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LOS ACTOS OF EL TEATRO CAMPESINO AND LUIZ VALDÉZ 1965-1967:
A STUDY WITH COMPARISON TO THE EARLY ENGLISH MORALITY PLAY

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C. Allen Neighorn

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Thesis

Accepted:

Approved:

Advisor
James Slowiak

School Director
Neil Sapienza

Faculty Reader
Durand L. Pope

Dean of the College
James Lynn

Faculty Reader
Stephen Skiles

Dean of the Graduate School
George R. Newkome

Date

ABSTRACT

Luis Valdéz is a significant playwright, producer, director and actor of the second half of the twentieth century. He was twenty five years of age and one year out of university when in 1965 he began organizing El Teatro Campesino [The Theatre of the Farmworker]. El Teatro was a collaborative theatre company which was initially associated with the United Farmworkers Union.

The researcher's interest in this study grew out of a thirty-year personal and professional association with the Mexican-heritage / Latino / Chicano community in rural Northern California. The researcher uses a Cultural/Critical Rhetorical analysis approach. The study considers the significance of the *Acto* [act or play] and the contribution made by El Teatro Campesino and Luis Valdéz.

The elements of the study include the historic setting, ethnic labels and cultural values, ethnic and cultural politics, social protest, Valdéz as the progenitor of El Teatro Campesino. The study focuses on the early *Actos* from 1965 to 1967. A categorical comparison is made between *Los Actos* and the Moralities or English morality plays. This is followed by a comparison between *Everyman* (c. 1495) and *Las dos caras del patroncito* [The two faces of our beloved patron/boss] (1965).

Further consideration is given to insights provided by the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Freire on El Teatro Campesino, a commentary on the study, and a conclusion, followed by further research suggestions. This study concludes that all of the essential elements of morality plays are present in the *Acto*.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Los Actos are brief bilingual-bicultural social issue dramas. They were created by the ensemble theatre company, El Teatro Campesino under the leadership of Luis Valdéz. El Teatro and Valdéz were initially associated with the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. *Los Actos* were used in organizing Filipino and Mexican-heritage farm labor by the United Farmworkers in the San Joaquin Valley of California. The dramas emerged in the environment of the 1960s when ethnic populations had begun to assert claims for status and opportunity in the United States. The study will examine the form and function of *Los Actos*. To assist in that task, the study will include an investigation of the historical, political, and cultural settings of *Los Actos*.

Two strong personalities influenced the creation of El Teatro Campesino in 1965: Cesar Chávez of the United Farmworkers, and Luis Valdéz a recent university graduate. Cesar Chávez was the internationally recognized leader of the United Farmworkers. He shared leadership with the remarkable feminist, Dolores Huérta, and the Leadership Council of the UFW.

Stress seems to have existed between Chávez's radical non-violence and the militant Chicano Movement to which Valdéz belonged. This conflict, I believe,

as well as the contrast between union politics and theatre art that Valdéz identifies, was the cause of the organizational separation that occurred in 1967 between the United Farmworkers and El Teatro Campesino.

The study will identify and consider the improvisational theatre group known as El Teatro Campesino; Luis Valdéz, the inspired leader of the group; the California non-profit corporation named El Teatro Campesino; and the current production company using the name El Teatro Campesino. The founder of El Teatro Campesino, Luis Valdéz, has had wide influence, success, and international recognition as a playwright, producer, director, and actor. He has been credited, in the role of leader of El Teatro Campesino, as the impulse which stimulated the creation of a nationwide Chicano Theatre Movement.

Moralities, or morality plays of the late 15th century, are recognized as a genre of theatre that came out of the end of the Medieval Period. This era was associated with social and cultural repression by the Church and the slow demise of Feudalism. While Moralities have been the subject of academic research for many years, *Los Actos* came into being approximately forty years ago and have become the subject of academic record keeping and research only in the last quarter century. From a rhetorical point of view, I believe similarities exist between the Moralities and *Los Actos* created by the El Teatro Campesino ensemble and Luis Valdéz in the mid 1960s. An analysis will be conducted to explore the possible rhetorical similarities of these dramatic forms.

Researcher Disclaimer

My background is that of an Anglo/White/European American¹ who lived and worked as a community member and professional educator for thirty years in mostly rural Northern California in small towns with large Indigenous and Mexican-heritage populations. During my career as an educator, I lived and worked in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Yolo, Solano, and Sacramento Counties.

For more than three years, I lived and interacted primarily with nationals of Spanish speaking nations and cultures temporarily residing in the Salinas Valley of Coastal Central California. I participated in the first Federally-ordered teacher training program for English as a Second Language instructors developed by the San Francisco Unified School District. I also participated in the founding of an American Federation of Teachers Local (#1999) and have been a supporter of the United Farmworkers, the Brown Pride Movement, and immigrant rights and opportunities since the 1960s. I am a social progressive and community activist who espouses a critical/cultural studies perspective of academic research.

Between 2002 and 2005, I completed a dual Masters Degree in Intercultural Communication and Latino Studies at Sacramento State University. Over a four-semester period in 2005 – 2006, I completed preliminary qualitative and quantitative research projects, and Intercultural Communication and New

¹ European American is used in Cultural Studies to refer to persons whose cultural and genetic roots lie in Europe but were born and raised in the United States. A more correct but clumsy term would be European US Americans because, as we all know, the US is only one of many American countries.

Media coursework in PhD study at Kent State University. I am currently completing a Master of Arts Degree in Theatre at The University of Akron. I have directed segments from the play, *Bernabé*, and directed the one act play, *Las dos caras del patroncito* [The two faces of our beloved patron], by Luis Valdéz as part of my graduate studies in Theatre at The University of Akron.

The thesis is of interest to me because it intersects with Intercultural Communication, Latino Studies, and Theatre at a historical point of conflict in a classic example of class struggle. Additionally, of interest is the assertion by Arturo C. Flores that the *Actos* introduce a major historical theatre movement and cultural paradigm shift, as did Moralities in about 1500 and Agitprop² around 1910. Every thesis makes sense only within a theoretical structure.

Theory

I shall use the rhetorical theory formulated by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. Campbell is a feminist rhetorical critical scholar. She supports a meaning-arousal theory of rhetorical criticism, which focuses on the meaning of symbols as an expression of human experience and interpretation of the world, and the use of symbols to persuade (*Ontological* 27-30). Campbell refers to a rhetor as one who initiates a symbolic act seeking to influence others (*Rhetorical* 5). She goes on to say,

² Agitprop may be broken into agitate and propagandize which were the two primary purposes of the dramas in the struggle to educate and convince the workers of the World to unite against the industrialists.

Because rhetoric is addressed to others, it is reason-giving; and because it is social and public, it uses as reasons the values accepted and affirmed by a subculture or culture. In this way, rhetoric is tied to social values, and rhetors' statements will reflect the social norms of particular times and places. (*Rhetorical* 6)

By Campbell's definition, a dramatic work is a rhetorical act.

Campbell defines the categories of analysis of rhetorical acts by naming seven general categories of parts and elements: purpose, audience, persona, tone, structure, supporting materials, and strategies (*Rhetorical* 20).

Campbell summarizes a rhetorical act thusly,

A rhetorical act ... is an intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end. A rhetorical act creates a message whose shape and form, beginning and end, are stamped on it by a human author with a goal for an audience. (*Rhetorical* 7)

Campbell's emphasis on values and norms of the culture at a particular time and in a particular place provides the impetus to the historical setting, ethnic labels and cultural values, ethnic and cultural politics, and social protest portions of the study.

Methodology

The study will be based primarily on published material. Additional material will come from unpublished conversations and personal experiences relevant to the study. In applying Campbell's theory of rhetorical criticism, Moralities will be compared to *Actos*, followed by a specific comparison of

Everyman to *Las dos caras del patroncito*. I believe similarities exist between audience, persona, tone, structure, supporting materials, and strategies of the early works of the Teatro and the morality plays of the European Middle Ages. A Feminist Critical/Cultural Studies perspective includes certain political and historical references. To clarify the impact of the perspective in this study, I define the following terms as used in this thesis.

Marxist class struggle

Marxist theory posits a class struggle between those who have power and those who do not have power. Marxist theory has been popularized with the slogan "Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains" created in 1867 (New Socialist). Feminist researchers accept the general concept of class struggle but also often view that struggle as primarily between traditional male dominance and females who seek equality through empowerment.

Hegemonic vs. counterhegemonic

In Marxist theory, the groups who have the power create and strive to keep in place the social/cultural story or cultural myths about why things are best and natural as they are. This story is the hegemony. An example of a hegemonic story would be that John is King because God has anointed him to be king, and it follows that what John orders is in keeping with God's will. Therefore, not only is it unpatriotic but it is unholy to disobey John. Thus, it is only "natural" or "the way it ought to be" that we obey John.

A more contemporary example might be the media furor that exploded on two occasions when a US citizen risked stating aloud, contrary to the established [hegemonic] mood of rage and indignation, that [counterhegemonic] the US support of state terrorism in Afghanistan against the Russians and continued imperialism/colonialism in dealing with less prosperous nations might be the root cause of the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001.

Officials and media spokespersons were outraged that someone should speak such "offensive" and "unpatriotic" words during the CNN broadcast of Reverend Jeremiah Wright's sermon segment. This emotional/cultural attack against both the message and the speaker vaccinates the people against the utterance and prevents any logical consideration of the comment. The professional destruction of the Communication Studies professor and department chair who first spoke these words publicly in Colorado demonstrates the importance to those in power that the hegemony is kept in place. The furor surrounding the tape recorded remarks of the Reverend Wright during the Obama campaign further demonstrates the intent that criticism not be uttered against the hegemony.

Critical/Cultural

Critical/Cultural Studies consider cultures, societies, and organizations, probing to discover the power structures and the hegemonies which keep the power structures in place. Once the structures have been exposed and the hegemonic stories critiqued, the counterhegemonic analysis and evidence is

presented to the people in an educational effort to dispel the hegemony and free the people enslaved by the social/cultural power myths.

Thesis

The thesis statement of this study is: *Los Actos* of El Teatro Campesino, while unique, have many of the essential characteristics of early English morality plays.

Significance

The study is justified because it examines a recent phenomenon which resulted in a national movement and arguably a new genre of theatre. "Although Chicanos have inherited a long tradition of religious theatrical expression that spans centuries, the relatively recent rise of Chicano theater remains generally unknown to the average citizen" (Huérta, *Chicano* 3). The study unites information and sources in an interdisciplinary manner to provide a broad and solid foundation to the understanding and study of the early works (1965-1976) of El Teatro Campesino and Luis Valdéz. At a time of an emerging Mexican-heritage/Hispanic/Latino/Chicano cultural importance in the United States, the study may contribute to both Theatre and Intercultural Communication disciplines, as well as the public discourse, and indirectly to the study of New Media.

Broyles-González in *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* said in 1994 that the

...group viewed and appreciated by farmworkers simply as an effective organizational tool, became, curiously, idolized in intellectual circles and was converted into a Chicano icon for the academy. Euro-American scholarship and the press followed suit. (xii)

Thus the work of the ensemble under the leadership of Valdéz transcended its birth as social protest drama to become a dramatic cultural expression of an emerging, awakening ethnic giant in North America, and established new recognition and appreciation of the Indigenous/Hispanic/Latino/Chicano contribution to US American theatre and society.

