

**ARANDO EL VIENTO  
(PLOWING THE WIND):**  
*finding my other*

By: Marta Cruz Sojo

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

School of Art and Design

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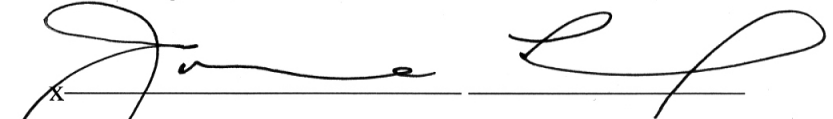


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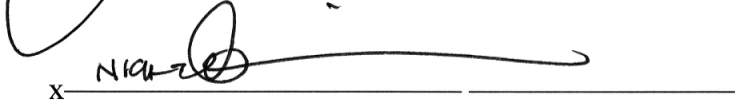
By: Marta Cruz Sojo

Approved by:

Joanne Leonard Diane M. Kirkpatrick and Griselda Pollock, Distinguished University Professor,  
School of Art & Design and Women's Studies Program, Thesis Committee Chair

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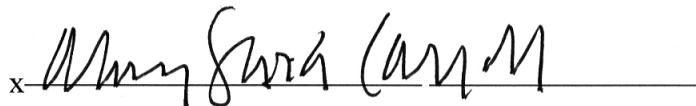
Nicholas A. Tobier, Assistant Professor, School of Art & Design, Graduate Committee Member

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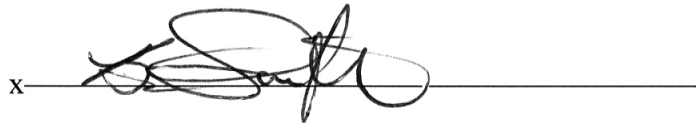
Dr. Mbala D. Nkanga, Associate Professor of Theatre, School of Music, Theatre & Dance,  
Graduate Committee Member

x  04/21/08

Dr. Amy Sara Carroll, Assistant Professor of American Culture (Latina/o Studies) and English  
Language & Literature, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, Graduate Committee  
Member

x 

Dr. Brad Smith, School of Art and Design, Associate Dean of Graduate Students,

x 

Dr. Bryan Rogers, Dean of the School of Art and Design

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## **Abstract**

Taking the term “the other” from Michelle de Certeau and others, this thesis explores artist Marta Cruz Sojo’s experiences of "otherness" and is based on her ethnography research in Mexico. Notions of "the other" motivated this thesis and became the main concept that has informed the final piece, a puppet performance made as a culmination of the three year MFA program. The thesis begins with Cruz Sojo's personal story in order to contextualize her thesis process. It continues with the history and theory of puppetry and then presents an analysis of Cruz Sojo's performance *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)*. The thesis concludes by reflecting upon anonymous Mexican voices as a community, and thoughts about how this work might contribute to a greater understanding of “otherness.”

**Keywords:** “the other”, food, “food for stories”, stories, storytellers, ethnography, Mexico, puppets, “personal narrative”.

*To the Memory of My Grandmother*  
*Josefa Pérez Cortés*

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*I remember that when I commented to a Mexican friend on the loveliness of Berkeley, she said: “Yes, it’s very lovely, but I don’t belong here. Even the birds speak English. How can I enjoy a flower if I don’t know its right name, its English name, the name that has fused with its colors and petals, the name that’s the same thing as the flower? If I say bugambilia to you, you think of the bougainvilleas vines you’ve seen in your own village, with their purple, liturgical flowers, climbing around an ash tree or hanging from a wall in the afternoon sunlight. They are part of your being, your culture. They’re what you remember long after you’ve seemed to forget them. It’s very lovely here, but it isn’t mine, because whatever saying it for me... or to me, either”*

*...our sense of inferiority –real or imagined- might be explained at least partly by the reserve with which the Mexican faces other people and the unpredictable violence with which his repressed emotions break through his mask of impassivity. But his solitude is vaster and profounder than his sense of inferiority. It is impossible to equate these two attitudes: when you sense that you are alone, it does not mean that you feel inferior, but rather that you feel you are different, but solitude is a hard fact. We are truly different. And we are truly alone.*

*(Octavio Paz, The Labyrinth of Solitude, pp. 18-19)*

## Introduction

My art work is highly conceptual, people-oriented and uses diverse media. In three years, I have dealt with issues of emigration, no-man's land, embodiment, cultural psychology, adaptation, border-control traumas, and ultimately, the development of identity. Living in the United States, close to the Latino community (mostly Mexican), motivated me to explore the Mexican territory further.

Thanks to the Center for the World Performance Studies, I was able to research Mexican identity through masks and puppets. I found myself in the role of an ethnographer approaching what Michelle de Certeau termed "the other." Being "the other" or talking about "the other" was the motivation for this thesis and the main concept that has informed my final piece as culmination of the three year MFA program. In the following pages, I begin with my personal trajectory in the arts in order to contextualize my thesis process, and go on to discuss the history and theory of puppetry. I then present an analysis of my performance *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)*. I conclude with thoughts about the process of identity transformation in my work.

I want to say first of all that I am not an anthropologist, nor an expert in ethnography, rather I am an artist who sympathizes with some of the questions of those disciplines. I would like this thesis to be read as an additional and alternative way of looking at work in those fields. In the same way that I have taken from them, I would like to contribute to them. I believe art can reach others just as oral history does. Yet, this work is one step in a longer process, a reflection about the self.

My ultimate desire in this project is not only to acknowledge anonymous Mexican voices as a community, but to reflect on how the experience of working and cooperating with individuals might transform cultural understanding of "otherness."

## Part I: Contextualization

### First Encounters: Spain

Finding my voice within the arts was a long process that involved my looking at my own culture and family. More than by any school, I was educated first and foremost by the women of my family, who are my greatest examples of strong women living and dealing with a world/culture designed for men. My grandmother, the eldest, who recently passed away, was one of my main influences.

My grandmother always told me stories, recreating or describing people and places with extraordinary detail. As a child, I realized stories were doors into the imagination, into a world in which I could fantasize, travel and understand human behaviors, beliefs and morality.



I would often ask questions that would lengthen stories, making the stories last for whole afternoons. Many times, my grandmother and I went to bed together to keep the story going. I was a good listener as a child. She loved to tell me stories and I loved to hear them. She would tell me about people she had known, stories of the Spanish civil war, stories of the sea, stories of different houses she'd lived in, stories of places and stories of the big family she used to take care of.

Today I can still hear her voice more clearly than I can see her image. What remains with me is her voice. I have not gotten over my loss of her, probably because the feeling of her absence will stay with me for the rest of my life. My grandmother is directly responsible for my ability to recreate imaginary worlds, my love of literature and poetry and my love of storytelling.

When my grandmother passed away, my mother called us together to reveal a family secret. “Now, I can tell you, because your grandma is not with us any longer. You need to understand that she was so ashamed of this, that she never told anybody, not even me, her daughter. I recently found out through an old lady that used to be your grandma’s neighbor in her village.”

But I already knew that well kept secret my mother was now telling us. My grandmother had told it to me many years ago, when I was still a child. This discovery made me feel even more connected with my grandmother after her death than I had ever realized. My grandma kept me in her confidence; she knew I would never reveal her secret. I will come back to this long-secret story later.

## From Photographer to Performance Artist: United States

With two degrees in language and literature, I came to graduate school as a photographer who interviewed Latina women concerning their relationship with the kitchen. I made edible jewelry pieces according to my subjects' narratives and took pictures of the women wearing my jewelry pieces.



