DEVOURING METAPHORS

NEOLIBERAL CONSUMPTION IN ARGENTINE AND BRAZILIAN THEATRE

by

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Abstract

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My dissertation studies the points of contact between theatre and neoliberalism, focusing on the consumption of labor power for the production of commodities. By tracing the mechanisms of capital exchange in the production of three late twentieth- and early twenty-first-centuries South American performances, I claim that, within the social field of theatre, the circular systems of cultural production operate by cannibalistically consuming corporeal labor power. To that end, I propose to place in the theatrical field of production questions rooted in conceptual and material matrices of bodies, work, consumption, exploitation, and violence.

Argentine Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco* (It is necessary to understand a little, staged in 1995) reveals the cultural, political, and economic negotiations that operated in Argentina in the construction and articulation of Otherness in support of the Menemist government's neoliberal program. Through the lens of Fernando Coronil's theory of Occidentalism, I explore the incorporation of neoliberalism taking place through a complex of legal, economic, and social institutions and praxis.

In my analysis of Argentine playwright, actor, and director José María Muscari's

Shangay té verde en 8 escenas (Shangay: green tea and sushi in eight scenes, performed between 2004 and 2006), I posit a series of biological implications of labor exploitation. By reading Marx in terms of biological consumption, I argue that an examination of the modes of ingestion, consumption, devouring, and physiological expenditure of food operating in and around the performance explicates the incorporation of neoliberalism into the bodies of theatre producers and consumers.

Finally, I study the representation of cannibalism in Brazilian playwright Newton Moreno's *A refeição* (*The Repast*, produced in 2007). In these aberrant actions, the body appears as the material of social struggles. Flesh becomes food in a framework shaped by economies of emotion and empathy. Workers' bodies are at all times fodder for consumption. Thus, in that sense, the play describes more than a metaphor. It illustrates the way cannibalism is the modus operandi of neoliberal economies.

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Introduction

Bodies at Work

My dissertation studies the points of contact between theatre and neoliberalism. Positing the existence of such connections seems somewhat redundant, since it appears that there are no spaces where neoliberalism does not impinge upon theatre and performance, to different degrees and in different ways. Yet this ostensibly self-evident assertion deserves closer scrutiny. In light of the complexity of neoliberal socioeconomic activity, I give attention to a particular and decisive facet of neoliberal capitalism, namely, the consumption of labor power for the production of commodities. The significance of this kind of consumption lies in the fact that capital ineluctably requires human energy for its reproduction.

Using three late twentieth- and early twenty-first-centuries South American performances as the material for analysis, I examine the manners in which said consumption is a vital aspect of neoliberalism. The first two plays are Argentine: Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco* (It is necessary to understand a little, staged in 1995), and José María Muscari's *Shangay té verde en 8 escenas* (Shangay: green tea and sushi in eight scenes, performed between 2004 and 2006). The third play is Brazilian playwright Newton Moreno's *A refeição* (*The Repast*, produced in 2007). The purpose of this project is to trace the mechanisms of capital exchange in the production of these performances. My contention is that, within the social field of theatre, the circular systems of cultural production operate like any other production process under neoliberalism—that is to say, by consuming corporeal labor power.

The selection of plays does not attempt any representativity of contemporary theatre in the playwrights' respective countries. In truth, these works have been underappreciated or simply ignored by critics or audiences—or both—due to their anomaly. In addition, there

is at best only a modest literature on *Es necesario entender un poco*, and almost none on the other two plays. Throughout the dissertation, I try to draw attention to the available studies of these plays.

What follows is a rather concise definition of terms that will appear in the dissertation in multiple forms. I start with the concept of neoliberalism in its broad sense in order to elucidate its effects in Argentina and Brazil, and their respective fields of theatre production. The analytical lens focuses more closely on some conceptual tools that will allow me to consider the complex processes of production and consumption shown, emphasized, disavowed, and/or concealed in these three South American performances. Finally, I delve into some of the specifics of these plays, expounding on their suitability as cases for study.