"Luis Valdéz is recognized as creating a distinct theatrical tradition and as one writer put it, he is '...the only living creator of a generic form of theatre.' ...[writes] Andrés Valenzuela Gutiérrez, Archives Curator and /Press Director" (UCSB Archive 1-2). Huérta concludes that, "the Teatro Campesino had, almost single-handedly, fostered a theatre movement" (*Giants* 29).

When asked for a definition of Chicano Theatre, Valdéz responded,

What is Chicano theater? ...At its high point Chicano theater is religion – the huelguistas [strikers] de Delano praying at the shrine of the Virgin de Guadalupe, located in the rear of an old station wagon parked across the road from Di Giorgio's [one of the largest grape growers struck by the UFW] camp No. 4; at its low point, it is a cuento [tale or story] or a chiste [joke] told somewhere in the recesses of the barrio, puro pedo [pure fart]. Chicano theater then is first a reaffirmation of *life* [italics in the original]. (Drain 315)[bracketed text added by researcher]

Chicano theatre is earthy.

Arturo C. Flores writes,

It is necessary to say that in the decade of the 1960s, the theatre [El Teatro Campesino], with a clear commitment to protest,

presented the problems of the Chicanos. Through it, the Chicano could demonstrate his often hidden frustrations and give form to his often unrecognized aspirations. Moreover, it gave impetus to the great voice of the theatre groups that came into existence and that still exist owing to the example provided by Luis Valdéz ... because of it [El Teatro], it was known [understood] that the problem was not that of the individual, rather it was a community problem. (9-10) [translation from Spanish by the researcher]

The development of *Los Actos* by Luis Valdéz and El Teatro Campesino has historic social protest, cultural awakening, theatre history, and Intercultural Communication significance.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXT

The context of any message provides additional information needed to interpret the symbols and meanings intended by the message sender.

Historic Setting

The historic setting of the 1960s and the beginnings of the United Farmworkers, El Teatro Campesino and *Los Actos* was a period of multicultural awakening and uprising unprecedented in the United States of America. The Latina, Broyles-González, states that,

The numerous social and political struggles of the 1960s and 1970s – such as the civil rights movement, the United Farm Workers movement, the antiwar movement, and the women's liberation movement – were intimately bound to a multifaceted cultural renaissance. Perhaps the single most inspirational struggle for Chicanas/os was the David and Goliath standoff between the United Farm Workers Union and the agribusiness giants of California and other states. (xi)

In the compilation *Takin' it to the streets*, Alexander Bloom and Wini Brenies recount the intensity of the upheavals of the 1960s which seem to have been a direct response to the regularity, uniformity, compliance, and moderate prosperity for the mostly white middle class of the 1950s. The apparent calm of the 1950s stands in sharp contrast with

...the images of the 1960s: civil-rights sit-ins, urban violence, antiwar demonstrations, black power salutes, hippie love-ins, draft card burnings, death and destruction in Vietnam, police riots in Chicago, obscenities, hostilities, [and the] killings at Kent State and Jackson State universities. (Bloom 3)

It was in this time frame that the Chicano Movement arises (176). However, the reader is cautioned that "...the harmonious 1950s; the turbulent 1960s" (3) is too simplistic of a viewpoint.

The apparent harmony of the '50s may have been due to the focus on White males: Persons of color and women were not having such a harmonious existence (4). Certainly the poverty and abysmal working conditions for migrant farmworkers on the Pacific Coast of the United States had existed for decades before the struggle to unionize the grape workers in Delano, California in 1965 (Broyles-González xi; Burma 19; United Farmworkers website homepage). It was this organizing effort and protest against the prevailing social conditions which brought about El Teatro Campesino (Huérta, *Chicano* 11-15) and the creation of *Los Actos*.

Consideration of Some Relevant Ethnic Labels and Cultural Values

Understanding the meaning and use of ethnic labels within a cultural group and being aware of the values of the culture are critical to understanding an ethnically grounded dramatic work.

Ethnic terms

When I was a child (1942-1960), a Latin was a person of Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese descent. Thus Latin America was Latin because of the colonialization by and the current residency of European descendents from these three Mediterranean countries. By the 1960s, Latino began to be used to represent persons of Spanish (and Portuguese) speaking countries of the Americas and other regions. As an Anglo/White/European American, I thought of all of the peoples of these countries as Latinos, though I was also aware of Indian, Indio, or Indigenous groups who seemed a small, diminished population in my mind.

The emergence of "Chicano"

The term Chicano evolved out of Black civil rights movement. "Public declarations by African-Americans of race pride and ethnic heritage prompted members of other minority groups to reassess their own place and backgrounds" (Bloom, 176). While Latino became a generic label for persons from Spanish speaking cultures, some chose to use the term Hispanic pointedly in opposition to emphasize the descent from "White" Spaniards contrasted with those who chose Chicano which emphasized the importance of and pride in the bronze/brown Indigenous component of the *Mestizo* or mixed genetic and cultural foundations of the Mexican heritage (Arrizón xvi-xvii; Bloom 177; Huérta, *Chicano* 4; *Spanish Concise Dictionary* 204). It is estimated that 80% or more of Mexicans living in Mexico are of Indio/Indian/Indigenous and European blended

cultural and genetic heritage. Luis Valdéz self identifies as a Chicano (*Early Works* 6; Huérta, *Chicano* 1-2).

The conflict between the population that thinks of itself as Mexican, inside or outside the US borders has a long standing difference with those who identify as Chicano. Huérta states,

Millions of undocumented workers in this country live in a sort of demi-world, always cautious of being apprehended and deported. As members of the working class, many Chicanos have accepted the politicians' rhetoric about the "illegal alien threat," unaware of the fact that the undocumented workers contribute to the economy rather than detract from it. And so there is a difference between Chicano and the Mexican in terms of language [English verses Spanish], attitudes, social customs, and place of birth, but in the final analysis they are both working class and share the same consequences of an insensitive society: Poverty, alienation, exploitation in wars, manipulation by government, ignorance in schools, and injustice in the courts – the several themes that Chicano theater has explored. (*Chicano*, 5)

The following is an example of the generational and birth place gap of cultural values of which I have first person experience. Three Mexican-heritage youths worked for me on a part-time basis in bilingual-bicultural cable television program production. Early one Sunday morning, the youngest brother called me and asked if he could see me. When he arrived, face swollen, eyes blackened, and wrists bandaged, he proceeded to tell the tale of the three boys beaten by twelve police officers in a nearby community the night before. He declared his father was unwilling to assist the boys and that his oldest brother appealed to me for help: The two older brothers were still in jail, the younger, being a minor had been released.

Weeks later, after an amateur video tape of the nocturnal events had been discovered and enhanced, I met with the father. He was ashamed that his youngest son could be heard screaming in pain during the beating. He stated that a real Mexican takes his beating in silence. The boy had needed seven stitches in his scalp and both wrists were broken: He stood 5' 2" and weighed 116 pounds. He was further embarrassed that his boys were Chicanos who had a confrontational attitude toward authority instead of attempting to maintain an environment of harmony. He assumed that if his boys were arrested, they must be guilty of something and felt shame had been brought to the family by the boys. When I pointed out that his sons were US citizens and in the US we do not believe that citizens should receive such treatment by the police, he reconsidered and agreed to help his oldest son find funding for an attorney.

In three separate trials, the two younger brothers were found guilty of misdemeanor resisting arrest and the oldest was exonerated after a directed verdict of innocence. The oldest brother was able to continue his university studies and the two younger brothers began university studies the next semester. This event took place in 1996. The struggle for social justice continues for Latinos more than thirty years after *Los Actos* first appeared and differences in values between traditionalists and Chicanos remain a conflict.

The Cultural Foundations of the Strike

In 1963, Ysidro Arturo Cabrera concluded a dissertation at the University of Colorado entitled *A study of American and Mexican-American culture values*

and their significance in education. The significance statement provides that “estimates indicated that there were 3,000,000 people of Spanish-speaking descent living in the United States. Most of these were of Mexican-American descent and lived mainly in the Southwest and far West regions” (1). Cabrera summarized “Mexican-American Culture Values” as “typically...village folk culture” (157). Values associated with this folk culture include primacy of family, individual security is by inclusion in family, focus on here and now, subsistent production, simple organization and work structures, materialism limited, authority rest in parents – often the father, females subordinate and limited to home/household responsibilities, men have more freedom, and godparents are important (Cabrera 157).

Luis Valdéz, in an article entitled “The tale of the Raza” in *Ramparts Magazine* (Noah’s Ark, 1971³), describes the period prior to the union organizing efforts this way: “...In the last one hundred years our revolutionary progress has not only been frustrated, it has been totally suppressed. This is a society largely hostile to our cultural values...” (Bloom 187). Most migrant workers in the California Central Valley in 1965 were Filipino or Mexican-heritage (United Farmworkers, *Official*).

³ *Ramparts* was an activist news magazine which did not follow traditional business practices. Noah’s Ark filed trust copyrights in 1971 to protect the works and authors of a number of otherwise unprotected published documents under then current copyright law.

The depth of Valdéz' "anti-establishment" attitude fifteen years after this time frame can be seen in an interview conducted in January of 1982 in New York shortly after the release of his major feature film, *Zoot Suit*:

Interviewer: What is this "entrenched attitude" that won't allow Chicanos to penetrate the literary and film industries?

Valdéz: ...white man's ... arrogance and belief that the truth resides in Western European culture, and that whether you are talking about capitalism or communism, or about Protestantism or Catholicism, only *their* science, *their* religion, *their* politics and *their* arts are sophisticated enough to be valid. [italics and capitalization as in the original] (Orana-Cordova 99)

He goes on to link this attitude to damage done to people of color on every continent and specifically the attempted destruction of the Indigenous cultures and peoples of the Americas (99-100).

*Consideration of Some Relevant
Ethnic and Cultural Politics*

Chicano is a political-cultural term. *The Chicano Manifesto* by Armando B. Rendón was published originally by MacMillan in 1971. In this early, and in light of history, rather mild statement of definition or manifesto of "Chicano," Rendón writes of an awakening to the cost of acculturation by the children of Mexican heritage immigrants. This cost includes the loss of the Spanish language in the English schools, loss of the Mexican heritage self-identification, and the shaming of the "Indio" cultural and genetic label as used by Whites both in Mexico and the United States (Bloom 177-180). He goes on to say,

Chicano has the ring of Pachuco slang, of shortening a word, which is typical of our Mexican-American experience. It also echoes

the harsher sounds of our native [nahuatl] ancestors of the Mexican Valley, but is softened by the rounded-vowel endings of our Spanish forefathers. It is the perfect word to characterize the mezcla [mixture, mix] that is la raza [the race, the people]. It portrays the fact that we have come to psychological terms with circumstances which might otherwise cause emotional and social breakdowns among our people if we only straddle cultures and do not absorb them. (Rendón in Bloom 180) [Bracketed text added by researcher]

The fact that Rendón was a college student is important to note because the Chicano movement was a student movement (Huérta, *Chicano* 2). The movement flowered on university campuses in California, with echoes on campuses in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. Sacramento State and UC Santa Barbara remain strongholds of Chicano thought and action today. It was the strong, single Mexican-heritage scholars of the 1930s to 1950s who had made their way into the faculty of public universities in areas of greatest ethnic diversity that became the writers, organizers, and first rank leaders of the Chicano Movement or *El Movimiento*, or *La Causa*.