As a photographer, I found myself arranging people and making great efforts to obtain the best light, the best angle, and the best composition. The truth was, however, that I enjoyed the time I spent with each person who was my subject more than looking at the final frozen result. In my experience, there is a time, space, and exchange that is not necessarily represented in the picture. The picture became the documentation of the process rather than the process itself.

In order to hold onto the shared time, I wanted to find a way to make art out of those interactions. This practice led gradually into making the process of interaction, the artistic product. Although photography is still an important part of my art practice, I have moved closer to performance art.

I wanted to convert the moments that I spent with people into a longer celebratory experience. The interaction between the artist and the audience brings another dimension to the piece transforming the art into realities of cooperation, making the conversation more immediate when the audience is present.

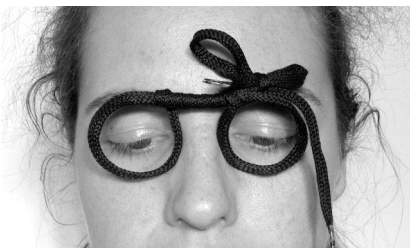
Being an immigrant to the United States and learning English as an adult, I have never had total certainty in the use of my new language. My worries about immigrants and especially cross-cultural messages, as they affect my everyday life, have continually driven my art work. My dilemmas about being different, about continually translating between two worlds, about not feeling understood, about feeling isolated and displaced, left me looking for friends who spoke the same language I did.



I found a whole new reality outside academia. I wanted to find my voice within the arts with the aim of contributing to Latino culture in the University of Michigan, but it was a challenge, since the population of Latinos comprises only 3.3% of academia. How could I get closer to my culture and make art with people that are not part of the institution? How could I link the two worlds?

Homi K. Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist who studies the location of culture and nation, describes his own experience as an immigrant through his writing. In the article “DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation” (1990), Bhabha examines the nation from the country to the city, from the city to the neighborhood. He is able to tune the reader into a level where the reader may feel the slipperiness of what Bhabha struggles to articulate; inconsistent concepts of one's reactions to immigration and nation that end up in the language. Bhabha’s conclusion is that languages, both the mother tongue (and mother-land ideas) as well as the foreign languages, are constantly changing. He paints the picture of a nation as a space, perhaps as an image of time, suggesting that the nation-space can be painfully unreliable.

I also explore embodiment theory. The philosophy of embodiment is to bind the two worlds of substance (or matter) and spirit (or culture, perceived here as intentional objects and phenomena), in opposition to mind-body duality. The core idea is to find the biological substrate not as a vessel, but as the being itself. The mind and spirit are not a sublimation of biology, but are a method for its workings. Thus body and mind are fused into a single being – the only distinction between matter and person being the way of observing the being. In reaction to the embodiment readings, I made a series of self-photographs accompanied by my poetry<sup>1</sup>.



Because I face language/culture barriers, I operate better when a person is in front of me. I can read gestures, voices, tones, narratives and actions. Communication seems to also works

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 2

better in the opposite direction: I feel more understood when I use my body. Being present allows me to interact with people directly. Being physically present on stage makes me feel more alive and in contact.

In the last two years, I worked on projects that involved both the achievement of a previously researched work, as well as the inclusion of a spontaneous live audience interaction. Exploring performance art, I have participated in carnival, theatre, puppet shows, solo dances, happenings, parades, and situations.



I felt much more fulfilled when people were thus involved. I thus became interested in the participants' roles when interacting with people.



## **Performance Studies**

An important theory encounter for me has been The Center for the World Performance Studies. The two-year Residency in the Performance Studies program was crucial for me as I navigated the Masters in Fine Arts. After these seminars, I developed how to apply embodying theory as a scholar, an artist, and a community member.

Through its focus on the critical analysis of performance and performativity, Performance Studies has been a structure within which my work and my theoretical understanding could take shape in the performative nature of speech-acts. For me, it allows its participant-observers to question how they perform themselves and their lives, opening a space for social analysis.

Performance Studies is an object of study as well as a method of analysis. Through the World Performance Studies Program, I found a solid theory and foundation for my art practice. Dwight Conquergood's theoretical work is among the most memorable I've encountered. He discusses the gap between practitioners of arts and scholars/researchers as creating a "hierarchical division between intellectual labor and manual labor." This hierarchic division generates a dichotomy. He argues it is unfortunate that disciplines distinguish themselves from another, thereby creating deficits for both sides. Conquergood suggests that there is a hybrid creative participatory practice: artist as researcher, and researcher as artist.

Over the past two years, I have discussed the dilemmas associated with approaching another culture, notably--how does one participate in "rituals", customs, or everyday situations. Conquergood's article "Rethinking Ethnography" (2002) made me understand and frame my own intervention pieces. He talks about the body, and how again through other means than text that one can learn and acquire knowledge. One such means, he suggests, is direct communication, speaking and listening (participation), rather than observing passively (reading). He argues that the encounter of bodies can internalize information and feelings (essentially) in a way that the mind cannot.

## Part II: Research and Analysis

### Entering Mexico

In the summer of 2007, a few weeks after my grandmother passed away, I was given a grant by the University of Michigan's International Institute to do ethnographic research in Mexico. My goal was to make connections with both famous and lesser-known Mexican artists in the puppet theatre world in order to examine the Mexican national identity. I took my camera with me and I drove my van to the south of Mexico. I had been in Mexico many times, but this time I was sent as an ethnographer, which gave the trip another dimension. Thinking of myself as an ethnographer made focused my attention more to the particular details and behaviors in community interactions and the daily life of individuals.

There were deliberated reasons why I drove my van instead of traveling by air. I wanted to experience the distance, to make a transition of the drastic change, to examine my own art search as a migrant in a moving house. I expected the unexpected and welcomed the unpredictable things that were more likely to happen with the extended timeframe of road-travel, as opposed to the quick passage I might have had by air. In addition, my plan was tentative, open to changes, since none of the over thirty puppeteers I contacted in advance via email had responded to me.



As I entered Mexico, I began observing public everyday practices that prompted my thinking about notions of intimacy and how such notions are distinct in every culture. I found myself particularly aware of the vendors, who cooked and sold their food on the streets. In many places in Mexico, you can eat at anytime on the street. There is always someone cooking or selling food. It was a source of inspiration that made me think of how I could participate in this culture and make art. I began with questions: how could I create an exchange-event with strangers? How could I enrich collective everyday life in the short time I had – traveling from village to village?

I created an itinerant-performance project of cooking in public spaces. I cooked and gave the food away for the price of stories. This way, I could learn great stories to make a puppet show. As the project developed, I was invited into the reality the villagers I met. My performance piece, *Plowing the Wind*, was born of these street performances. The “stories for food” exchange became a methodology for approaching “the other” and the stories became a treasure trove of information with which to work.



Having my camera with me, I again began to question how a memory recording device affects both the subject (the other) and the photographer (ethnographer) before and after the “decisive moment” of the click. As a Spaniard, I felt the camera was playing the role of a colonial gaze. After all, I was not interested in capturing an image, but a message, so I decided to handwrite the stories in order not to intimidate my storytellers. As I moved deeper into the cultures that are Mexico, I was mainly driving, cooking, and listening to stories. Some of the stories moved me so much that when I came back to the United States I wanted to share my experience and had a strong desire to give voice to/make art about the people who had shared their stories.