Theatre Production and Neoliberalism

Culture is a field in which an arrangement of unrelenting processes of naturalization of neoliberalism unfolds. To study the reproduction and impact of neoliberal politics through cultural production, I want to postulate five terms that are crucial to my analysis. Body, work, consumption, exploitation, and violence are the central operative notions. My objective is to read these three productions through those five ideas. Concentrating on the way these concepts are historically and materially connected leads to an understanding of the concrete implications of neoliberalism. These tools of analysis provide me with a methodological apparatus to examine the theatrical productions as examples of the ubiquitous mechanics of neoliberal economics. Since performances are historically specific, they display a pervading mode of material cultural and economic production. Although all performances evince systems of production either in agreement with or countering the

predominant and hegemonic ideologies, the selected plays reflect modes of neoliberal capital accumulation most clearly. The intersections of the aforementioned five concepts engender particular loci of social negotiations under neoliberalism.

Many scholars claim that defenders of neoliberalism strongly believe in individual freedom, and the curtailment or adjustment of state intervention.[1] David Harvey contends, "Neoliberalism has … become hegemonic as a mode of discourse and has pervasive effects on ways of thought and politicoeconomic practices to the point where it has become incorporated into the commonsense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world."[2] Lynne Phillips argues that neoliberalism is "the process of a growing reliance on the market for organizing social and economic activities."[3] According to Susan George, the underlying idea is that "the economy should dictate its rules to society."[4] It entails the rejection of Keynesian state and economic policies.[5] It is also a theory of political economic practices positing that fostering individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within a framework protecting private rights, free markets, and free trade is the most effective route to human welfare.[6] Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy describe neoliberalism as "the ideological expression of the reassertion of the power of finance."[7] It is a culture that "re-visions persons not as producers from a particular community, but as consumers in a planetary

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[1] Mark Olssen, John Codd, and Anne-Marie O'Neill, *Education Policy* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 136.

[2] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

[3] Lynne Phillips, introduction to *The Third Wave of Modernization in Latin America: Cultural Perspectives on Neoliberalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), xvi.

[4] Susan George, "A Short History of Neoliberalism: Twenty Years of Élite Economics and Emerging Opportunities for Structural Change," in *Global Finance: New Thinking on Regulating Speculative Capital Markets*, ed. Walden F. Bello, Nicola Bullard, and Kamal Malhotra (New York: Zed Books, 2000), 28.

[5] Carolyn Gallaher, "Definition: A Return to Laissez-Faire," in *Key Concepts in Political Geography*, ed. Carolyn Gallaher et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 153.

[6] Harvey, 2.

[7] Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, "Costs and Benefits of Neoliberalism. A Class Analysis," in *Financialization and the World Economy*, ed. Gerald A. Epstein (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005), 17.

marketplace," Jean and John L. Comaroff argue.[8] Additionally, Harvey believes that the state is complicit in promoting neoliberal ideology. He says, "The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices."[9]

At the same time, the objective of neoliberal agents is to reorganize the constitution of individuals and their social relations of individuals, market, and state through desocializing tactics, meaning capital and labor become reciprocally remote.[10] Thus, "Neo-liberalism is a political-cultural project that aims at transnational hegemony, in which different places are invited, seduced, and compelled to join," as John Clarke claims.[11] But hegemony is never uncontested and static. In Raymond Williams's words, it is a "realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities with specific and changing pressures and limits," and therefore, "it has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, and challenged by pressures not at all its own."[12]

Theatre has also been a target of a global neoliberal force. In Brazil, David George writes in an e-mail to Paola Hernández, "The globalization of economic models (e.g., market economy) has led to the virtual elimination of government subsidy for the arts in Brazil and has given rise to the hegemony of the theatrical entrepreneur, the '*catador de recursos*' [money

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[8] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," in *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 13.

[9] Harvey, 2. Aihwa Ong argues that neoliberalism can be understood as "a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions." She is more interested in examining regimes of citizenship, where market-driven truisms and strategies infiltrate political arenas. Aihwa Ong, introduction to *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

[10] John Clarke, "Unfinished Business? Struggles Over the Social in Social Welfare," in *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall,* ed. Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie (New York: Verso, 2000), 87.

[11] John Clarke, "Living With/in and Without Neo-Liberalism," *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 51 (2008): 137.