Notable in this early leadership is Américo Parédes, who self-identifies as a "proto-Chicano." His "1958 book, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*, described the legend of Gregorio Cortéz, a Mexican American ranch hand who shot a Texas sheriff [in a misunderstanding caused by a faulty translation by the deputy sheriff]. [Cortéz] ...then became a hero as he eluded capture" (Gale)[Bracketed text added by researcher]. The archives of UCLA present Américo Parédes in these terms: "Considered the foremost scholar of Chicano folklore, Américo Parédes (1915-1999) is regarded by a whole

generation of Chicano scholars as their intellectual role model and mentor” (UCLA Archives). These scholars quickly passed leadership to the student ranks and influenced the Chicano Movement from behind the scenes.

“El Plan Espiritual de Atzlán” presented by Gonzáles is a rhetorically powerful and militant statement of Chicanoism:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal “gringo” invasion of our territories, *we*, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Atzlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, *declare* that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny. (Bloom 181) [Italics in the original]

Rudolfo “Corky” Gonzáles gave the keynote address at the First Chicano National Conference, in Denver in 1969. According to Blackburn-Reyes, research librarian at California State University Sacramento,⁴ the audience consisted of young university students (including Blackburn-Reyes) and the professors who acted as their mentors and recruiters. In later years, the speech is passed on and recorded in academic journals and texts as “anonymous” and a shroud seems to exist around its actual origin. However, it was delivered and presented as a personal message by Gonzáles. He was the author of the intensely ethnically proud epic poem entitled “I am Joaquin”. He also was the leader of the local organization called the Crusade for Justice in Denver (Bloom 181; Escuela Tlatelolco).

⁴ Private conversation while I was doing graduate work at Sacramento State University between 2002 – 2005

Fernando P. Delgado identifies three specific words in the *plan spiritual de Atzlán* speech as ideographs of Chicano culture: *Atzlán*, Chicano, and *LaRaza*.

Delgado defines ideographs as “linguistic units containing political and cultural dimensions...” He further says, “As a consequence of these dimensions, ideographs allow for essential to social movement discourse” (447).

Jorge A. Huérta addresses the rhetorical question, “What is Chicano?” He states,

...What is a Chicano as opposed to a Mexican American, Mexican, Hispanic, or Latino? More than anything, the term Chicano seems to identify a certain political consciousness, asserted with vigor especially after 1965...it is a self-definition that denies both a Mexican and an Anglo-American distinction, yet it is influenced by both. In essence...employing a term that stems from barrio realities and linguistic patterns on this [northern] side of the Mexican border. (*Chicano* 4)[bracketed text added by researcher]

Huérta goes on to note that it has a certain working class implication and is anti-assimilation (*Chicano* 4), even though it may be used by university student and professor alike, as an affirmation of solidarity with “the people.”

Gary Soto speaks to Chávez’s influence on urban Chicanos, “César inspired us all through his will for justice” (Soto in Ferris, xiv). It was this will that brought Chávez and the United Farmworkers the support of the Chicano youth.

The Emergence of the United Farmworkers

Yolanda Broyles-González notes that the, “first successful farm labor union in United States history began in 1962, when, against all odds, César Chávez, Helen Chávez, and Dolóres Huérta began to organize farm laborers” (xi).

It is interesting and not a coincidence that both Dolóres Huérta and César Chávez were initially community organizers with the Community Service Organization, CSO (Ferris 60; United Farmworkers, *Chavez Story*; United Farmworkers, *Official*). In 1996, the following historical perspective was created on the CSO:

In 1947, in direct response to rampant police abuse, a lack of educational opportunities, widespread discrimination in government services, a strong culture of bigotry that allowed even people of good conscience to turn a blind eye to the suffering of their neighbors, and ultimately, to the Zoot Suit Riots and Bloody Christmas, the Community Service Organization was founded by Antonio Rios, Edward Roybal, and Fred Ross, Sr. Quickly, the CSO became a training ground for a generation of Latino leaders, including Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Gilbert Padilla. Recognizing the need for a unified Latino voice and for some semblance of political representation, the CSO initially concentrated on organizing voter registration drives in Latino communities all across California. In 1949, the CSO's efforts culminated in the election of Edward Roybal who was the first Latino to serve on the Los Angeles City Council. (CSO)

With the backing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the Southwest Voter Registration Project continued a sustained effort to register Latino and African-American citizens to vote and to provide both legal defense and education to new minority voters particularly in the Southwest United States (Rosales, Gambiita, Korbel, *et al*). This effort continues currently in preparation for the national elections in the fall of 2008 with the "*Su vota es su voz!*" [Your vote is your voice] campaign (SWVRP).

Dolores Huérta publicly acknowledged during a speech I attended at California State University Sacramento in the spring of 2005 that, "*¡Sí, se puede!*"

or, Yes, you can [do it], was her creation. The UFW slogan and now general affirmation for Latinos, recently has appeared in Barack Obama's campaign for President of the United States. Private conversations with an inner circle leadership council member suggest that she not only trained Chávez in his organizing method, but was the strong, stable organizational voice that helped focus Chávez's idealism. Further, according to the private conversations with a member of the UFWOC leadership council [United Farm Workers Organizing Committee] it appears that members of the council may have shielded Chávez from some of the more earthy methods used in the stress of the organizing and strike activities.

Chicano militancy and Chávez on non-violence

Chávez encouraged carrying pictures of the Virgin of Guadalupe as part of the marches which helped to maintain the ties with tradition and with more traditional Mexican-heritage people, and reinforced Chávez's commitment to non-violence (United Farmworkers, *Chaves Story*). He had read biographies of Mahatma Gandhi as well as Gandhi's own writings on non-violence "which fascinated him throughout his life" (Ferris 47). Gandhi was the leader of the non-violent civil disobedience which was instrumental in the British leaving India. The establishment of the nation of India took place after the departure of the British in 1947 (India). Valdéz is quoted by Jorge Huérta on the issue of violence: "...I

encountered all the violence I needed on the home front [as compared to Vietnam]: people were killed by the farmworkers' strike'" (Huérta, *Zoot Suit* 8).⁵

According to a confidential informant who alleged to have been an active Brown Beret member and a photocopy of an unpublished recruitment document,⁶ the most militant wing of the Chicano movement, the Brown Berets, advocated the use of force and possible violent overthrow of authority.⁷ The Brown Berets found the use of force for protection of the barrios and *la gente* was justified just as the Black Panthers had done before them (Ferris 141).

Chávez never endorsed nor sought the support of the Chicano movement, but he never turned away a student volunteer, so long as non-violence was maintained at UFW activities. This is again according to private conversations with the leadership council member. Chávez's fast which began on February 15, 1968, had been to confront the growing enthusiasm for force. He vowed the fast would continue until everyone associated with the UFW renewed the pledge of non-violence (Ferris 142).

The economic foundation of the strike

The primarily agricultural "industries" of the West Coast, and especially California, developed based upon the cheap labor of the uneducated migrant or

⁵ I do not mean to imply by this juxtaposition that supporters of the UFWOC were involved in any capital crimes.

⁶ I believe the document is currently in the hands of my attorney for safe storage.

⁷ Rumors thereafter have it that he was a graduate teaching assist pursuing a Master's in Theatre at a California state university.

seasonal worker (Burma xv-vvi; Wixson xv-xvi). By carefully planning the route, a family could start at any point on the seasonal crop and work rotation on the Pacific Coast then work most of the year. Shortly after the peach and apple seasons of Oregon and Washington, winter pruning of grapes, nuts, pears, and prunes would begin in California. In my youth I heard the term "The Migrant Trail" to represent this pattern. The entire working family (everyone over age six and still young enough to walk to the field and back) traveled in a vehicle from farm to farm. The family would carry simple kitchen goods, modest bedrolls, and a couple changes of clothing in the vehicle. Occasionally a grandmother would travel with the family as a housekeeper doing cooking, cleaning, and mending or making clothes. I observed that this pattern was true while I was a pastor in Cloverdale, California, from 1966-1968, and as a teacher in Geyserville, California, from 1967-1974. It has further been my experience that some agricultural employers would hire the man of the family, then provide what could be generously described as shacks for housing. In exchange for the housing the farmer/rancher would insist that the whole family work for the payment given to the man.

Another deceitful tactic used by a neighboring rancher in Geyserville was to hire workers and pay half the agreed figure in cash, withholding the remainder until the end of the season to assure the workers would stay. The working conditions were rumored to be particularly bad on this ranch. Then the last day, before he settled up, he would place an anonymous call to Migra [the US

Immigration and Naturalization Agency] reporting undocumented workers at his place. Migra would sweep the farm trying to catch illegal/undocumented workers. They would capture some, but the rest would run and not return to the farm. The rancher never had to pay the other half of the minimum wage he had promised. This was still occurring in the early 1970s when the rancher bragged in my presence about his cleverness and how much money he saved.

Migrant families often lived out of their cars, sleeping on the ground or in crude, open shacks. These shacks were “air conditioned” by reason of a lack of window glass or even a door. The “cabins” had no facilities or utilities other than a single light bulb, an outhouse, and a commonly used spigot or faucet near the housing. In the fields, often no sanitary services were provided, nor was medical care available. The wretched conditions reported in the CBS documentary, *Harvest of Shame*, were routine, not the exception (IMDb).

Commercial or corporate farmers and ranchers held both great wealth and political power. It was to serve the need for cheap labor that the Bracero Program was created in 1942 and continued until 1964 (Calavita 75, 151; Driscoll 51,). It allowed large numbers of Mexican nationals to temporarily enter California, Arizona, New Mexico, and other agricultural states, with the exception of Texas, for temporary agricultural work. The Mexican government would not allow its citizens to enter Texas to work because of the large number of human rights violations against Mexicans in that state (Burma xv; Calavita 73; Driscoll 51).

As a provision of the Bracero Program, a substantial portion of the “salary” would be withheld with the promise that it was being forwarded to a bank in Mexico where it could be collected when the migrant returned home. After many years of legal employment in the United States, most migrants who returned to Mexico found that there were no accounts or no deposits in the accounts.

The University of California Agricultural Personal Management program posted the following in 1999 from the *Orange County Reporter*:

Most of the farm workers, known as braceros, never received the savings that were automatically deducted from their paychecks. For years the braceros have petitioned the Mexican government and, more recently, the Mexican bank, Banrural, to acknowledge the existence of these funds. Farm-worker activists estimate the sum to be between \$150 million and \$3 billion, including interest. (UC Berkeley)

A major investigation is currently “underway” to determine at which point in the route the money of tens of thousands workers vanished. This investigation has continued over several decades without a definitive resolution.