## Puppets and Identity

Before leaving The United States, I had conducted research on the history of puppetry in Mexico to help me to understand tropes and traditions. The puppet world in Latin America begins in pre-Colombian times, with little Teotihuacan figures that had moving arms and legs. Found in the Cacaxtla, Tlaxcala, Mexico, these ancient manipulatable figures appear like sacred images in the Mayan and Teotihuacan cultures. Later, the Aztecs used these figures in their priestly ceremonies, which took place in the village plaza so that everyone could watch<sup>2</sup>.



With the Spanish conquest (1519-1521) came the main mission of evangelization, which modified of all sorts of Native American rituals and modified them to represent sacramental or pastoral plays. The indigenous puppeteers disappeared little by little because their puppet practice was considered idolatrous and heretical to the Roman Catholic Church. Puppeteers were persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition, which prohibited puppet shows but failed to exterminate them.

Puppeteers during the Spanish colonial time (1700-1800) continued their practice in a very sophisticated manner to circumvent censorship. Their shows were difficult to classify as they were a mix of healing practice, fortune telling, and storytelling.

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<sup>2</sup> There are various hypothesis about the origin of puppets in Mexico. This particular historical information was taken from the research made by Elvia Mante y César Tavera, founders of “Baúl Teatro A.C.”

Beginning in the XIX century, the European influence in Mexican puppets was present in the famous puppet character, Don Foliás, a puppet with a long neck and an enormous nose. These European features, in contrast to the dark skin of the puppet, made him an interesting mix within the puppetry arts. Don Foliás stretched out his neck and kicked everyone in all the scenes. His actions suggest a more violent behavior - the anger of oppressed people. When I found out about this character, I wondered if the evolution of the character Don Foliás offers a trace of the Spanish Inquisition in the modern Mexican puppet tradition?



Octavio Paz, in describing Mexican perceptions of identity, dedicates a chapter in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1993) to the art of masks. Paz suggests that Mexicans use masks to “perform being Mexicans.” Moreover, Paz argues that Mexican art is the purest place to reflect national values. Paz’s cultural nationalism caught my attention. In my experience, contemporary Mexican culture moves between deep Catholic morals and its indigenous heritages, creating individuals who are continuously performing their existence and survival. The majority of the people I met from the provinces, are living in a country that suffers from significant violations of human rights and a fraudulent democracy. I would like to ask Paz, if, in such a corrupt country, this “masking” might be a way of survival? To what extent does this theorized identity apply to contemporary masks/puppetry? Also, after reading Bhabha, can we really believe in such a thing as national identity?

## *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)*

One of the reasons I chose puppets for this project was to explore yet another dimension of live performance. In the realm of puppetry, it is craft, sculpture, painting, and acting that unify to create a whole new universe. I believe puppets reflect what we actually are, a mix of characters reflecting the multiple faces of the human condition: humor, tragedy, naivety, insolence, irreverence, irony.... *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)* is a selection of six stories that do not aim to examine Mexican national identity, but rather to give a picture of my experiences of exchange that have helped me to think about a multiplicity of identities. This puppet show is accompanied by an exhibition of pictures that adds information to the play narrative.

*Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)* is what I call “performing with the puppets.” The puppet is a visual image able to act and to represent. It is an object that belongs to the world of aesthetics, to the fine arts; but also, it is meant to be animated by humans, to occupy a scene, to be performed. It is an “image” that can be seen as a representation, a simulation, a symbol, a mirror or as a metaphor of reality. It is an object that falls in a “sui generis” category (Carlos Converso, 2000).

A puppet lives in both the fine arts and performance art. It has the potential of creating a convincing realm if we allow ourselves to enter that world, that language. This language is convincing not by imitation of reality, but by being believable, by being theatrically legitimate. It is a language “separated from the body of its manipulator and has its own mechanical laws...physical separation causes psychic separation” (Jurkowski, 1988).

There is also a dissociation, a dislocation between the object and the puppeteer. By itself, the puppet is a metaphor that involves arts and actions. By nature, puppets are separated from reality without being unreal. When the object becomes alive, it reveals its character in the spirit in its own contradiction: it acts against gravity, talks to other objects and people, turns its head 360 degrees, breaks its body, etc. Thus puppets recreate a whole universe of fictions mixed with

human characteristics. “With puppets,” as my teacher in Mexico says, “we are in the universe of the living and of the dead. We are in the universe of the gods” (Carlos Converso, 2000).

An object in motion requires a verb to define it, and that verb can hardly be passive. If there are moments of passivity, static, silences, or non-action, these are conscious decisions. The human actor embodies a range of activities that do not command audience attention. For example, when an actor casually touches his/her nose in a scene, s/he adds fine information to the complexity of the whole character, simply through part of the “lively” ness of the living actor. In opposition when a puppet touches its nose in a scene, the spectator witnesses a conscious manipulation, a piece of information that is important for the audience to understand: the puppet becomes an object pregnant with delivered meanings. Although the puppeteer is always present, his/her gestures inhabit the body of “the other”.

In *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)* the puppet and the puppeteer meet in scenes using two languages simultaneously: the language of acting and the language of the object. This tension is ultimately a reflection of the relationship between my art (“the other”) and myself as an artist (ethnographer). As a puppeteer, I serve as a microphone to the puppet.

*Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)* combines six different stories within one story. After my trip to Mexico, I had collected a total of seventy-one stories. Initially, I was very attached to all of them. I could not even classify them, as I saw them all as part of a compilation of oral narrative: “the narrative is an instrument in which nuances, expressive lies, negotiations... do not have a clear category of facts or fiction, of truth or lie, believable or unbelievable, but it is an interval of a complex net, that leaves issues in constant doubt, susceptible of manipulation” (Bauman, 1988). Nonetheless, I made the decision to select the stories that would show a representative picture of the culture I visited, while still attempting to retain my own doubts and pass them on to my audience.

Since stories have always nurtured my world of creation, and as I was cooking while people were telling their stories, I prepared a menu that functions as the play’s program. When

the audience entered the theatre, they were treated as if they were entering a restaurant: they were greeted and seated by a waitress in a theatre-restaurant set. The audience was involved in the performance from the very beginning. The “Menu del Dia” (Menu of the day) is a format that recreates the menus of popular restaurants in Mexico, where, for a reasonable price, you can enjoy a full meal with appetizer, first and second courses, and dessert. The ingredients show the nature of the story. Next to the plates, I list the price I paid for the stories.

The function of the food in the play is an element that evokes my experience of exchange. In Mexico, food was a celebratory experience, a ritual with which to approach strangers. In the play, stories become food for an audience literally and metaphorically, i.e., we need the stories of others in order to nurture ourselves. The audience is eating “the other”.

In the next pages, I abuse standard formatting practice by intertwining my analysis with the script and images of a live performance. My intention is to invite my reader to simultaneously follow two voices: the artist (theatre performer/writer) and the scholar. I believe the two texts inform each other, providing a closer reference to the art piece: I think it very important to consider both the art and the commentary as a part of the same being. Furthermore, while structurally the analysis could have been separated from the script, I feel this formatting approach functionally facilitates assimilation by the reader of explanations, considerations, and personal reasons that informed many of my final choices as a playwright.