[12] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 112.

hog]. This influences what plays will be staged, [and] what space is available."[13] For instance, the *1991 Lei Federal de Incentivo à Cultura* (Cultural Incentive Federal Law), also known as Rouanet Law, grants businesses tax incentives for the investment on cultural products or "assets." Thus, firms could attach their name to cultural events as a means of marketing promotion.[14] Since 2001, the Itaú Unibanco holding has been the major sponsor of the prestigious Curitiba Theatre Festival. The organization also offers half-price tickets to its customers. The discount represents an added value to the financial services the institution provides. It has also sponsored other cultural events, such as the Carnival in Salvador and the Street Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, the *Festa do Círio de Nazaré* (Candle of Nazareth Festival) in Belém, and the *Festival de Dança* (Dance Festival) in Joinville. Thus, the bank benefits from the unlevied income tax, which implies that Itaú Unibanco profits from unpaid public funds.[15] This is particularly bad in the case of the *Lei do Audiovisual* (Law on Audiovisual Media), for corporations both use the products to promote their brands and are allowed to reap the profits from the venture.[16]

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[13] Quoted in Paola Hernández, "Teatro da Vertigem: Performing Resistance in an Era of Globalization," in *Relocating Identities in Latin American Cultures*, ed. Elizabeth Montes Garcés (Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 118.

[14] Fundação Itaú Social, "Patrocínio do Itaú ao Festival de Curitiba completa dez anos," news release, March 16, 2010, accessed January 18, 2010, http://ww2.itau.com.br/itausocial2/salaImprensa /ReleasesAbreNoticia.aspx?id_noticia=4803.

[15] "Não se trata … de mecanismo de incentivo fiscal baseado em abatimento do imposto relativo aos gastos com cultura, mas do não pagamento dos valores aplicados em atividades culturais. A diferença é enorme: ao contrário de serem incentivados a investir dinheiro na cultura, os empresários investem dineiro público nessas atividades, com benefícios privados. As empresas aparecem como doadoras de dinheiro–que, na verdade, não lhes pertence–, e acabam definindo uma parte considerável da atividade cultural do país." (It is not … a tax-incentive mechanism based on the abatement of taxes related to expenditures on culture, but a non-payment of funds allocated to cultural activities. The difference is enormous: instead of being incentivized to invest money in culture, businessmen invest public money in these activities, with private benefits. Firms appear to give money—which, in truth, does not belong to them—and end up defining a considerable part of the country's cultural activity.) Fernando Kinas, "O programa de fomento ao Teatro para a Cidade de São Paulo. Uma experiência de política pública bem-sucedida," *Seminário Internacional de Políticas Culturais* (2010): 3.

[16] "Na Lei do Audiovisual, a dedução é maior do que o próprio investimento. Ou seja, para cada R$ 1,00 investido, o benefício fiscal é de R$ 1,25." (In the case of the Audiovisual Media Law, the deduction is greater than the investment itself. That is to say, for every *real* invested, the tax benefit is R$ 1,25." Gabriel Estellita Lins Cavalcanti, "Análise econômica das políticas de incentivo à cultura," (master's thesis, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2006), 32, http://virtualbib.fgv.br/dspace/handle/10438/343. Cavalcanti offers a detailed description and economic analysis of tax-incentive laws.

Some governmental entities have funded cultural production in their respective districts. For example, the city of São Paulo passed the *Lei de Fomento ao Teatro* (Theatre Promotion Law) in 2002. Through a system of municipal subsidization of performance work, city officials attempt to encourage cultural work in the field of theatre. Insofar as the panel of judges granting the funds to groups and collectives is composed of four government officials (one being the president of the committee, who votes only in case of a tie) and three representatives of the theatre community, it provides a respectable countermeasure to a market-driven theatre industry.