Suddenly, the Bracero Program ended (Calavita 148; Driscoll 51) and *immigration limitation for Mexicans* went into effect in the 1960s (Burma xv) for the *first time*. Freedom to cross the border had been one of the original terms in the treaty with Mexico, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed after the invasion and annexation of half of Mexico in 1848 (Library of Congress). It was in this atmosphere of “controlled” immigration that Huérta and Chávez began the

organizing efforts in the Filipino and Mexican-heritage communities (United Farmworkers, *Official*).

As carried by the press, many saw the strike as primarily a Mexican-heritage issue. Theodore Shank, noted scholar and theatre historian, perceives the setting as,

Nearly all of the field workers were Chicanos – that is, of American Indian and Spanish ancestry – which made organizing very difficult. The work available to most of them was in the fields, as they had poor or non-existent formal education and limited English. Typically they considered themselves fortunate to have a job, so they were reluctant to strike even though their low wages kept them at poverty level. Progress toward forming a viable union was slow. The situation was further aggravated by Mexican workers who illegally slipped across the boarder, often with the help of labour contractors, who were willing to work as scabs for whatever payment they were offered. They could make no demands without the threat of deportation. (74)

However, other sources identify the Filipino farmworkers as involved not only in the work in the fields but also as participants in the strike effort (United Farmworkers, *Official*).

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL PROTEST

Luis Valdéz quotes César Chávez, "*Los actos son muy interesantes, chistosos, y representan la realidad de la vida del campesino*" (*Early Works* 15). [The *Actos* are very interesting, humorous (with the sense of "joke"), and represent the reality of life for the farmworker] [Translation by researcher]. The UFW used entertainment to help draw a crowd, especially after a long hard day of field work, marching, or picketing. The entertainment also provided instruction and propaganda to the strikers, outside supporters, and the media. The creative efforts empowered the creators and the observer/participants (Flores 9-10). The productions began to crystallize the roles of employers and employees in the new labor movement view and to disassemble the old patronage model of the beneficent "don" in a superior-submissive model of the old Mexican heritage. This was social protest performance.

Harry J. Elam, Jr., a participant in Black protest drama in the 1960s says, regarding social protest,

By "social protest performances" I mean those performances that have an explicit social purpose, that direct their audiences to social action. My definition presupposes that social protest performances emerge solely from marginalized peoples and oppositional struggles. Social protest performances function as

counterhegemonic strategies through which underrepresented groups challenge the dominant social order and agitate for change ... (vi)

Based on Elam's definition, I would qualify *Los Actos* as counterhegemonic social protest. However, this social protest is not an intellectual didactic, it has a folksy quality.

While living in Yolo County, California, directly across the river from Sacramento, I had the opportunity to see a mid-nineties version of an *Acto* performed by community Mexican-heritage and Chicano youth. This dramatization summarized the history of the Indigenous and Mexican peoples in the Southwest US. Before the action began, Mexican traditional music played over the school auditorium speakers. It had the usual pageantry of Indians and Mexican serfs toiling in the fields while oppressive whites abused and capriciously killed them. Then, the bare-chest young Chicano warrior for truth, justice, and the Mexican way charged onto the stage and atop a crate, his arm raised in a Brown Pride salute. The young woman and young man reading the narrative extolled the virtues of the new society where Mexican-heritage and Indigenous people would be recognized for their superior qualities.

Because this performance was part of the anti-drug youth program sponsored by state and county funds, the state assembly person was in the audience to watch the performance. He was outraged to see the accomplishments of his European ancestors portrayed as war crimes and crimes against humanity. How a middle-aged man of Italian decent could have been an

active politician living 10 miles from the state capitol of California in the 1990s and be shocked to learn that Chicanos view the landing of Columbus in the "New World" as a cataclysm is astounding, but his scathing letter to the editor published in the largest newspaper in the county certainly indicated both his displeasure and rejection of the political message.

In spite of attempts to cut off funding and close the program, it survived because it had been very successful in developing personal and ethnic pride with the resulting decrease in drug use and trafficking in the county. The board members, which included a man who had been one of the leadership council for the United Farmworkers in the 1960's, refused to fire the program director or the young Latina social worker who had coordinated the development and presentation of the play. Chicano theatre is exciting because it political protest and it speaks to the real issues seen by the people on the streets and in the barrios, bypassing the restrictive topic limits of "safe theatre."

In 1965, when the *Acto, Las dos caras del patroncito* was created, the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC – the predecessor to the UFW) was subject to frequent confrontation with local law enforcement agents and reportedly by vigilante group members at night. In rural California in this time period, vigilantes functioned in much the same manner that the Ku Klux Klan did in the south of the United States, or as the early Texas Rangers functioned as reported by Parédes. Intimidation and violence were used to dissuade followers and organizers from challenging the interests of the large land

holders and growers. The vigilantes were often ranchers/farmers and their older sons and other male relatives, even law enforcement agents out of uniform. Their general intent was to keep disruptive influences out of the community. They would go beyond what the "law" could do to "safe guard" their interests. In my personal experience such methods included telephoned death threats, hanging of a fellow teacher and union member in effigy⁸, arson, and beatings. It was rumored that less than twenty years before, vigilantes had broken a prisoner out of the county jail and hung him from the oak tree on the courthouse lawn. The ridicule of the *jura* [guard or jailer] in the *Acto*, *Los dos caras del patroncito*, was often performed within sight and ear-shot of armed county sheriff deputies and California Highway Patrol officers. The *Acto* is an example of non-violent social protest and resistance.

⁸ A scarecrow like life size dummy was hung from the power pole in the main intersection of the town. It bore a placard with a slur based upon the teacher's name and a Communist hammer and cycle symbol.

CHAPTER IV

LUIS VALDÉZ AS PROGENITOR OF EL TEATRO CAMPESINO

It is into the mixed, confused, and turbulent setting of the 1960s, the Brown Pride Movement, and the Farmworkers strike, that Luis Valdéz takes his place in theatre history. He was a recent graduate of San Jose State University with a degree in Math and English, a young Chicano, and the son of a migrant farmworker family. He became a worker in the blue collar labor movement of the *la gente* or the people (Huérta, *Chicano* 12; UCSB 2).

While at San Jose State University, Valdéz wrote a full length play which he staged and directed as a departmental project. Shank reports

In 1965 Luis Valdéz, then a theatre student in California, saw a *commedia* performance by the San Francisco Mime Troupe. He was so amazed by the vitality, the colour and the sound that he joined the troupe. About the same time he began thinking of a theatre for farmworkers which would bring together his roots as the son of migrant labourers and his theatre training. He was convinced that if any theatre would appeal to farmworkers it would be the lively, bawdy, outdoor style of the Mime Troupe. (74)

Shank states, "...the San Francisco Mime Troupe, [is] probably the oldest surviving political theatre in the United States..." (ix). Valdéz worked for about one year with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Huérta and Orana-Cordova state that Valdéz graduated in 1964 from San Jose State University (*Chicano* 13,14;

Orana-Cordova 95). The conflict in the reports might be resolved if Valdéz encountered the San Francisco Mime Troop in 1963 and was involved in it while in his senior year.

Upon graduation, Valdéz went to Delano to the United Farmworkers strike headquarters and presented Chávez with his idea to use theatre in support of the strike. Shank states,

The strike had been in effect for a month when Valdéz arrived in Delano and met one evening in the house behind the union office with a group of union volunteers. These workers and students spent their days attempting to persuade those who were picking grapes to join the strike. Valdéz had brought some signs along made for the occasion. He hung signs saying *Huelgista* (striker) on two of the men and *Esquirol* (scab) on a third who was instructed to act like a scab. The *Huelgistas* started shouting at the scab and everyone began to laugh.⁹ It was the beginning of El Teatro Campesino. (74-75)

Jorge Huérta recounts the story of Valdéz' first meeting with a group of strikers in the pink house behind strike headquarters in Delano, California, in this way: Valdéz introduced the now famous pig mask. The farmworkers burst into laughter when the first farmworker-actor put on the pig mask. The freedom of being behind the mask seemed to allow the man to transform into the boss without fear. He continues his story of the first meeting with the struggle to get anyone to play the strikebreaker (*Chicano* 11-12).

Whereas in the 1960s, Anglo/White/European Americans and Black/African-Americans would immediately identity the "pig" with "cop," it

⁹ "El Teatro Campesino: Interview with Luis Valdéz," by Beth Bagby, *Drama Review* T36 (summer 1967): 74-75. (located on p.344)

seems that the strikers identified “pig” with “boss” and the ensuing improvisation gives rise to the *Acto* to be analyzed in this study: *Las dos caras del pratroncito* [The two faces of our dear patron] (12, 19). I believe that the title comes about because the boss is two-faced, pretending to be a benefactor while actually abusing the workers.

Luis Valdéz is generally credited with the creation of El Teatro Campesino. He also seems to espouse a Chicano perspective (*Early Works* 6; Huérta, *Chicano* 1-2). The differences which developed between the United Farmworkers (UFW) and El Teatro in 1967 which resulted in Valdéz moving El Teatro Campesino up the road to Fresno may have been based on the conflict between César Chávez’s non-violent civil disobedience and the more militant brown pride of the Chicano Movement (Bloom 187; Kanellos 101; UCSB_3). The California Ethnic and Minority Archives note that in 1967 El Centro Campesino Cultural of Fresno, created by El Teatro Campesino and Luis Valdéz was formed, and the works of El Teatro grew to include “broader themes related to Chicano culture, including: education, Vietnam, indigenous roots, and racism” (UCSB 3).

Focus On Early Actos

I have elected to consider only the early years, 1965-1967, of the dramatic productions within the United Farmworkers [UFW] of El Teatro Campesino or The Theatre of the Farmworkers (UCSB 3). The title could also be translated the rural theatre, the theatre of the fields, or even the theatre of the poor. I select "The Theatre of the Farmworkers" as the translation due to the organizational affiliation, the political intent of the early plays, and my understanding of its use at the time. In time, El Teatro Campesino's influence extended far beyond the UFW.

As an organizing tool for the United Farmworkers, *Los Actos* were used on the picket lines, nearby communities, and on tours to raise consciousness and support for the grape strike. As an informal improvisational theatre group, the day's events on the picket lines might well appear in that night's play or become part of a growing "permanent" repertoire of established play elements which seem to have developed into *Los Actos*.

Catalog of Actos

In 1970, Valdéz delineates *Actos* versus *Mitos*, describing them as two halves of the same phenomenon (Valdéz, *Early* 11). In the introduction of Valdéz's 1971 copyrighted text, he identifies *Actos*, *Bernabé*, and *Pensamiento Serpentino* as separate categories. *Bernabé* is considered a *Mito* or mythic play representing the old, regenerated, or new myths of the Chicano Movement.

Pensamiento Serpeintino is an epic style poem about the nature of being Indigenous, especially being Aztec.

An unpublished *Acto*, *The Three Grapes*, [*Las tres uvas*] involves a green grape, a ripe grape, and a rotten grape as non-human stage characters (Huérta, *Chicano* 3; Shank 80). The earliest published *Acto*, *Las dos caras del patroncito*, was created in 1965 and was performed on the picket line of the UFW grape strike in Delano, California (Valdéz, *Early* 17). This play is about an exchange of roles between an arrogant ranch owner and a “simple” undocumented strike breaker. A lap dog or perhaps lap ape law enforcement agent also plays a role.