## MENU DEL DIA

PRICE

### **Aperitivo: El otro (The other)**

*Ingredientes: Encuentro, conmoción, maíz, curiosidad, inquietud* ..... **Conciencia de espacio**  
*(Encounter, shock, corn, curiosity, worry)* ..... **(Awareness of space)**

### **Primer plato:**

#### **Tesoro (Treasure)**

*Ingredientes: Pasión, proyección, café, fe, admiración* ..... **Un gusto a silencio**  
*(Passion, projection, coffee, faith, admiration)* ..... **(A taste of silence)**

#### **Naturaleza (Nature)**

*Ingredientes: Corrupción, abandono, mezcal, locura, justicia* ..... **10 minutos de intelecto**  
*(Corruption, abandonment, mezcal, madness, justice)* ..... **(10 minutes of intellect)**

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### **Segundo plato:**

#### **Laura**

*Ingredientes: Soledad, abuso, especias, clemencia, fortaleza* ..... **3 horas de compasión**  
*(Solitude, abuse, spices, clemency, strength)* ..... **(3 hours of compassion)**

#### **Herramientas (Tools)**

*Ingredientes: Desconfianza, pueblo, chile, lucro, dominación* ..... **Unos centavos de culpa**  
*(Mistrust, people, chile, profit, domination)* ..... **(A dime of guilt)**

### **Postre: Plácido**

*Ingredientes: Sencillez, omisión, chocolate, asombro, tarea* ..... **Inspiración**  
*(Simplicity, omission, chocolate, amazement, task)* ..... **(Inspiration)**

**Tortillas, salsa, bebidas y café incluidos.**

## ARANDO EL VIENTO (PLOWING THE WIND)

*Intro music is playing (Sak Izevul). As the audience enters, a performer (P2) is at the door and a second performer (P1 or Traveler) wearing a watch and a red necklace, is seating the audience at the tables of the theatre-restaurant. On stage, there is a folding screen, and a table with a blue fabric. There is a picture show "Llévame a un lugar" (Take me to a place). On the stage set: at the left, a rope hangs from the ceiling. Closer to the audience, a picture frame hangs. On the wall, there is a puppet head with a spoon as a body. On one of the audience seats, there is a green-peasant puppet with a rake. The theatre-restaurant tables have kitchen utensils on them. When everyone sits, the show starts and the intro music stops.*

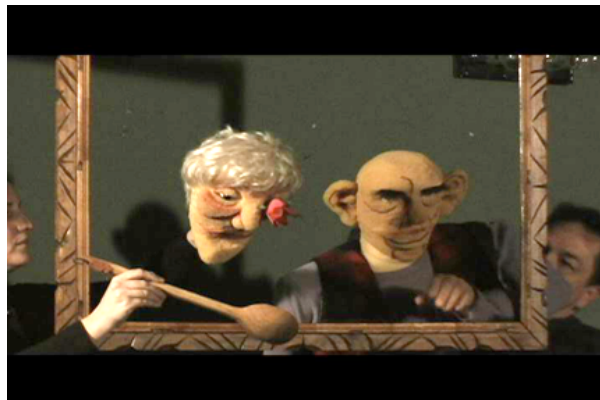
As the audience waits in the restaurant, it is invited to read the menu/program. The background music is Sak Izevul. This is an "ethno-punk" music group from Chiapas. This is the only known band that sings in tzotzil (Mayan language from Chiapas). Chiapas is always my main stop in Mexico. It is a very important place for me. It is a place of conflict, where social and public manifestations thrive on strong ideals of community life as a way to resist abuses of power. Among other sounds I set up for the play, the main music in Plowing the Wind was Sak Izevul.



Traveler: Welcome to my restaurant. How is everyone doing tonight? Are you hungry? Thank you all for coming. Tonight, we have selected the best

food for you. I hope you enjoy it. In fact, I have been cooking for a year. I started cooking when I drove my van to Mexico. Last summer, I went from Ann Arbor to Chiapas and all over Mexico with the purpose of collecting a great story to make a puppet show. So, I asked different people along the way to tell me something about themselves. I asked them to tell me a story so I could pick the best one. But soon I discovered, that I was getting much more than a great story.

I am introducing myself as the server of the food (waitress), but this character is going to be navigating different identities during the play: the traveler (actor), the narrator (interpreter/ ethnographer), the puppeteer (artist). All of them in one person: the Traveler. It was a long process of changing roles to serve the stories.



## Appetizer: THE OTHER STORY

The first story presents the first look at “the other.” An introduction to a different culture, an appetizer. That “other” is two different puppets: an indigenous girl and an old man. These two first puppets are called Rod puppets. They are manipulated with sticks attached to the neck and their control comes from below. I made them in Mexico and I use them because it was a way for me to hold on to the immediacy of my trip.

I started with a child for different reasons. One is that the children were ones who most immediately opened to me. But also I picked the story of this particular indigenous girl because the indigenous people of Mexico always catch my attention the most, as they belong to the most marginalized communities. They are always in the shadow, always reminding me of the miseries of Spanish colonization, and of centuries of atrocity. Always living in the poverty of Latin-America. And yet, her story was a challenge to my Western conception of a story: beginning, middle and end.



*A seven year old girl puppet (P2) approaches the folding screen. The traveler sits facing the audience on stage. The girl walks towards the center. The traveler sees her and interrupts her own speech.*

No matter how many times I travel in Mexico, each time I return it takes me days to reorient myself, to become aware of space and of the people around me.

Traveler: Hi!! What is your name?

*The girl puppet looks at the traveler and looks at the audience. Her pace is slow and calm in opposition to the rhythm of the traveler speech. The girl takes time to look and discover who is that person.*

Traveler: hi!. look how cute you are. What is your name? (silence) You are not going to tell me what your name is? Mmm.. are you from this city? Maybe not (quietly looking at the audience). Come here. Maybe she does not speak Spanish (whispering to the audience) Do you understand me? How old are you?

*The girl moves closer to the traveler and looks at her from time to time, like she does not know or understand the traveler's intentions at all.*

Traveler: What are you looking at? The church? Why are you not wearing shoes? Where is your mom? Are you by yourself? How old are you?

Girl: (quietly) "siete"(seven).

Traveler: what? Seven? You are seven years old? Ok (to the public) So you DO speak Spanish. Tell me something about you. Are you by yourself at age 7 ?! Tell me something about yourself.

*Silence. Girl puppet moves. The traveler sighs and sits on the table and removes her watch.*

Traveler: Well, I guess we are going to be here the whole night.

At first, I came up with all kinds of questions. All of the things I wanted to know, but also questioning realities that were inconceivable to my rational mind, to my ideas of basic needs.

Girl: "Me gusta la iglesia" (I like the church).

*She pauses and she goes away slowly.*

Traveler: You like the church? (looking suspiciously as if none of this made sense). Well, I am not religious, but yes the church is nice, ok. That's all? What do you like about it? *To the audience:* That's not much of a story, hey, where are you going?

*The girl puppet disappears behind the folding screen. The traveler moves back the table and sets up some frying pans.*

The other puppet is an old man. He represents many men I met in my trip. Playing the role of a paid ethnographer was a new experience: I learned that before you interview the villagers, they “interview” you. My identity was questioned many times in the play and in reality.

Traveler: Well, as I was telling you, the way I collected stories was by setting up my portable kitchen and a table like this one in the public space and I cooked on the streets (taking the frying pans out) I cooked food and gave it away for the price of a story. No money was accepted.

*She sits on the little chair behind the table. An old man puppet approaches the scene behind the folding screen.*

Old man: Sniff sniff.