In Argentina, cultural production is closely linked to business interests. Even prestigious foundations such as Konex and Costantini are endowed by very financially successful entrepreneurs (Luis Ovsejevich and Eduardo Costantini, respectively). Fundación Costantini's mission is to manage the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires Latin American Art Museum), whose holdings were donated by Costantini, a very wealthy real-estate developer. Fundación Konex is most famous for giving awards to distinguished and accomplished artists, scientists, athletes, and scholars. Ovsejevich claims that the foundation also offers scholarships and grants for cultural activities.[17] In his condemnation of symbolic means of domination, Guido Galafassi argues that organizations such as Konex evince the construction of a neoliberal ideology. They emphasize democratic values as the basis for a portentous future while ignoring other aspects of social reality (particularly those related to economic and social inequalities).[18] Galafassi's words may be harsh, but his assessment is not unwarranted. For instance, Federico Sturzenegger and

[17] "Luis Ovsejevich–Fundación Konex," Fundación Konex, accessed January 20, 2010, http://www .fundacionkonex .com.ar/b2339-luis-ovsejevich; Luis Ovsejevich, "Nuestra clase dirigente no es culta," interview by Carola Birgin, *Revista Noticias*, August 8, 2008, accessed January 20, 2010, http://www.revista-noticias.com.ar/comun /nota.php?art=1524&ed=1649.

[18] Guido Galafassi, "Los intelectuales y la 'convivencia democrática,'" *Theomai* 14 (2006): i-iii, accessed April 8, 2009, http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/redalyc/src/inicio/ArtPdfRed.jsp?iCve=12401401.

Roberto Lavagna—veritable neoliberal ideologues and "spokespersons" for the IMF and World Bank, argues Galafassi—received a Konex Award.[19]

In addition, Fundación Konex rewards intellectual and artistic production, yet there is no evidence that these prizes involve anything but an award statue or diploma. Nowhere in its promotional material does the foundation indicate that these awards include a monetary grant for further work in their field. One would assume that it would make its generosity public. Although successful and affluent athletes may not need financial support to pursue their careers, actors, directors, researchers, and writers oftentimes do. These awards, instead, perform as validation of the symbolic capital of the award judges. In chapter 2, I expound on the economies of cultural awards and their role in the accrual of capital.

There is no "Social Patronage Law" at the federal level in Argentina. There are such laws in the City of Buenos Aires, and the provinces of Chaco, Jujuy, Entre Ríos, Tucumán, Río Negro, and Catamarca, which establish very ambiguous directives for tax abatements to private investment in cultural products.[20] In addition, the 1997 *Ley Nacional del Teatro* (National Theatre Law) created the Instituto Nacional del Teatro (National Theatre Institute), an administratively autarchic entity under the jurisdiction of the Secretaría de Cultura de la Nación (National Culture Secretariat).[21] Its mission is to promote and support performance activities in Argentina. One of its methods is to offer subsidies and grants to theatre endeavors and participants. Sources of its budget include the national government by means of Congress appropriations, the institute's ticket sales and similar revenues, private donations, and a stipulated percentage of the taxes levied on lottery winnings. Like the theatre-promotion laws in Brazil, the Instituto Nacional del Teatro establishes a modest

[19] Ibid., ii.

[20] *Legislación Cultural en la Argentina*, s.v. "mecenazgo," accessed January 20, 2011, http://sinca.cultura.gov.ar/sic/gestion/legislacion.

[21] Law No. 24800, May 28, 1997, B.O. 1.

corrective to the systems of production and consumption of culture in the era of neoliberalism.

The Materiality of Consumption

Through a dissection of modes of consumption in the field of theatrical performance, I examine various ways in which neoliberal ideologies and practices encroach on social relations. In particular, my goal is to explicate neoliberal processes of consumption and production that inform the formation of human bodies. To that end, I propose diverse questions rooted in conceptual and material matrices of bodies, work, consumption, exploitation, and violence, and to place them specifically in the theatrical field of production. I organize these terms in specific ways. Considering the copious literature on any of these ideas, in addition to studies on how they interrelate, I suggest particular ways of thinking about these notions, since they are the foundation of my analisis. To gauge the force of these five elements, it is important to position them as material realities. For instance, a body can be an object of rhetorical interpretation, yet it is also a physical (for it has mass, volume, shape, and density), sensuous thing. In my dissertation, I invoke scholarship that engages those concepts in the abstract, postulating sophisticated lenses of analysis. Those analytical devices are the springboard for the chapters' more focused observation of cultural artifacts, and the processes involved in their production and consumption.

