to go down on the bed. The sound of the rain comes up.)

ANÍBAL

And at one point in the evening, I heard the sound of Spanish, as love assumed the language my parents spoke the night I was conceived, the language I had forgotten....

(Celestina kisses Aníbal. Celestina leaves the bed takes the baby out of the stroller, and starts walking to the bus stop with the baby in her arms.)

ANÍBAL

Celestina said to me: “Me preguntó como será haberte amado en cada etapa de tu vida, Aníbal ...”
EPILOGUE

(ANÍBAL continues the speech in Spanish, quietly, underneath CELESTINA’s simultaneous, and louder, translation:)

CELESTINA

(To the baby) ... I wonder what it would be like to love you in every age of your life, Aníbal. To love the little boy you were, and hold your hand, and lead you across the street, and kiss your fat little baby stomach, and comb your little boy’s hair. And then, later, to love the old man you’ve become, and kiss your deep wrinkles, and smooth out the gray hair, and delight your wise and tired heart, and stare into those mysterious eyes, past the cataracts, and deep into you, to the green landscapes where you never age. Wouldn’t it be sweet to have that kind of love, Aníbal?

ANÍBAL

“... El amor de toda una vida.”

(CELESTINA has reached the bus stop with the baby.)

CELESTINA

... The love of a lifetime.

(ANÍBAL smiles sadly at the sweet memory. Then he forgets it again and goes back to his book as if nothing happened.)

(Lights slowly to black on the bed.)

(At the dark bus stop, CELESTINA holds her thumb up, hoping to catch a ride out of Los Angeles.)

(She reaches into a pocket and pulls out saltine crackers. She gives one to the baby and eats the other.)

(Rain. Headlights. Blackout.)

END OF PLAY