Traveler: “Hola, Buenas noches Señor, ¿cómo está usted?” ( Hi, Good afternoon Sr. how are you?).



Old man: It smells good. What are you cooking?

Traveler: I am cooking Jasmine organic rice and lentil soup.

Old man: Organic rice? Where are you from?

Such comments made me conscious of my own new Ann Arborite identity. I realized I had picked up the health-food consciousness of Ann Arbor's typical of American college campus communities.

Traveler: From Spain.

Old man: From Spain? How did you get here?

Traveler: Well, I usually fly, but this year I drove my van. It is parked right there (pointing at the picture). I came from Michigan.

Old man: From the north? so you are American.

Traveler: No (quietly).

Old man: You live there?

Traveler: Yes but,

Old man: (interrupting) So you are American.

*The traveler gets upset. Steps out of to the audience:*

Traveler: I am American. I am NOT American. Why do they see me as an American?.

Old man: Who drove your van?

Traveler: I did.

Old man: Where is your husband?

Traveler: I don't have a husband. What is everyone's problem!? Can't I just be an independent woman!?

*The traveler goes back to the table.*

Even though they may be charming and interesting people, men still question my identity in relation to my gender. Questions such as, “why are you not traveling with your husband?” — were frequently asked and often annoyed me. The fact of having an American identity imposed on me was also bothersome. As soon as someone sees me as thoroughly American, I become aware not only of the ways in which I’ve become Americanized, but also of how hard I’ve fought to be understood in America for what I truly am, a Spaniard who has been living in America. It was the first time that others saw me, unexpectedly, as “American.” Did I seem American because of my van? My clothes? My seemingly greater financial wherewithal?

Traveler: So, do you want to try my rice?

Old man: What's in it?

Traveler: Onions, tomatoes, garlic, butter and spices.

Old man: “¿Cuánto?” (How much?)

Traveler: How much? (looking at the audience) A story.

Old man: I am not a storyteller or troubadour. I don't know anything from history.

Traveler: It doesn't matter, I don't know history either. Tell me something that happened to you when you were younger, just maybe tell me something that happened to you today.

Old man: Mmm... let me think. I will tell you a story people tell in this village. My grandmother told me once.. there was a lady who had tons of jewelry..

*Lights fade out. Intro<sup>3</sup> music fades in. P1 picks up the frying pans on the table and take them behind the folding screen. She (P2) puts a shawl on (costume for the main character of the next story). She brings back to the table a jewelry case, a candle, paper and pencil.*

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<sup>3</sup> “Intro music” refers to the Sack Izevul song “Sobz leb.”



## Main course: TREASURE STORY

*Lights fade in as P2 lights the candle. The traveler (as an Actor-woman-shawled-up) comes out to the table looking at a piece of jewelry. She is an old lady. She removes her earrings and bracelet and puts them in a box, then sits and writes a letter, while speaking out loud.*

Old lady: Dear children and husband. I hope this way I can restore our family. I love you all. God bless you. Your mom and wife.

*Death<sup>4</sup> music fade in.*

*She puts the letter next to the jewelry case and walks away from the table. She stands in front of a dangling rope. She walks around the rope in a ceremonial way. Turning to face the audience, she pauses, looks at the rope, removes her shawl and walks decisively to the rope. She opens the ropes and opens her arms in a cross (while the audience hears her breath) lights fade off as she puts her arms down.*



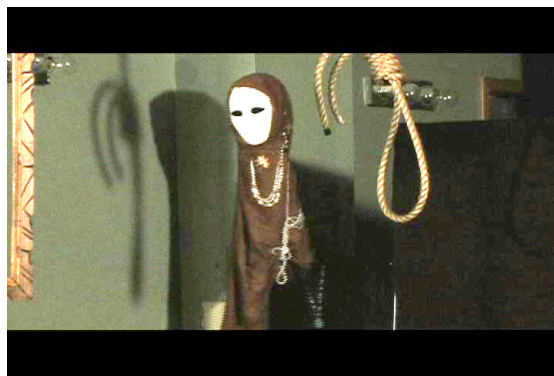
I used this story because it relates to my own story that haunted me throughout the trip. The secret my grandmother shared with me about her mother has many similarities with a story that a ten-year-old girl told me. Indeed, my great grandmother had hung herself in a similar way. This story transported me to another time and place. As I was listening and looking at the child relating the story. I pictured myself as a child retelling the story to my grandmother. I identified with this child in the story I was hearing. I wanted to learn more about this girl, I wanted to know

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<sup>4</sup> “Death music”, “Glitter music”, “Water music”, “Party music” and “Laura music” are short mixed sound pieces I created for the play.

what had been the impact of my “having” this type of story in mind, this story that resembled the secret of my own family. I wanted to find some sort of answer in order to understand my own relationship with my grandmother. But the girl was gone after she ate her plate of food. Later, I thought of the story in a cultural context and wondered why it is so common to hear stories of women who kill themselves believing whole families or villages hold themselves responsible for all the miseries of the family group or village?

The approach of death was the hardest thing to digest during my trip to Mexico as I understand death (after the recent death of my grandmother) as a punishment rather than as a transformation. I consciously gave life to death through a puppet, not only to reflect the Mexican culture, but to talk to it. I made of the death and “other,” a stranger.



*Few seconds of silence. Lights fade off. Time to go around the screen. Glitter music begins.*

*Traveler: (come out from the right) The day after, in the cemetery, her grave was open and some people actually saw her walking around. She did not have much, but the last time people saw her, she had all her jewelry on. She shines.*

*There is a figure of a ghost puppet (a human head with the shawl) coming out of the folding screen from the same side where the lady just killed herself. The glitter music is in the background and the traveler looks at her with fear. The traveler appears from the left side of the screen and reflects to the audience.*

*Traveler: Approaching the audience. I am not sure why Mexicans love death. It is not that they love it, but they actually live with it, it is part of life... they live*

with their ancestors. Even a Mexican writer said: "the way you die, it is the way you have lived your life"

There is a long tradition in Mexico of using skeleton figures in main celebrations that tend to dramatize Mexican folklore for visitors. However, with this commentary I intended to highlight the naturalness with which the Mexican people embrace their belief of "living with death," to such an extent that the presence of the lively dead often seems to be a part of the Mexican peoples' collective identity." (Paz, 1993).

For me death is not questionable. It is painful. It is a loss, a whole forever !. Seriously, don't want to talk about death, I want to enjoy my life with everything in it. I want, I don't know, time to live different experiences, time to make art, to learn new things, time to become old, to accomplish things. I want to travel the world !!!

*Party girl music fade in.*

Ignore everything that makes me sad without ignoring anything, A little bit clever, a little bit silly...

*P1 is so exited, dancing when the ghost puppet comes back behind the traveler. We listen to glitter music. She looks at the ghost for a while with fear.*

Traveler: Are you still here? What am I supposed to do with you? and with my pain?

*The traveler hangs her jewelry on the ghost as a sign of admiration and stands looking as the ghost goes away behind the folding screen slowly. Lights fade out. Intro Music fades in. Time for performers to clean up the jewelry, and the paper on the table in the dark.*

### **Main course: FROILÁN STORY**

The third story, "nature," is a story of revenge. A very poor man, known for his physical strength was used by the authorities to kill innocent people. The lake where he used to fish, swallowed him one day. The people who told me the story say that it was mother "nature" who sought revenge on him. The end of this story may sound like what we call superstition, but I see it instead as a way of explaining the difficulties of life, a way of believing or constructing beliefs.