Body

Ava Baron and Eileen Boris state, "Like other material objects, such as land and commodities, bodies are cultural productions that are constituted through an interpretive

process that masks the cultural work that went into their making."[22] Thus, the scholars understand the body as a socially produced material object. The body, therefore, seems to encompass three different traits. It is matter in its physical sense. It is also produced, that is to say, it is not an abstract a priori, but the result of some kind of work. Finally, the production of the body occurs socially in accordance to relational and historical matrices. In its materiality, however, there is something inherently "non-historical" about the human body: its biological configuration. Human beings belong to the same species; consequently, they share ecological characteristics. In light of certain biological determinations, Terry Eagleton argues that much of human history also includes permanence or very gradual change.[23]

The challenge of studying the body under neoliberalism is to account for the dialectics of the body. Capitalism establishes a unique mode of social relations between workers and capitalists. Capital accumulation—the ultimate objective of capital—inescapably demands the labor of an army of workers. Karl Marx describes how capitalists increase the value of their capital when they ensure the subsistence of the workforce. "The individual consumption of the working class is ... the reconversion of the means of subsistence given by capital in exchange for labour-power, into fresh labour-power which capital is then again able to exploit," he contends.[24] The individual consumption of the worker is a feature of the production and reproduction of capital. In effect, capital offers the means of subsistence to workers to foster the constant formation and existence of embodied human energy, which in turn will be consumed by the capitalist as its most indispensable means of production. The generation of productive energy occurs physiologically. As a

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[22] Ava Baron and Eileen Boris, "'The Body' as a Useful Category for Working-Class History," *Labor* 4, no. 2 (2007): 25-26.

[23] Terry Eagleton, introduction to *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), xii.

[24] Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin Classics and *New Left Review*, 1990), 717-18.

laborer feeds on food and water, ongoing physiological processes, cellular regeneration, and the accretion of stored energy in fatty tissue taking place within the workers's anatomy propel the reproduction of labor power. Both economics and biology describe the dynamics and utilization of the workers' bodies, turning the accumulated, potential energy stored in the human body to physical labor power.

The materiality of the body in these works underscores one of the most provocative tools in theatre. Among the arts, theatre is an overtly compelling form for the expression of ideological thought. In particular, it enables a foregrounding of social relations in the theatrical animation of physical bodies, showing how human experience predicates on material historicity. Rather than describe it in literary terms or reproduce it pictorially, a performance may position a human body in front of an audience—a collection of human bodies—thus confronting the spectator with her own physical counterpart. A thorough discussion of the complex nature of mimesis falls beyond the scope of my work. Nonetheless, I find in Elin Diamond's study of the human body onstage a compelling description of complex and irreducible dialectics of embodiment. She contends that the body onstage encompasses an irreducible multiplicity of social meanings:

> The body, particularly the female body, by virtue of entering the stage space, enters representation—it is not just "there," a live, unmediated presence, but rather (1) a signifying element in a dramatic fiction; (2) a part of a theatrical sign system whose conventions of gesturing, voicing, and impersonating are referents for both performer and audience; and (3) a sign in the system governed by a particular apparatus, usually owned and operated by men for the pleasure of a viewing public whose major wage earners are male.[25]

[25] Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 52.

Although Diamond concentrates on the gendered body, the distinction she makes regarding gender can also be applied to class. I therefore adopt Diamond's description to apply to the bodies of labor, or "classed bodies." The body, particularly the worker's body, by virtue of entering the stage space, enters representation in a system ruled by a neoliberal apparatus. To this, I would add that the body goes onstage as a material site of class struggle as well, and not merely a sign of it. Eagleton asserts, "The body is itself a kind of sign, in which we are present rather as the meaning is present in a word; but it also sets the outer boundaries to signification as such."[26] Bodies are constitutive of class difference. These classed bodies are not only those bodies onstage, but all workers' bodies invested in producing theatre. Theatre workers' bodies participate in these social relations, including those engagements with audiences. The issue is not only a matter of representation; it is also a question of presentation.