In 1966, *Quinta Temporada* [The fifth season] was performed at the Filipino Hall during a meeting of the strikers in Delano, California (Valdéz, *Early Works* 28). This is a reworking of a classic story of the seasons which first portrays the present lives of farmworkers and then shows a fifth season which represents how things could be under a union contract.

In 1967, *Los vendidos* [The sellouts] was performed at a meeting of the Brown Beret, the militant Chicano group, at Elysian Park in East Los Angeles (Valdéz, *Early Works* 40). A “sellout” in the 1960s did not represent a full theatre. It referred to a person who switched sides or accepted a payoff of one kind or another and abandoned the legitimate class struggle. Examples of sellouts are the “scab” or strike breaker on the picket line or a Mexican-heritage person who tried to erase all traces of Latino identity to become part of the White society, especially in business or politics. This story is about a sellout

Latina career politician working in the governor's office who is looking for a model Latino to be the token "Mexican-American" on a new state commission. A Chicano theme is the Latino who tries to pass as White and the shame it should bring to not have pride in the Indigenous blood of the *Mestizo* genetic and cultural heritage of most Mexican-heritage people.

During 1965-1967, the Teatro was part of an emerging social and cultural movement which was at least progressive and at most revolutionary. It was created in the heat, dust, noise, conflict, fear, confrontation, struggle, hope, love, thirst, hunger, discipline, and chaos of civil disobedience of mostly poor migrant workers in the agricultural rural Central Valley of California. It was not created with a five year plan and a line-item budget, although research of California records shows a California non-profit corporation named El Teatro Campesino was chartered by the Secretary of State in 1968 (California Secretary of State). History and relationships for the group are therefore subject to post-event memories and interpretation. The precise balance between Valdéz as leader and Valdéz as peer is difficult to determine after the fact.

Broyles-González states that the story of the El Teatro Campesino collective ensemble is not the same as the story of Luis Valdéz and not the story of El Teatro Campesino production company which began in 1980 (xii). It was about this time that Valdéz filed the copyright in his name for El Teatro Campesino for the text currently titled *Luis Valdéz – Early Works: Actos, Bernabé, and Pensamiento Serpentino*.

Benefits may not accrue individually to a person from property or activities owned by a non-profit corporation. It might be that it was for this reason that the copyrights for *Los Actos* are noted as "1971 by Luis Valdéz for El Teatro Campesino" (Valdéz, *Early Works*, back of title page). By 1980 when the original members of the group have been "left behind," a new production company and educational institute is formed in San Juan Bautista at which time the rights to *Los Actos* are sole property of El Teatro Campesino, the business non-profit organization.

The official records of the State of California show that El Teatro Campesino became a registered corporation February 1, 1968, and remains active as of March 14, 2008, according to a recent weekly update of the computer records (California Secretary of State). Broyles-González reports a pattern of under representation of the contributions made by ensemble members including the contributions of women in the various academic and official histories of El Teatro Campesino, and a disbanding of the ensemble starting in 1979. She further analyzes that the new production company was modeled on a Euro-American tradition with top down authority. She reports the requirement of review and approval by Valdéz of any reports, research, and interviews before publication based on research of the archives of El Teatro (xiv-xvii). I found the requirement that the state held archives required permission from Valdéz to examine the artifacts. My inquiry on the approval process did not receive a response from the curator. Broyles-Gonzales infers a conflict exists between

some of the original members of the group and Valdéz based upon the feeling that Valdéz took more credit and benefited more from the work of the group than did some of the less educated members (4-6).

While it is always difficult to adjudicate such subjective matters, it is curious that Valdéz filed the copyright in his name for the benefit of El Teatro Campesino, when a presumably non-profit corporation existed as the legal entity for the group using the same name. This may have provided an opportunity for income to be paid to Valdéz and the other members of the theatre company from the proceeds of the book and plays recorded therein because the funding would be split up outside the non-profit corporate structure. A portion of the proceeds could then be donated by individuals to the nonprofit if that was desirable. This procedure was validated on appeal of an IRS decision against certification of the Plumfield Theatre Society, Inc in such an arrangement with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (74TC No. 97 ... Dec 37,257, p 17 Judge Wilbur sitting). I am not privy to the conversations, negotiations, or relationships within the original group except as published by third parties and therefore can draw no conclusions in this matter.

CHAPTER V

ACTOS VERSUS MORALITIES

The core of the study is the general comparison of the morality play and the *Acto*.

Morality Plays

The various characteristics of the *Acto* will be compared with the characteristics of the morality play.

The historical setting

The Middle Ages or Medieval Period ran from about 700 to 1500 AD. Icons of the period include Castles, Knights, the Crusades, and the Black Death (Medieval). In the Medieval Period the predominant social/political/ economic structure was feudalism (Brockett 81). The four social classes of status were nobles, clergy, craftsmen, and peasants/serfs. The primary forms of drama in this period had to do with courtly pageantry or religious rituals involving Christian tradition and scriptures (Brockett 82-83; Hardison viii ; Sanders 5). Until the development of skilled craftsman who formed guilds, and with the exception of privately tutored nobles and the clergy, the citizenry was illiterate (Beadle, *Cambridge* xiii; Brockett 76; Sanders 4, 12).

As a further historical marker, the *Magna Carta* had been signed by King John in about 1215. A little more than one hundred years later, in 1327, the documentation begins of the cycle of religious dramas known as the *corpus Christi*. Cycle dramas were a series of plays which occurred regularly in a sequence. When the cycle ended, the sequence would start again from the first play in the group. The *corpus Christi* dramatizations of religious "historical" events were first presented within the Church, then literally outside the Church in open space.

The dating of 1327 is based on the Memorandum Book, *Ordo Paginarum*, which was compiled by the Common Clerk of York. A common clerk is a position similar to a city clerk, or a scribe. The Common Clerk of York began documentation of the official events of the City of York in 1415 (Beadle, *The York Plays* 19-24).

Robert Potter draws attention to the fact that the *corpus Christi* plays were concerned with an event for all times and the cycle's plays dealt with the period from creation to the final judgment. Brockett states that the "feast of Corpus Christi...was conceived by Pope Urban IV in 1264...[and]...was instituted out of a desire to give special emphasis to the redemptive power of the consecrated bread and wine" (82). The morality play appears around 1500. By contrast with the *corpus Christi* play, the morality play focused on the "life of the individual human being" (Potter 6) and had the theme that "sin is inevitable; repentance is always possible" (16).

The Morality emerges

Whereas in modern times a movement might create a pamphlet to hand out or buy air-time to reach the public, in the Middle Ages movable ritual and drama became a tool in the battle for men's minds and souls (Sanders 6, 12). In general terms, the morality play was intended to teach a lesson about life. The viewer might thereafter make amends and live a more Godly life, escaping punishment at the final judgment (Brockett 97). The morality plays also made social commentary (Sanders 13). In summary, the morality plays focused on the moral issues of an individual and reinforced the teachings of the Church.

The Morality as hegemonic

I assert that the morality plays also taught obedience to moral authority. In this, the plays served the hegemony. However, at least two primary agents of power were doing battle, the Church and nobility: Ultimately the guilds emerged as a third agent of power.

Marx will later suggest that religion is the opiate of the people (New Socialist). The traditional "Wobblies"¹⁰ song put the hegemonic promise in these words: "You will have pie in sky when you die." The hegemonic teaching of the Church in that time was that if the people submit to authority, the power of Caesar and the will of God, while alive, they will be greatly rewarded after death.

¹⁰ This is a mildly pejorative nickname for the I.W.W. or International Workers of the World progressive union movement at the beginning of the 20th century reputed to have strong ties to both socialist and communist political interests, and generally seen as revolutionary and dangerous by industrialists: They also had the reputation of being heavy drinkers, and thus wobbled as they walked.

The early dramas which reinforce the judgment of God upon his people put a rather fine point on the requirement to obey authority, supporting the hegemony of the noble class and church power over Mankind or Everyman. Moral authority is hegemonic, and moral drama begins with the church, a primary hegemonic force.

The Morality as counterhegemonic

The modern viewer of Mediaeval English theatre may perceive it as reinforcing traditional values of the culture. However, royalty seems to have feared an opposite influence. The period preceding 1500 had been politically unstable due to frequent changes in the throne and conflicts of power between the Church and the state (Sanders 12). In 1543, Henry VIII enacted a statute which permitted only "...plays, and interludes...for the rebuking and reproaching of vices and the setting forth of virtue" (Sanders 9-10).

Melvin R. White, in his introduction to *Everyman*, puts the morality play in perspective as revolutionary and counterhegemonic, within an extremely controlling environment. For the first time since the outlawing of theatre by the church at the beginning of the Dark Ages, theatre again appears outside the direct control of the church in the morality plays. The playwright is able to create imaginary settings and characters not set forth in the text of the scriptures. The plots which appear almost liturgical in today's environment were outside the oral tradition of the church as well as extra scriptural. In context, the morality represented "free thinking" (98).

Brockett notes that even though by the end of the 1300s "the church gave up direct participation, it kept an eye on the contents of the plays..." (84).

Brockett defines vernacular drama as theatre performed in the spoken language of the people and not in Latin, the language of the Church. To a degree secular drama also is separated from the Church in control and content. Hardison argues the existence of secular drama as early as the twelfth century (ix). Brockett points to other historians who believe that the vernacular theatre developed in parallel to and not in succession from liturgical drama. He cites Wickham and Kolve, and specifies that, "Wickham believes that vernacular plays were intended to emphasize Christ's humanity in the world" (82). The re-emergence of the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth in contrast to the divinity of the Christ would be counterhegemonic. The Church had emphasized the duality of Jesus as the Son of God and Son of Man since the great council of 325 AD.

Twelve hundred years later, the issue Jesus as a man verses the divinity of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God is still vital. In the recent fiction film, *The Da Vinci Code*, which emphasized the historic conflict and politics regarding the humanity verses divinity of Jesus, the line paraphrased from the Gospels is delivered by the character Sir Leigh Teabing, "And he who keeps the keys to heaven rules the world" (Goldsman). This modern use of drama to make a counterhegemonic evaluation of history is said to have offended the Bishop of Rome. An emphasis on the humanity of Jesus would seem to be in harmony with the emerging power of the guilds and government by councils, and the

emerging spirit of the Renaissance. In that context, the morality play was a counterhegemonic force.

Origins of the plays

Brockett asserts that the *Pater Noster* plays were the predecessors of the morality plays. The *Pater Noster* [Our Father] plays were based upon the *Pater Noster* prayers within the liturgy. The "Pater Noster prayers... were divided into seven petitions, each related to the seven cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, faith, hope, and charity) and the seven deadly sins (pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth)..."(Brockett 97). The liturgical dramas led to plays representing the conflicts around the influence of these virtues and sins on Mankind's relationship to God. Brockett states that, "Many of the Pater Noster plays were presented by municipalities and trade guilds under the same general arrangements as those used for the religious cycles" (97). Brockett suggests that the cycle plays may have been created by the church and were sometime later taken over by the guilds, or the guilds may have originated some of the cycle plays (97).