I am not sure what my beliefs would be in a country where justice is only justice for the wealthy. The narrator did not comment on it. I leave it to the interpretation of the audience.

*Lights fade in. Intro music fades out. P1 goes silently to the back of the audience and puts Authority hands puppet on. P2 grabs Froilán. Water music fades in. Froilán puppet comes into the scene. He approaches the lake (blue fabric on the table) and fish.*

Authority hands: (calling gesture) Psst..psst... Froilán. Psst psst Froilán!.

The law is a simple globe puppet and it appears in silence. The hands, though only gestures, command Froilán on his mission. I deliberately made the choice of silence to represent the lack of clarity in the current Mexican government.



In the play there are four “bocones” or ventriloquists, also called dummies, who appear in this main story. I used foam to sculpt them. I chose foam because it is (of material I could carve) the closest texture and color to human skin and I wanted to make the dummies “as human” as possible.

*Water music fades out. The puppet moves towards the Authority-hands puppet representing the hands of the city mayor. Through gestures, the Authority-hands convinces Froilán to murder by giving him money. Froilán shows doubt. The hands put the money on him and commands the mission. Froilán's head looks down in sign of obedience. He is not sure about it, but he follows the orders. (He is afraid of the authority). He takes the money and walks slowly to the other side of the scene. P2 grabs the green-peasant puppet sitting on the audience and comes to the scene. He is working the field with a wrack.*



Froilán looks at the money and looks at him. Puts the money in the performer's pocket and attacks the puppet. They fight back and forth. The green-one puts his hands on Froilán and Froilán pushes him on the table. P1 and green-peasant puppets are both lying on the table. P2 (Froilán) uses his right hand to kill him. P2 (Green-peasant puppet) still with some life, beats like a heart (P2 hands) on the puppet's chest. Froilán pulls the red ribbon out of green-peasant puppet's mouth. Froilán grabs the hand of P2 (still moving) and the hand abandon the body of the green-peasant puppet. The green-peasant puppet is death on top of the table. Froilán looks to both sides. P1 follows Froilán's puppeteer as a shadow. Froilán pulls the dead body to the lake.



He looks around and looks into the lake. He puts himself together –cleaning jacket- and looks back again to the lake before he walks home. Performers move to the frame. P1-shadow gets out, crosses behind the hanging frame and grabs the head-mother puppet on the wall with the left, in the right the spoon. She is cooking when Froilán is outside looking from the window (from outside-side in). Froilán combs his hair before coming in the house. The head- mother-conscious knows about the activities of her son. They don't talk much. They never look at each other's eyes. They both know the secret, as does the rest of the town.

The woman in the kitchen-house frame, is a metaphor of women's genealogy in the Hispanic world. Having a spoon as her body, she only moves from the frame of her house, serving men and is not able to discuss the men's world.



Froilán: "Con permiso mama". (may I come in, mom?)

Head-mother: "Si, m'ijo" (yes, my son). How was your day Froilán? Are you hungry?

Froilán: Mmm.

*She serves him food. She looks ups, he doesn't look at her.*

Head-mother: Did you see again the city mayor today?

Froilán: Eh?. Si.

*She looks at him and looks down. She looks up and turns to him.*

Head-mother: Froilán, those are innocent people.

Froilán: We need the money mother. Fishing is not enough.

*Both puppets look at each other for the first and last time as if facing a horrible reality. She looks down.*

Head-mother: Good night Froilán.

*Lights fade out. Head-mother comes back to the wall. P1 goes behind the folding screen and gets back to the Authority-hands puppet. Lights fade in. It is the day after.*

*Froilán leave the house (the frame) and goes back to the lake.*

Authority hands: Pst Pst...(impatiently) Froilán! (come here with gestures)

*Gives him the money and demands another assassination. Froilán goes to the left side of the folding screen and watches for his next victim. When she is not aware, he attacks her. A puppet-woman with a big mouth in screaming gesture appears. They fight for a few seconds (go in and out of the folding screen) Red ribbon comes out. Froilán runs in front of the folding screen to the right side. He kills someone else –behind the folding screen – ( motions on the fabric, time for P1 to slide under the front table). Froilán comes out breathing out with red ribbon in his head. He goes to the lake to wash himself. Water music fades in. A lake hand appears and gives him water three times. Froilán falls in love. The lake seduces him. The hand disappears, flirting. Froilán looks down stunned. The Lake-hand puppet appears again in the inside part of the table and keeps seducing him to drop him eventually into the lake. Mother nature has taken revenge. Lights fade off. Water music fades out. Intro music fades in. Time for performers to clean up the bloody scene in the dark. Put Laura behind the front table.*



## **Second course: LAURA STORY**

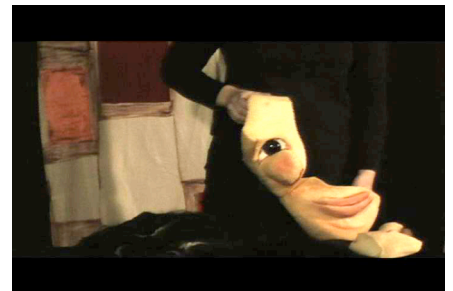
*Intro music fades out. Lights fade in to penumbra. The traveler comes out from the right side of the folding screen:*

Traveler: “Que no se apaguen las llamas de la indignacion, que el horror siempre nos estalle en la mente, que la nube roja de la furia nos ciegue, antes que olvidar” (May the flame of indignation never die out; may the horror of it always explode in our minds; may the red cloud of fury blinds us, lets we forget).

*Take Laura from behind the table and Laura music in.*

The story of Laura is a story of compassion. After hearing the atrocities that occurred in the life of this woman, I started questioning the consequences of my own art project. What to do with this reality? This is probably one of the most dramatic voices of all. The puppet breaks into pieces as did her life. There was, however, a lesson for me too, because after all she claimed to be happy. She had recovered. As the menu announces, I felt a lot of solitude in this woman: abuse, clemency and strength.

*As the Laura music plays, the P1 deconstructed the Laura-puppet into pieces. The piece that is left is a smile that flows. (P1 is behind the folding screen and grabs the smile to keep it flowing). The traveler will stand and look at it. When Laura's music fades out, the traveler turns around, collects the pieces of Laura's puppet and leaves the scene from the left side. Lights fade off. Darkness. Intro music fades in. Time to put the utensils on the table.*



## **Second Course: UTENSILS STORIES**

This story is a reflection on the North American cultural and economic invasion of Mexico. I can see more and more of it every summer that I travel to Mexico. It seems to be the new colonization that is affecting Mexican people directly, as they cannot compete or negate the power of the dollar. I found a lot of historical land treasures transformed by wealthy Americans buying up the territory.



*An old style coffee-maker puppet, an egg-cutter puppet, a cheese-shredder puppet, a beer mug puppet, and a pasta strainer puppet are on the tables where the audience is sitting. The coffee-maker-puppet is an old lady who lives in a big ruined house from the time of the Mexican revolution. She takes care of the house and tourists keep coming to visit the place. The tour guide (the cheese-shredder puppet) takes tourists to visit the ruins. Lights fade in. Intro music fades out.*

Traveler: Mexico is a place full of interest and beauty, like this old hacienda, now gone to in ruin.. Someone in the village told me there was a woman still living in the hacienda and that this house was a place where revolutionary people used to hide. When we got there ...

Coffee-maker: I am sick of tourists. This is not a tourist event.