Work

What *is* labor? In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt argues that Marx failed to explain the complexity of labor by reducing *working* to *laboring*. According to her, the latter [*Arbeit*] refers to the physiological processes whereby the human being, as *animal laborans,* ensures his or her subsistence. Labor comprises the diverse activities involved in the preservation and reproduction of human life. The cycle of biological life requires work to produce the means of life-giving consumption. Labor encompasses a series of biological processes analogous to those of animals, inasmuch as "labor is the least 'human of human activities.'" Jennifer Ring argues, "It *is* a process with a product … It produces nothing but the ability to keep producing," in her analysis of Arendt's work.[27] However, the purpose of

[26] Eagleton, xv.

[27] Jennifer Ring, "On Needing Both Marx and Arendt: Alienation and the Flight from Inwardness," *Political Theory* 17 (1989): 436.

working is to finish an object "ready to be added to the common world of things," Arendt claims.[28] Work [*Werk*] is human artifice of the *homo faber*, the craftsman who makes and builds, that is used rather than consumed; it is the result of genuine human activity. Arendt argues that Marx concentrated on labor as a physiological process, as man's "metabolism with nature."[29] Marx describes the process in the following way: "He [the worker] sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs."[30] In response to this, Arendt argues that Marx was specifically speaking physiologically: "labor and consumption are but two stages of the ever-recurring cycle of biological life."[31]

Marx contends that "through this movement he [man] acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature."[32] The German scholar does not reduce human labor to animal-like work; he claims that products also result from the human being's imagination. In truth, "apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work."[33] Marx sees labor as a dialectical and irreducible condensation of Arendt's categories of labor, work, and action. I. T. King breaks down Marx's notion of labor: "Labor is necessary to satisfy immediate biological needs (survival); applies craftsmanship to the process of production; and is a fundamental form of human *praxis*."[34] Despite Arendt's claim, it seems that Marx

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[28] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1959), 86.

[29] Marx, 959.

[30] Ibid., 283.

[31] Arendt, 86 (emphasis mine).

[32] Marx, 283.

[33] "A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally." Ibid., 284.

[34] I. T. King, "Political Economy and the 'Laws of Beauty': Aesthetics, Economics, and Materialism in Marx," in *Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought: Critical Assessments*, ed. Bob Jessop and Russell Wheatley (New York: Routledge, 1999), 7.

does not reduce labor to a mechanistic, mind-numbing activity.[35] Labor is an innately human endeavor for it produces what already exists in the worker's imagination.

Marx's view allows for a more complicated understanding of production than the dichotomy of work and labor Arendt advocates. The individual engages the world on multiple levels. Marx claims, "Man lives from nature—i.e., nature is his body—and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it is he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature."[36] Although human beings and animals perform the same tasks (such as eating of drinking), the former is conscious of his life activity. In fact, "Life itself appears only as a *means of life*."[37] Human beings utilize matter consciously and freely, "in accordance with the laws of beauty."[38]

My purpose is not to engage in a philosophical debate on the concept of work. However, a few things appear clear. Ingenuity and enterprise are always at play. Human beings have the capability—though not always the option—of producing ontologically fulfilling work. Although I concentrate on the biological aspects of the human body as the source of labor power, I do not want to run the risk of ignoring the role imagination plays in the life and work of an individual. Marx's views on the dialectically biological and creative nature of work, what Arendt prefers to separate as two distinct and incompatible aspects (labor and work), provide a framework to elucidate simultaneous and complementary

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[35] According to Patchen Markell, Arendt's claim is that Marx elevated labor to the status of work. "[Arendt] repeatedly says that [Marx] treated 'all labor as work' or that he 'endowed' labor with 'certain faculties which only work possesses.'" Sean Sayers contends that Arendt "treats with disdain and contempt the labour which meets consumer needs and those who do it," and considers her views elitist. Patchen Markell, "Arendt and Habermas Revisited: The Critique of Marx and the Critique of Capitalism," (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), accessed September 9, 2010, http://faculty.virginia.edu/pol-theoryprogram/markell.pdf; Sean Sayers, "Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx," *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 1 (2003): 107-28.