Perhaps the morality plays were private efforts by the emerging professional actors to create employment opportunities. Brockett finds evidence of a collection being taken at morality plays (98). This would seem to imply that they were not sponsored as were the cycle plays. Morality plays grow out of the ecclesiastical tradition of the reenactment of the lessons of Christianity and owe

their fundamental structure to Church drama. I shall now examine the rhetorical elements as identified by Campbell which I have found in the morality plays.

Rhetorical elements

Campbell's rhetorical elements will now one at a time as they are used in the morality play.

Persona

When referencing the persona of a play, we are speaking to the viewpoint of the author of the story or that of the narrator who is telling the story, if a narrator is present. The persona in morality plays has a brotherly/sisterly aspect, providing advice and offering solutions to life's problems. The hero is an individual human with faults rather than the faultless Son of God. The voice of the drama seems to intend that audience members would be able to identify with *Everyman*.

Purpose

Finding the purpose behind the play, the purpose of the playwright, is complicated by the failure to identify with certainty the sponsor or organizational affiliation of the play. A contemporary example of this situation might have existed in the first half of the twentieth century in the United States, where it was common to have Christmas dramas which appeared in churches, in public schools, and as community pageants. Without knowledge of the sponsor or playwright, it might be difficult to identify the purpose of the drama from a script in any sense beyond the exegesis or textual analysis of the text itself. Was the

purpose of the Christmas pageant on the courthouse lawn to teach religious instruction or to bring more shoppers downtown?

However from a textual exegesis, the apparent purpose is to have the audience member leave with a moral lesson: Hence the drama is labeled a morality play.

Structure

In identifying structure, we often seek to understand the timeline or sequence of the events in the play: Is the plot a straight line, complex branching, or a series of flashbacks? The structure of the morality play is highly allegorical, using a simple, linear, direct plot (Brockett 97). An allegorical play uses an abstract theme, plot, and/or characters which intellectual rather than physical, but the abstract represented by a human being. An example would be a human on stage who speaks for love or death.

A morality play was ostensibly created by a single writer and set to paper, the plays may have developed over a period of time with some degree of improvisation (98). Brockett theorizes that the morality play was modified with the addition of comic interludes, songs, and dances as part of its commercialization and secularization in order to attract audiences (98).

Tone

The tone of a play speaks to general qualities of the dramatic presentation. The tone of a morality play is serious, with concern for teaching and exhortation. The morality play seems to be an extension of the liturgical

drama which precedes it and yet it opens the door to originality and individuality. It establishes the foundation for Elizabethan Theatre to follow by introducing the struggle of the individual rather than dealing with mankind as a whole.

Audience

The audience speaks to both the intended and the theoretical viewers of the play. It may also refer to those present at the time of the performance and about those who will hear about it indirectly, which person does the playwright wish to influence. In the case of the morality the audience was nearly illiterate. Since education occurred through tutoring of nobles or through instruction in seminary or brotherhoods, laborers and common peasants did not receive education, specifically instruction in reading and writing. Literacy and accounting skills became a hallmark of the emerging guild members. A larger number of audience members were therefore likely to be illiterate.

Strategies

The strategies in theatre refer to the basic and technical ways of solving problems or presenting the content. Strategies in morality plays involve a movable drama with hand props and costumes. Hand props were used to assist in identification of the character role of the actor as did costumes which were representative of the current style as per function or role of the character. Appearances and disappearances were accomplished by entry or exit through a doorway (Brockett 88; Sanders 89). Such use of a doorway was an innovation in the Medieval period. The "stage" could vary, but usually followed the method of

the liturgical plays such as the York Plays, the *corpus Christi* cycle of plays performed at York, which used wagons upon which any set and the actors stood during the performance (Brockett 88-89). Sanders states performances for the wealthy were performed indoors in "the hall." The use of "doors" or passageways often referred to only outside versus inside, but could also refer to distinct other places away from the hall, such as the throne room or a dungeon (79). Either a wagon platform or a hall seems to have been used in a three quarters round style or as a projected, or "thrust," stage in current theatre (90).

I have used six of the seven categories or elements of Kohrs-Campbell's rhetorical criticism theory. Overall, in looking at morality plays, a few essential characteristics emerge: The persona of the Morality is brotherly/sisterly, the purpose is uncertain, the structure is simple and linear, the tone is allegorical teaching and exhortation, the audience was nearly illiterate, and the strategies involve a movable drama with hand props and costumes in character representation. How relevant these are will become clear as I begin to characterize *Actos*.

Actos

Los Actos [the acts] are an out growth of El Teatro Campesino and Luis Vadéz. Theodore Shank identifies El Teatro Campesino as significant and successful. He further states that Valdéz, "then a theatre student in California, saw a *commedia* performance by the San Francisco Mime Troupe. He was so

amazed by the vitality, the colour and sound that he joined the troupe. At about the same time he began thinking of a theatre for farmworkers..." (74).

The history

Los Actos first appeared in 1965. Broyles-González argues that Valdéz has received credit not only for leadership, but also for company training and creativity which more rightly belong to the ensemble. She states that this is a function of the male based research and writing about EL Teatro Campesino led by Jorge Huérta and Nicolás Kanellos who, she says, support the "great-man theory" of academic research. Broyles- González particularly finds contributions made by women to have been ignored. She identified other members of the company with ten or more years of tenure. These included Olivia Chumacero, Felipe Cantú, Phil Esparza, Roberta Delgado, Lupe Valdez, Rogelio Rojas, Diane Rodríguez, José Delgado, Daniel Valdez, Socorro Valdez, and Yolanda Parra, most of whom are never mentioned by other researchers (38, 131-138). With the exception of Valdéz, the members were uneducated in theatre but talented actors and performers whose regular employment was as field hands, though they were unemployed because of the Delano grape strike.

The *Actos* emerge

If the *Acto* is a new theatrical form, it did not spring from a cultural vacuum. The *Acto* is strongly rooted in Mexican cultural heritage. Catholicism is the predominant Western religious form present in Mexican-heritage/Latino/

Hispanic/Chicano culture. Catholicism has a strong tradition of music, dance, theatre, and pageantry (Hardison viii).

The Actos as hegemonic

This is especially true in the Mexican cultural heritage where Catholicism was grafted onto a vibrant tradition of Indigenous pageantry and dance performance (Flores 21-24). While first used to “evangelize” the Indigenous populations but then discouraged by the Church, native celebrations of ritual dance ceremonies related to the power of the sun and the moon, coming of age, and calls for nobility and bravery have continued alongside the European Christian tradition of drama (24).

As an example of this mixture of Catholic and Indigenous religious traditions, I have experienced going to populous events and finding a simple Indigenous style altar with a picture of the remembered, a small offering of food, and religious items arranged on a *serape* or small hand-woven brightly colored blanket. The most memorable was honoring César Chávez on the lawn of the capitol grounds in Sacramento. The altar was on the grass in the shade of a large tree in front of the Secretary of States office during an assembly to mark an anniversary of the march from Delano to Sacramento.

The Acto as counterhegemonic

Luis Valdéz seems to espouse a Chicano political-cultural perspective (*Early Works* 6; Huérta, *Chicano* 1-2). In 1967, El Teatro moved from the United Farmworkers strike headquarters in Delano, California to a separate facility. The

differences which caused this move may have developed between the United Farmworkers (UFW) and El Teatro based on the conflict between César Chávez's non-violent civil disobedience and the more militant Brown Pride of the Chicano Movement (Bloom, p.187; Kanellos 101; UCSB Archive 3). Valdéz's work seems to enshrine Chicano values, notably pride in the Indigenous roots of the *Mestizo* background, reverence for the pre-Columbian religious heritage, separatism, and militancy which could include violent defense. I shall now consider the rhetorical aspects of *Los Actos*.

Rhetorical elements

Campbell's rhetorical elements will now be considered as they appear in the *Actos*.

Persona

The persona or voice of *Los Actos* is that of a fellow traveler, a family member, or a member of the community speaking of shared events and offering common or folk wisdom to a member of the community. The choice of language and references used for validation and humor are based on common cultural and economic experiences. We laugh at ourselves and each other, feel pain together. There is no equivalent of a Greek chorus providing an objectified commentary.

Purpose

The very obvious practical purpose of the *Acto* is to convince people to join the strike, join the union, and to continue to support the effort. Luis Valdéz identifies the functions of the *Actos* as: "Inspire the audience to social action.

Illuminate specific points about social problems. Satirize the opposition. Show or hint at a solution. Express what people are feeling" (Valdéz, *Early works* 12). The performers were also field workers, marchers, or pickets enacting narratives about field workers, marchers, or pickets experiences. Valdéz himself grew up in a migrant labor family (Huérta, *Chicano* 1). His purpose is grounded in personal experience and hopes.

Structure

The structure is the organizational plan. Huérta states that, "The style and characterizations of the *actos* reflected many western European influences, but the themes were strictly farm-worker issues, calling for justice in the fields through unionization" (*Giants* 26). The style of the *Actos* was to use a simple, direct plot which was highly allegorical, was to use humor and satire, and was to create a live group improvisation (Huérta, *Chicano* 15-19). These group improvisations were later written down in fixed form and under the name of the director of the Teatro, Luis Valdéz (Huérta, *Chicano* 14-16; Valdéz, *Early Works* 16).

While the general form of the *Acto* was very similar to a morality play, the third published *Acto*, *La quinta temporada* [The fifth season], Huérta states, "is a descendant of the Spanish *auto sacramental*, the Iberian version of the medieval mystery and morality plays that combined qualities of both, mingling biblical characters with mortals and with allegorical figures as well" (*Chicano* 23).

Tone

In spite of the fact that serious issues and cultural assumptions were being addressed, the quality remained light and informal. Valdéz labels this tone as “tragicomedy.” Commonly occurring, everyday events were the foundation of the plays, but the lessons or morals taught were often through the allegorical titles, names, and roles. The humor is often found in the *Pelado*, or the beaten man, somewhat akin to Charlie Chaplin’s tragic comedy hero, the Tramp.

Audience

To understand the audience of the *Acto*, we must remember that most were recent immigrants from poor, rural Mexico. The Mexican villager with even a third grade formal education was rare. Many documented and undocumented farmworkers began life in Mexico and came to the US as teenagers or as young children with their parents. Other farmworkers were born in the US to recently arrived and poor Mexican peasant parents.

Therefore, most of the field workers were illiterate, reading neither in Spanish or English. Simple Roman Catholic traditions, village lore, and working experiences provided the cultural commonality for the audience (Huérta, *Chicano* 16-17). Most immigrants who spoke Spanish could understand some English and most Mexican heritage persons born in the U.S. spoke English but could understand some Spanish (Huérta, *Chicano* 17), hence the Teatro performances with mixed English and Spanish using a linguistic style called code switching common in the U.S. – Mexico borderlands (Shank 75).

Because of obligations to help support the family, university students from farmworker families reported to the fields on days off from classes. So the audience might include brilliant young college students as well as progressive members of most of the ethnic subcultures of California. Valdéz coming to work in the fields or with the union would not have been a surprise or unexpected by the farmworkers.