Traveler: (knocking the table) Señora! por favor, (Madam, please) can I go in? I would like to know more about this place. How long have you been living in this hacienda?

Coffee-maker: No. I have a lot of things to do. This is my house.

Traveler: "Pero señora" (but Madam), I want to hear some stories from you.

*P1 puts him on the table loudly. P2, on the other side of the audience takes the beer-mug (representing a fat-American-bear drinker).*

Beer-drinker: Where are we going now? ... are we still in Mexico? okay, call me when we get there.

Egg-cutter: Oh! This is lovely. "Señor por favor"(Sr, please with English accent). Could you take us to the ruins?

*P2 moves to another table and grabs the Cheese-shredder puppet.*

Cheese-shredder: We are going to the ruins in few minutes. "Ahorita" (in a minute).

Egg-cutter: This place is beautiful. It is a perfect place to come for Spring Break.

*P2 moves to the table where the pasta strainer puppet (representing a bus) is sitting*

*and grabs it.*

Cheese-shredder: (taking the pasta strainer-bus). We are going to the ruins. "Ruinas, ruinas, ruinas, ruinas, ruinas" (ruins, ruins, ruins, ruins).

*P1 takes all the utensils and put them in the pasta strainer. P1 and P2 go to the table. On the table, there is a tower of containers all over the table (ruins). The coffee-maker (P1) is inside the ruins. The Cheese-shredder (P2) takes all the utensils from the pasta strainer-bus and approaches the Coffee-maker:*

Cheese-shredder: "Buenas tardes María"(Good afternoon, Maria).

Coffee-maker: Emiliano, are you bringing more people? I don't want tourists in my house. I told you many times.

Cheese-shredder: Please María, there are tourists. They need to know the history of Mexico.

Coffee-maker: The need to go to hell!. I am sick of attending your people and I can't get my work done.

*She moves out down the table. Rob and Marta change places.*

Egg-cutter: (To the Cheese-shredder) How much is this?

Cheese-shredder: Two American dollars, but today we can not enter the house.

Egg-cutter: No Emiliano. How much is this whole field, including the house.

Cheese-shredder: WHAT? I don't know Madam. Do you want to buy the ruins??!!

Egg-cutter: Yes. Everything has a price, come on.

Cheese-shredder: Mmmm. I don't know.

Egg-cutter: One thousand? Two thousand? What about three thousand dollars?

Cheese-shredder: Three thousand dollars?!?!?! Deal.

Egg-cutter: Good. So, let's see. Let's start developing this. Put that over there. (Pointing one of the containers). That here (pointing to another one) faster, faster, faster!. (Cheese-shredder starts making the

tower of containers until the pile is done) Good. This is marvelous. Nice view! (happy). Mexico is so cheap. (sitting on top of the tower)

*Coffee-maker appears on the table from the left side.*

Cheese-shredder: So, do you like it now? Look they have cable for all the neighbors, and a swimming pool, and a botanical garden. What do you think?

Coffee-maker: Well. It looks very modern.

Cheese-shredder: I told you. This is a nice American modern apartment building. Do you want me to show you one of the apartments? Maybe you would like to buy one?

*They both walk together off the table. Lights fade off. Intro music fades in.*



### **Dessert: PLACIDO STORY**

*The traveler (P1) comes out on stage walking slowly with the green puppet with a hat on. He looks one way and another.*

Traveler: I collected all kinds of stories but one of them had a particular flavor. His name is Plácido. Plácido (to the puppet) why don't you tell the audience the story you told me.

Plácido: (Moves. looking at P1). me? What do you do?

Traveler: Me? I take pictures, I make puppets.

*The puppet looks at the P1 with strange looks.*

Plácido: What for?

*At this very moment, P1 embodies the three persons (narrator, ethnographer and puppeteer-artist).*

Traveler: Well, It is art. what do you mean what are they for? Listen (talking to the puppet) meeting you in the village touched me so much and then I made you. In fact, I made you to give you voice.

*P1 and Plácido puppet both look at each other. Silence. He looks at P1 and P1 looks at him.*

Traveler: Come on, I've been in Mexico for three months collecting stories....You need to say something, everyone is waiting for you.. you are the dessert !!!

Plácido: Since I was 7, I have only been working, I have no story.

*Lights fade out. Dark.*

**THE END.**



The play culminates with the voice of Plácido, which brings to the audience an open reflection on representation of “the other.” It is an end that also is the beginning of a further conversation: an open-ended reflection about what art is for, and whether art is a medium to give voice to others or not. The puppet is questioning my art activity as he reveals himself to be a simple man. There is a tension at the end that keeps the audience thinking, why would he not have a story? What is it to not have a story? Why is he embedded in a storytelling play? Why is the artist making these choices?

### Part III: Conclusion

In my research about “the other” I found an article questioning “can the subaltern speak?” Gayatri Spivak analyzes the relationship between global capitalism (exploitation in economics) and nation-state allegiances. She observes that postmodern criticism seems obsessed with theorizing “the other.” In essence, she concludes that we cannot *give voice* because that “other” will depend on us, which is another means of colonial imposition.

I agree with Spivak on a certain level and I am aware my creative representation is still subject to her theory of “colonizing” or “giving of voice” in a condescending or patronizing way. However, I still wonder, when someone like myself, a stranger, approaches an unfamiliar community, does that experience transform his/her perspective? There is a problem of representation, but I do feel the need to represent, if not “the other,” the experience *with* “the other.” As an artist, particularly one who is performing, I must find ways to speak in voices that, while still my own, also give voice to “the other.”

I have also examined the implications of one more nuance of my most immediate identity (Spaniard), as I am literally “manipulating” the puppet/“other” (Mexican) in the play. Also, the fact of using food in the exchange has opened the “grill of discussion” : was I “feeding” the Mexican? Was the food I gave to the Mexicans the same as the religion the Spanish gave them in the colonial past?

To this quandary I do not have a clear answer. I felt I was using the food in a more celebratory way and as a means by which to adjust to my surrounding space. Yet, not only can I *not* talk for “the other,” but definitely I can not force “the other” to be as I want her/him to be. To ask for a story in Mexico with the Spanish colonial past on my shoulders could be seen as unethical. I cannot oblige “the other” to have a story, let alone to give me a story. My reason to include the encounter with Plácido illustrates this very point.

My conclusion, after this long process, is that I have to start with myself in order to approach any “other.” I learned that in order to heighten my own awareness, I must first research myself, I must become an ethnographer of myself. For me, an ethnographer’s job is not only to balance the academic research and the new experiences in the field, but also to understand who is the ethnographer herself. This self-reflection risks creating work that misrepresents, but the effort to view myself and my motives critically is an exercise in humility and dedication. My experience (as a traveler, observer, and artist) taught me to remain self-aware and self-critical, and articulate (make) my findings loudly in any art form.

I believe it may be almost a universal truth that when we share our fears, our stories, our horrors, our insecurities, our ignorance within a community, we will be able to see ourselves in others, because “the other” will become our own mirror. There is no “other.” We are all “others.”

The play *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)* became for me an autobiography. I present “the other” as I see it. In *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), Julia Kristeva examines the foreigner, the outsider, the notions of strangeness within the self. When we realize that the foreigner is within ourselves, we will start treating “others” as if they were us. This was a deeply revealing insight for my own work.