[36] Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," in *Early Writings,* trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Penguin, 1975), 328.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 329.

human activities. What I want to do is to underscore the frequently ignored biological component of all types of work, whether they operate in the "realm of the necessity," to use Marx's term, or in a more creative or artistic domain. Marx, in all his ambiguity and contradictions, alludes to the physiological element of economic work. In invoking his theory, I aim at linking the materiality of biological nature, and the production and consumption of human work.

Consumption

Consumption in the economic sense may also prompt a biological consumption, that is to say, an act of ingestion and devouring. When capital consumes labor power, it participates in the productive consumption—in other words, the expenditure of resources within production—of the worker's very flesh. "The consumption of food by the beast of burden does not become any less a necessary aspect of the production process because the beast enjoys what it eats," Marx contends, thus drawing an unambiguous relation between the worker's ingestion of food as the *sine qua non* for the creation and reproduction of workers, and the process of the capitalist's consumption of labor power intrinsic to any process of production.[39] Consequently, the capitalist's consumption ultimately describes economic cannibalism. The capitalist exploits labor power that is present in the body of the worker and consumes the body of the worker. Through a Marxist lens, these practices reveal the built-in exploitative organization of capital. Borrowing from Donna Haraway, "The body is an accumulation strategy in the deepest sense."[40]

Crystal Bartolovich makes a compelling argument in contending that capital may be considered parasitic rather than cannibalistic. "To criticize capitalism by declaring it a form

[39] Marx, *Capital*, 716.

[40] Donna Haraway and David Harvey, "Nature, Politics, and Possibilities: A Debate and Discussion with David Harvey and Donna Haraway," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 (1995): 510.

of cannibalism might seem tempting in certain ways, but to do so is to miss the point. It *must* be parasitic rather than cannibalistic," she writes.[41] Her reading of Marx's work is incisive, in that she recognizes that capital accumulation requires a constant supply of labor power to be extracted. "Capitalist accumulation is not hoarding," she argues. "Rather it requires a constant extraction *and redeployment* in production of surplus-value."[42] This assertion is one with which I completely agree and defend even further in chapter 2. Capital accumulation may be misleading, for it does suggest unqualified appropriation. It is the capital's appropriation of the workers' surplus value. Marx also refers to "capital reproduction," which "produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capital-relation itself."[43] Indeed, Bartolovich invokes Marx's words to argue her case:

> The development of capitalist production makes it necessary constantly to increase the amount of capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking, and competition subordinates every individual capitalist to the immanent laws of capitalist production as external and coercive laws. It compels him to keep extending his capital, so as to preserve it, and he can only extend it by means of progressive accumulation.[44]

Thus Bartolovich identifies the contradictory and evident drives of capital: "The capitalist is, on the one hand, driven to consume labour power utterly, and, on the other hand, absolutely prevented from doing so if accumulation is to continue."[45]

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[41] Crystal Bartolovich, "Consumerism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Cannibalism," in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 214.

[42] Ibid., 224.

[43] Marx, *Capital*, 724.

[44] Ibid., 739.

[45] Bartolovich, 225.

I find Bartolovich's analysis of Marx's views persuasive. She identifies in Marx's writing frequent invocations of parasitism, providing a list of these images: "a vampire, werewolf, or parasite, who continuously feeds off a living worker."[46] Capital is innately cannibalistic, she writes, "but it cannot go so far and preserve the system as a whole."[47] Her notion of cannibalism derives from an array of early modern literature. For example, she cites Richard Hakluyt's travel narratives of cannibals devouring "whole companies," whose only remnants were "cleane burnished" bones.[48] Bartolovich understands cannibals as flesh-eating creatures feeding off, and exhausting, human-body matter. In response to these early texts, she argues that cannibals "suck blood until the life is utterly departed from the body."[49] In her reading of early modern railings against primitive accumulation, she explicates the difference between absolute consumption—more akin to aristocratic consumption—and an emergent capitalism. Undoubtedly, capital requires an inexhaustible purveyor of labor power. There must always be labor power for sale. I think Bartolovich's use of the term "parasite" is remarkably apt, given the biology of these organisms. In fact, French biologist and parasitologist Claude Combes calls the parasite-host association a system.[50] Parasites exploit their hosts' matter, metabolism, work, and product of their labor.[51] The most valuable asset for parasites is the organisms' bodies, since in them energy is stored.