Strategies

The staging was certainly minimalist. Often it was an open-air or theatre-in-the-round everyday location not necessarily associated with dramatic performance. It has been reported that some performances were lit by a circle of car headlights. Very few properties were employed. Rather than elaborate costumes to create visual identity, hand props and simple black marker pen on white paper placards were hung loosely around the neck of the player with perhaps a one word role identity. A common performance location while in the fields or on marches was the surface of a flatbed farm truck (Broyles-González xii; Huérta, *Chicano* 10). Alternately, the community common “hall” or meeting room was often the Grange Hall.

I have given consideration to the categorical characteristics of the Moralities and the *Actos*. I will now consider Everyman as an exemplar of the Morality.

CHAPTER VI

ONE MORALITY AND ONE ACTO

One morality play will be compared to one *Acto* to enhance the comparison of the classifications.

The Morality Everyman

The text of *Everyman* uses the words of Biblical text and church pronouncements to critique the folly of the wayward (White 97-98). Two of the final forms of the text which survive appear to have a similar plot but have variation in form, *ie.*, the content of the texts (*Everyman* 1515; *Everyman* 1526). *Everyman* is the story of the day-of-judgment for every person when death is summoned to bring him to an accounting before God. That the play is a morality play is included explicitly in the text of the prologue (White 99).

The list of characters contains roles from God to Everyman, a total of seventeen. Ten of these roles are metaphysical such as Good Deeds, Discretion, and Confession. These qualities are represented by actors as are the corporal beings Kindred, Cousin, and Doctor. Thus a deity, representative humankind, and moral values are represented together on stage in this highly allegorical drama. The drama is a one act play with a linear construction.

The plot of the play is familiar to the audience. Like a story told to a child at bed time, it gains in favor by its being re-told countless times. No doubt exists that Goods, Fellowship, and Kindred will be of no help to Everyman on his last day. Confession is already known to be one of the valuable allies. Wisdom is sensed as one is reminded of what one already knows and a sense of fulfillment occurs when the plot concludes as expected. But, hearing it again can be a powerful reminder to apply the teachings in everyday life.

In the case of the character Everyman, he attempts to buy additional time, then attempts to find someone or something to go with him in his support and defense, but finds the worldly persons and values most unwilling or unable to pass the veil (Farmer 89-122). Good Deeds, while valued, is weak from disuse. Knowledge supports Confession by reminding Everyman to complete his penance. Beauty deserts him before the grave. Strength leaves almost as quickly as Beauty, all his strong words of commitment to the contrary. Shortly thereafter Discretion and the Five Wits abandon him.

Ultimately, it is only Good Deeds that goes with him to the grave. In the epilogue, Doctor summarizes, that we must forsake Pride, know that Beauty, Five Wits, Strength and Discretion all forsake, and that only Good Deeds goes with you. He urges all hearers not to let their good deeds be small. At the end, Doctor points to the Trinity and Holy Charity (White 121).

In the early 1960s, while an underclassman at university, I had an opportunity to see *Everyman* performed. It was stage on a bare platform and

using black choir robes as costumes. I remember limited hand props and flat lighting. The performance sounded more like a reading than a dramatic event. The play seemed to last forever and was “deadly” dull. The staging was the result of the research for a master’s degree in Theatre. While the Moralities cover a narrow range of topics, *Actos* are quite varied and wide ranging in story plot. *Los dos caras del patroncito* is one of the most simple *Actos* and is performed in about 20 minutes.

The *Acto The Two Faces of The Beloved Patron*

“The first three *actos* that Teatro [Campesino] members created have not survived” (Huérta, *Giants* 27). Therefore, *Las dos caras del patroncito* is the earliest extant *Acto*. The *Acto, Las dos caras del patroncito* was created in 1965. *Las dos caras del patroncito* [The two faces of the beloved patron or the two faces of the revered boss] is the tale of a naïve Mexican scab¹¹ laborer who has been trucked in from Mexico by the grower, perhaps via a farm labor contractor, to replace the striking farmworkers (Valdéz, *Early Works* 17-27). Though he is new to the situation, he has already learned to hear the disapproval in the patron’s voice if he gives the wrong answer, and he anxiously adjusts his attitudes, beliefs, and statements to please the boss, at least on the surface. We are lead to believe that perhaps the improperly done work may be low level

¹¹ Scab is a derogatory term used by labor movements for those who violate the strike picket line.

vandalism of the patron's vineyard, masquerading as inexperience or stupidity of the scab.

While the original performances were created by real farmworkers of Mexican heritage, I had the opportunity to reenact these performances in the spring of 2008 as a main stage production on The University of Akron campus using a Black/African-American male as a Simon Legree type of ranch boss, a small White European male version of the Pelado, and full stature White European female as the riot club toting security guard with a taste for blood. I point out that this casting while intended to be "race" and gender free, Latinos are perhaps the only ethnic group which contain the full range of pigmentation from purple-black to off-white in skin tone. Every actor could credibly have been Latino. It also created an interesting learning experience for the two male actors to understand and represent an intensely ethnic role of a character from a culture different from his own, and to play both the stereotype and the subtle characterization that is provided in the very well written script.

The staging was a simple eight foot by twelve foot platform raised two feet off the ground which roughly approximated the often used flatbed truck. The size differential between the boss and the scab extremely effective until the transformation took place calling for the scab to become the aggressive, abusive boss. We added a two foot open plywood box cube upon which the scab hopped before his transformation. This way he towered over the large boss until the boss was dragged off the stage and through the audience by the security guard.

When the boss is espousing his great love for Mexicans, he scab is pulled in and embraces the boss like a little child hugging a gigantic Teddy Bear. The boss shoves him violently away and reveals his “patronizing” attitudes, assuring *Esquirol* [scab], the farmworker, that he loves his Mexicans “... at about a ten foot distance” (Valdéz, *Early Works* 19). The armed security gorilla, who actually walks and moves like a gorilla, is the representative of the “dumb local sheriff’s deputies,” who the farmworkers believed protected the interests of the growers without question. The not-so-naïve or not-so-stupid scab farmworker goes along with the role manipulation initiated by the boss. The Halloween pig mask, a fundamental prop, is exchanged. As a result *la jura*, the security guard, does not recognize his actual employer and fawns of the little farmworker wearing the pig snout. He humiliates the boss and shows him for the cowardly, selfish pig that he truly is, though he is unmasked at the time. As the boss is being hauled off by the guard, he is yelling for César Chávez and the union.

Through the reality of the stage, the farmworker wrests the power, the land, the crops, the big car, the wife, and the big cigar of the patron from him. However, after he has shed the cat-of-nine-tails, the big leather jacket, the Stetson hat, and the pig nose, the farmworker assures the audience that he will return all of it to the patron except the cigar (Valdéz, *Early Works* 17-27). Perhaps the cigar is Cuban.

This *Acto* uses the story of an individual brother farmworker or Latino or Chicano as a lesson for the whole community on how to act, how to deal with

this injustice: The answer provided is support César Chávez and the United Farmworkers' strike against the grape growers. While considerably more entertaining than a morality play, this play holds many similarities to a morality play.

Comparison of *Everyman* (C.1495) and

Las Dos Caras Del Patroncito (1965)

The comparison of *Everyman* and *Las dos caras del patroncito* will be made in terms of similarities and differences covering the points of purpose, audience, persona, tone, structure, supporting materials, and strategies.

Persona

The truths presented in each style of drama were recognizable from daily life. The persona was advisory, not authoritarian, not unlike sharing a fable with a younger brother or sister, hoping that it is instructive.

Purpose

To define the organizational function of the play, *Everyman*, an organizational affiliation must be established. I have not encountered clear evidence of an organization to which *Everyman* might be said to be affiliated. It may have been performed solely for economic gain if the theories about the rise of professional actors are correct. If we assume that the morality was sponsored or backed by a guild, then it would be a progressive social-political play intended to bring about cultural change. For the *Las dos caras del patroncito*, the initial association is clearly with the United Farmworkers, but in 1967 El Teatro

Campesino becomes more independent and more loosely connected with the UFW but moves closer to the radical agenda of the Chicano Movement.

The dramas functioned to entertain, to educate, and to persuade. At least in the case of the *Actos*, the purpose was also to propagandize. In both stories, the proud and successful are made humble by confronting the truth about the values worth pursuing in life. Traditional moral values are presented as the answer to the human condition. The stories call for at least internal action or choice by the audience members. In the case of *Las caras del patroncito*, action is called for in the cultural, economic, and political world.

The content of the Morality has been viewed as primarily a vehicle for religious moral teaching. Although not stated in religious language, *Las dos caras del patroncito* addresses avarice, greed, prejudice, dishonesty, and the failure to treat others as you would have them treat you. I assert that these are moral issues. To at least that extent, it is a morality play.

Structure

While *Everyman* is contained in one hundred pages of text, *Las dos caras del patroncito* consumes only ten pages. Each play has been viewed as a turning point in the flow of theatre history. Huérta says that in the *Actos*, "...as in the Medieval morality plays, the villains and heroes were always clearly identified" (*Giants* 27). Melvin R. White provides the analysis that *Everyman* "is naïve, simple, direct, and almost childlike" (97), a description which also fits *Las dos caras del patroncito*.

The text presented by Valdéz for the *Acto* appears to have called for a delineated script with some limited costuming which requires a plan before the drama is staged. The fact that the script presented may be a compilation or composite of various impromptu presentations is not addressed in the published work. Valdéz reports that the plays were group improvisation. Perhaps the improvisation shaped itself over time from the individual contributions of the members of El Teatro Campesino to the form which becomes the written record.

A difference appears when we consider the hegemonic impact of the works. *Everyman* might be seen as counterhegemonic to the degree that the plot focuses on an individual at a time when class was more important than individuality and at the beginning of the Renaissance. On the other hand, it does blatantly reinforce the teachings of the Church and moral authority.

Las dos caras del patroncito intends to be counterhegemonic, ridiculing the arrogant and selfish grower/boss and justifying why it is necessary to disturb the usual concern for harmony. But, from a cultural perspective, it is also quite hegemonic, reinforcing the responsibility to family and ethnic community, and group cooperation.

Tone

Perhaps because of a more restrained nature of theatre performances at turn of the 16th century, *Everyman* appears stilted and would be very dry indeed if presented in today's theatre or on television. By contrast, *Las dos caras del*

patroncito would be mildly vaudevillian. The *Actos* make extensive use of humor, sarcasm, and ridicule.

Audience

The similarity of audiences is remarkable as well. The audiences shared overarching moral instruction from the Church. Not only were most of the audience participants illiterate in both settings, they consisted of members of the underclass or oppressed members of society. The audiences also had participants from the more elite groups of the society. For the morality plays, there were members of the emerging guilds; for the *Actos* there were the college students.

As the audience for the *Actos* became more inclusive, with performances taking place statewide, nationwide, and internationally, the bilingual-bicultural and improvisational nature of the *Los dos caras del patroncito* became more a matter of stylistic tradition and less a natural outgrowth of the audience needs and the environmental setting. A loss of authenticity in performances of *Everyman* is not likely in its contemporary time frame because the audience did not expand as quickly in diversity and locale.