Living in two different worlds and trying to find my voice as an artist, I recently realized that I have been a bridge between cultures. A bridge between the city and the town (in Mexico), as well as a bridge between academia and the reality of the under-represented Latino population. I have been reporting one to the other and vice-versa, taking and giving, telling and hearing social circumstances.

In summary, *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)* evokes a place, a metaphor of exchange, and a contribution to the understanding of types of “otherness.”

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## Appendix 1<sup>5</sup>

The next are the stories used for the play *Arando el Viento (Plowing the Wind)*. They are the “original” handwritten documentation made while talking to the storyteller during “stories for food” in Mexico. I include the place and a brief description of the person. Please notice that these are rough translations from Spanish, so the reader may find some grammar mistakes.

### Arrival (Querétaro, Mexico).

Alejandra is about 7 years old. She's a native Mexican, carries her sister on her back, and goes barefoot. She's from San Juan del Río. She tells us the following in the course of 2 hours:

We've come, my two sisters and me, with my cousin and my mother to visit Querétaro. And now we're here! I like it a lot. The garden, the churches... There're many tourists in Querétaro. And I saw some clowns.

### Resurrected? (Santa María del Rio, San Luis Potosí, Mexico).

Miriam-Elisabeth and Nanci are two young girls about 12 years old. They are cousins. They've been around us all night, but without getting too close. It seems the town women were ticked off by them, saying that the girls lived in the street because their mother worked the street. At around 11:40 –very late- they finally got close and told us that they knew a lot of stories about the town. We told them it was late, and they said they're waiting for Miriam's mother, who is supposed to come on the last bus. (Her mother never came). When we began putting things away, they just left and walked home. These are their stories.

A woman who had hung herself left a note explaining she'd done it in order to save her family. They buried her and the following day, when they all went to the mausoleum, they saw her out of her coffin and still wearing all her jewelry, which no one had stolen. Nobody knows who got her out.

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<sup>5</sup> This translation had been made by Javier Barrios.

Froilán Valdés (Calpulalpa-Tlaxcala, Mexico).

Carlos Sistol is about 50 years old. He is in Calpulalpa on vacation. His nephews from Tapic are also here for 15 days and they took them to Mexico City (to Coyoacán) to visit. So they'll have fun.

There was a man in San Mateo Actipán who was a hit man. His name was Froilán Valdés, he was peasant and died in the lagoons where he used to go fishing for "ajolotes", carps, etc. He used to kill people sent by the government. He got on a boat and it capsized, and he drowned because he couldn't swim. None couldn't get out because the mud kept on swallowing him, so Mother Nature had her revenge. He was never arrested because he was well-connected. He was strong and tall.

The Story of Laura (Calpulalpa-Tlaxcala)

Laura is one of the few people who comes near in Calpulalpa. She's about 31 years old. She's with her 3 kids. One older, and the other two, much younger and who never stop. They seem hyperactive. She spends a long time with us because she likes hearing other peoples' stories. But she's afraid someone will steal her kids.

In the state of Veracruz I was raised by very poor people in Misantla. My parents had 14 kids and couldn't afford school nor much else. I was one the younger girls and it was sad, because mother didn't have enough food to give us, and father left with another woman to Mexico. And then began the real poverty, hunger and cold. Mother had to steal chickens to feed us. A sad life, very sad, and mother turned bad and began living loosely. She started selling the kids to men, and so the bad life began for them too. I was 6 years old. I had to go to an asylum because of all the rapes by my stepfathers. I lost my memory and had to go to a psychiatrist. Now I've got 3 kids and the oldest one was born of a rape. Every day I give my husband the money I make. I lost two twins and also another girl. Now I'm going to a self-help group (AA). I am going to graduate from primary school this week.

Hunger and Cold (Galeana, Nuevo León, Mexico).

Plácido. 78 years old. A strong man, gold teeth, and wears a hat. He is sitting on a bench for the whole night. He approaches a while ago and asks us if we were from the church. He sat back. Right before we leave, Plácido, whose eyes shone with great humility, told us a startling story.

I want to try your food, but I have not story to tell. (I asked him about his childhood). When I was a kid I took care of the animals and suffered much in the open country because I was cold and hungry, and always came back home late. I shepherded goats, cows, horses and cut firewood. From the age six I was always hungry and thirsty. All I ate was Maguei honey, corn "atole " and berries. And it was always like that. I have only been working. I have no story.

## Appendix 2

This appendix are four poetry pieces I wrote to use in one of my installation pieces in relation to the embodiment theory.

### am I?

I am a hot Latina.

I am a researcher.

I am an emigrant.

I am a jeweler.

I am a dancer.

I am a student.

I am a photographer.

I am a woman.

I am a writer.

I am a friend.

I am so far.

I !

I     I     I

I     ¡I!     I!

I     I     I     I     I

I     I!

I

I!!

(ay variations)

you just made a flamenco son.

**ventrículo derecho vs ventrículo izquierdo  
(right ventricle vs left ventricle)**

call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete.  
log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in,

new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent,  
replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay

(I don't recommend that you to stop)

call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete.  
log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in,

new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent,  
replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay

(may I have your attention?)

call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete.  
log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in,

new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent,  
replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay

(I don't recommend that you to stop)

call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete, call for artist, delete.  
log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in, log out, log in,

new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent, new mail, sent,  
replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay, save, replay

(may I have your attention?)

## my bolsa de viaje (travel bag)

I have always carry with you,  
as far as I remember  
but you have always carried with me too.

My stomach takes me to unknown places  
and makes me  
feel  
an stranger.

Some times it trap me insane:  
-don't go any where.  
I move, move, move pain.

I also take it to dangerous places  
y mi bolsita doesn't know how to react

performing me a beautiful song:  
gestingdi gestingdi gestingdi gestingdi

we are very dependent of each other  
is this love?

little bag of dreams, such naivety.  
bag of memories. heavy.  
bag of fear.  
bag of love.  
bag of thoughts.  
bag of hope.

## Etymology of Opportunity

opportunityopportunityopportunityopportunityopportunityopportunityopportunity

your opportunity !

mine?

o p p o r t u n i t y

oh

oppor

pporo

ppoor ...

**poor!**

tunity? tune?

not me.

infinity?

that is not enough focus

finity

end

nity

is it end? or is it open?

nido? (nest)

nity, nudy? nudity?

NO! nudity no!

nitido? (clear)

DEPENDS

[ni ti ni do]

ni tú ni yo (nor you nor me)

opportunity

what to do with you?  
and without me?

**integrity?**

yes!!! that maybe it.

*opportunitate* (13c.), from L. *opportunitatem* (nom. *opportunitas*) "fitness, suitability, favorable time," from *opportunus* (see **opportune**).

ah! I see

fitness?

I hurt my feet

favorable time?

in my mind....

in my wiliness  
what the hell is freedom?  
now it is about being me.

I AM

hello !!!! anybody there, there, there [eco sound]

from L. *opportunus* "favorable," from the phrase *ob portum veniens* "coming toward a port," in reference to the wind, from *ob* "to, toward" + *portus* "harbor." *Opportunist* (1881) and *opportunism* (1870) both borrowed from It. *opportunismo*, a word in It. politics, later applied in Fr. to Gambetta (1881) and then generally in Eng. to any who seek to profit from the prevailing circumstances

coming toward a port?

an other emigrant !

is he/she legal or illegal?

depends of the wind (and of the focus)

well, I am not British !

opportunity,

you are my headache

**poor integrity,**

It is time to celebrate mediocrity.