Strategies

Many of the widely available theatrical conventions of the respective times were simplified in the respective dramatic forms. In both cases, at the beginning of the use of the form, they are associated with outlier groups, not the established sources of theatrical production. The content was more significant

than the pageantry and financial resources were limited. Consistent with these considerations, the performances took place in simple settings, often in the round or three-quarter round, usually outdoors.

The Morality was a movable performance staged from a wagon. The drama was moved to the people rather than waiting for the people to come to the performance. In a similar manner, the performance of *Los Actos* took place often from the back of a flat bed truck or using car head lights. Even when the performances did take place in doors, they took place where the people had already gathered.

Both plays used simple hand props rather than scenery to create the setting. The use of a pig mask and the pruning shears represent the simple characterizations of *Las dos caras del patroncito* (Huérta, *Chicano* 12). At the time of this *Acto*, only males appeared on stage and only male roles were portrayed.

Supporting Materials

Changes in society and historical settings call for changes [in the theatre] (Flores 10) [Paraphrased translation by researcher]. "These transitions involve changes in themes, techniques, and determine values" (10) [Translation by researcher]. Flores suggests that the transition of the theatre from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance is no different than the development after the First World War of agitprop theatre and during the upheavals of the 1960s the birth of El Teatro Campesino (10-11).

CHAPTER VII

PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian sociologist, educator, and Marxist, taught that oppressed persons and populations may be brought into the current world and to equality of participation in cultural interaction with oppressor cultures through the work of a privileged class facilitator. This enlightened and progressive member of the privileged class recognizes the invalid nature of her/his privilege and chooses to facilitate the asking of questions that will lead the oppressed community to a self determined definition and selection of interaction methodologies for use in dealing with the oppressing community. This process seeks to preserve the qualities and character of the oppressed community while also seeking to empower the community to interact with oppressor cultures when history requires this interaction (Freire).

The oppressor culture's answer is for the oppressed community to adapt and adopt the oppressor culture. As an example, I am currently working with a local group of refugees from Burma and Thailand. Many US government sponsored agencies want the Karen Community of Akron to "Americanize." The Karen Community has expressed a desire to establish a cultural and community center to continue their consensus-based communal structure. It is my job to

assist them in creating a set of interactions and methods that allows them to continue to be Karen but also empowers them to interact with external community and government agencies.

Luis Valdéz, though raised as an itinerant farmworker in an immigrant family, had the opportunity to attend university. When he came back to Delano, his home town, to support the United Farmworkers and the grape strike, he functioned as a privileged class facilitator. The facilitator assists the rural folk culture farmworkers to effectively express themselves, redefine and empower themselves, and communicate to the oppressor the culture the values and merits of their struggle for unionization of farm labor. That is, Valdéz functioned as the societal facilitator for the other members of *El Teatro Campesino* because of his university education and theatrical production experiences at San Jose State University. He might also be said to have been a facilitator for the large body of farmworkers. Whether Valdéz later violated this “trust” when he decided to move toward Theatre as art and Chicano culture instead of political action, discontinuing his work with skilled amateurs in favor of commercial viable work and professional actors is beyond the scope of this study.

CHAPTER VIII

COMMENTARY

Flores suggests that the Morality was the breakthrough dramatic form which opened the path to the great Elizabethan works by introducing the struggle of the individual and imaginary settings. He states the agitprop theatre movement with its essentialist improvisational and hyper political emphasis was the break-rank step that led to modern experimental theatre. He also says the *Acto* was the spark that has begun a flood of previously repressed Indigenous expression of social protest, cultural perspective, and native artistic style which has lead to a national Chicano Theatre movement and to the birth of a theatre genre. If this is true, then the morality play and the *Acto* do serve similar functions in different settings (10-11). Huérta states, "The year 1965 became the point of departure for a veritable renaissance of cultural and political activity among Chicanos, motivating young and old to assert their identity in a society that had ignored them for generations" (*Chicano* 1-2).

While the historical dates of 1495 and 1965 seem quite different, a closer examination reveals that the development of Scientific Thought and the Renaissance at the end of the Middle Ages may be more similar to the current development of multiculturalism in the United States since the 1960s than would

first appear. Latinos (among them the Chicanos) now outnumber the Black/African-American population in the United States. There is also the startling change that some areas of the United States, including the State of New Mexico, several counties in California, including Los Angeles, are now Latino majority. Many other areas no longer have an Anglo majority, but a majority composed of the sum of the populations of color.

The development of true cultural pluralism with diversity celebrated rather than tolerated, and complexity celebrated as richness contrasted with simplification through rigid categories, seems to have eluded the creators of Scientific Thought. Perhaps it is the job and future contribution of the US American society through its emerging pluralism to contribute to the genuine awareness of cultural diversity and sensitivity in human affairs. This could be the consequence of the Indigenous influences in the US American culture.

Michel Foucault noted the use of knowledge and classification to create authority, division, and control. We may need to apply fuzzy logic and chaos theory to human relations and human society to re-create freedom of thought and action. We may need to reassert that no single perspective or style can encompass all there is to know, understand, or accept. We may need to embrace a level of uncertainty about the world and ourselves as a badge of sophistication

rather than a sign of weakness.¹² Taken together, these points may reveal a possible cultural shift in U. S. American society so great that it could, over the next 100 years, become as significant as the Renaissance.

¹² The thoughts on the inability of Scientific Thought developers to include diversity and uncertainty were suggested by a comment made by Keith Patti, a pre-submission reader of the thesis text.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The conclusion will be presented as three elements: The findings, suggested further research, and a last word.

Findings

I have concluded this study by applying Campbell's theory of rhetorical criticism to Moralities and *Actos*. A specific comparison was made between *Everyman* to *Las dos caras del patroncito*. I believe that I have demonstrated that similarities exist between audience, persona, tone, structure, supporting materials, and strategies of the early works of El Teatro and the morality plays of the European Middle Ages. I believe that the degree of similarity exceeds that needed to support my thesis. I find that *Los Actos* of El Teatro Campesino, while unique, have all of the essential characteristics of early English morality plays.

Perhaps the uniqueness of *Los Actos* is the "American" audience of which Valdéz speaks. The American audience requires performances which take into account the culture, language, and variation of a specific audience. This consideration includes both the ability to communicate in a Spanish-English and the bilingual-bicultural social-political setting (Heyward 1). The interaction in the US Southwest of Anglo/White/European American culture and peoples with the

Chicano/Mexican-heritage/Latino/Hispanic American culture and peoples offers the sphere in which this uniqueness is effective in communicating.

However, as the socio-cultural structure of the US Southwest of today may be a precursor of the whole United States by 2040, this dramatic form and expression may increase in importance and impact. Projections done in 2004 based on the 2000 Census suggests that for every 10 Hispanics/Latinos there will be only 20 non-Hispanic Whites, 6 Blacks, 3 Asians, and 2 Native American Indian/Asian/Multiracial persons. (United States Census Bureau, *Projections*).

Suggested further research

After nearly a year of researching, producing/directing Valdéz's work, and observing how initially foreign the material seems to be to actors in the NE Ohio region, I continue to assert that *Los Actos* by El Teatro Campesino and Luis Valdéz are unique. However, whether that uniqueness is based upon the skillful blending of the rich Mexican-heritage theatre and cultural traditions with twentieth-century European *avant garde* styles, or is in fact a new genre, as some authors have suggested would require considerably more study. The topic to be explored in that study should include the following areas.

The evolutionary pattern

A potentially valuable study might be the evolutionary pattern of the morality play over perhaps 100 years and the evolution of the *Acto* over the past 40 years. Possible parallels in the developments could strengthen the assertion by Flores about the historical periods of change and dramatic genres. The

difficulties in such a study would be the fragmentary nature of the remnants of the morality plays and the significantly reduced current rate of creating *Actos*.

Valdéz: a Separatist or a Moderate

Militant Chicanos in the 1960s echoed the sentiments of the Black – African American separatist movements, often wanting to exclude Anglos/Whites/European Americans from organizations, events, and even *barrios* [ethnic neighborhoods]. Valdéz self-identified and was identified by other writers as a Chicano. However, in interviews about El Teatro Campesino's fortieth anniversary, he emphasized the inclusion of all persons of diverse ethnic backgrounds in the work and study in San Luis Obispo, California (El Teatro Campesino, *Official*). It would be interesting to understand if he ever held the exclusionary view, how and when the view changed.

Actos as Agitprop

Carl Heyward has suggested that *Los Actos* are examples of agitprop or agitate and propaganda theatre (Heyward). This is a view voiced also by Professor and Director James Slowiak. A closer study of the meaning and history of agitate in this context and a review of the specific defining characteristics of propaganda might reveal another layer of meaning to the tragicomedy of *Los Actos* created by El Teatro Campesino and Luis Valdéz.

Actos as Commedia dell' Arte

Opinion exists to support the consideration of *Los Actos* as *Commedia dell' Arte* (Shank 74). Jorge Huérta labels *Los Actos* as following in the line of

commedia dell' arte (*Chicano* 14). He also speaks of El Teatro as street theatre (*Chicano* 3) and political theatre (*Chicano* 1). Perhaps awareness of Valdéz's involvement in the San Francisco Mime Troupe influenced Huérta's choice of labels. He states that Valdéz was with the Troupe about a year (1964-1965) (*Chicano* 14).

Shank notes in 1982 that, "The San Francisco Mime Troupe [is] probably the oldest surviving political theatre in the United States" (ix). Huérta further supports El Teatro as *commedia* stating "[El] Teatro Campesino...places politics above aesthetics, unfettered by considerations of Great Drama" (*Chicano* 3). Shank says of El Teatro, "In the early days El Teatro Campesino performed at union meetings and labour camps...They borrowed techniques from *commedia dell' arte*, as is evident in the stereotypes, masks, and broad comic action..." (57). A formal study of *Los Actos* of El Teatro Campesino and Luis Valdéz as examples of *Commedia dell' Arte* seems likely to provide additional insight and understanding.

Actos as Brechtian

Huérta quotes Valdéz labeling the works of El Teatro as lying between Brecht and Cantiflás (*Chicano* 18). Valdéz claims to have understood Brecht through the work on the *Actos*. It is doubtful that the ideological conversations would survive the Brecht test. However, many aspects of Brecht's approach to the audience do seem to fit. Brechtian elements were evident when I directed the selections from *Bernabé* and the full *Acto*, *Las dos caras del patroncito*.

Actos as traditional Mexican working class theatre

Broyles-González argues that much of what has been attributed to Luis Valdéz as his creative genius by other male scholars is in fact working class Mexican theatre tradition. She says the Pelado character was a resurrection of the famous Mexican comedic character Cantiflás. Jorge Huérta, one of the male scholars criticized by Broyles-González, does draw a comparison noting each character dramatizes the tragedy of the lowest level working class. These characters allow the Mexican – Chicano audience to identify with and laugh at the cruelty of poverty and disenfranchisement: The tragicomedy.

A last word

If, as Flores states, *Los Actos* announce the beginning of a new era in world culture, it behooves us to study and document this period of dramatic cultural and social expression for the ages to come. In 700 years, our documentation of today's events may be as significant for future researchers, as that of the common recorder of York in 1375 is for us today.

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