However, I am interested in the dialectical biological feedback of worker and capital emerging from a system of capital accumulation within which capital must feed the worker in order to feed itself. I claim that it is not just a process of extraction; it is also a cycle of

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[46] Ibid., 213.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 212.

[49] Ibid., 213.

[50] Claude Combes, *Parasitism: The Ecology and Evolution of Intimate Interactions*, trans. Isaure de Buron and Vincent A. Connors (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4.

[51] Ibid., 3.

continuous exchange. In my mind, a parasite-host system concentrates on unilateral consumption. I want to draw attention to the multiple vectors of production, consumption, and exploitation deployed corporeally, discursively, and in systems of body discipline and regulation. This becomes clear when I juxtapose the operations of economic and biological consumption. I posit that neoliberalism is cannibalistic due to the physiological characteristics of labor-power consumption. The configuration of social networks through the metaphors and concrete activities of feeding and eating speak to the hegemonic (that is to say, constantly in flux and in dialectical tension) political, economic, and cultural forces striving to maintain their supremacy.

The concepts of cannibalism and anthropophagy are important tools for my study. However, the notions radically differ in their cultural significance and history in Argentina and Brazil. Carlos Jáuregui's *Canibalia* outstandingly traces the metaphoric use of these concepts in Latin America.[52] He argues that as the Modernist appropriation of the cannibal by Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) took form in Brazil, the term *antropofagia* became an important concept in Brazilian modern art discourse. Oswald coined the term to describe the devouring of foreign ideas and influences, the digestion of its valuable elements toward their incorporation into Brazilian culture, and the rejection or vomit of what was considered useless. Moreover, anthropophagy became a central feature of the construction of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness). In "Manifesto Antropófago," Oswald invokes the indigenous Brazilian Tupinambá people when writing "*Tupi* or not *Tupi*, that is the question," a bilingual joke connoting both an acceptance and a rebuff of European culture.[53] Oswald's formation of the rhetoric of primitivist anthropophagy, endorsed by the collective endeavor *Revista de Antropofagia* and his numerous essays, carved a new realm of discourse within Brazilian

[52] Carlos Jáuregui, *Canibalia: Canibalismo, calibanismo, antropofagia cultural y consumo en América Latina* (Havana: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, 2005).

[53] Oswald de Andrade, "Manifesto Antropófago," *Revista de Antropofagia* 1, no. 1 (1928): 3.

culture that allowed for spin-offs together with critiques, rejections, and disavowals. For instance, Marxist scholar Roberto Schwarz critiques Oswald's endorsement of cannibalism: "Oswald de Andrade's 'anthropophagous' Pau-Brazil programme also tried to give a triumphalist interpretation of our backwardness."[54]

In Argentina, unlike in Brazil, intellectuals and artists have not employed anthropophagy as a trope for the articulation of culture. There, cannibalism is deemed an aberrant and repugnant idea. Although there are no evident animations of the concept, we find nevertheless other examples of unembellished devouring. These acts of consumption are mostly metaphorical. The best-known example of rapacious devouring appears in Roberto Mario Cossa's neogrotesque play *La nona* (The Granny, 1977), where the title's eponym literally devours anything edible she can find in the household, leading to the voracious annihilation of her family. Eduardo Romano argues that the play is a metaphor "for the economic mechanisms that were sucking up the country's workforce and, in passing, destroying family life."[55] Jean Graham-Jones considers that the nona may be a metaphor for the atmosphere in which Cossa was writing the work.[56] The playwright describes the mood as one where the Argentine population was confronted by the new and horrifying experience of watching friends and strangers "disappear" and die.[57]

Exploitation

Joseph Stiglitz, former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Advisor to President Clinton, writes in 2002, "People in the West may regard low-paying jobs at Nike as exploitation, but for many people in the developing world, working in a

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[54] Roberto Schwarz, "Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination," in *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, ed. John Gledson (New York: Verso, 1992), 7-8.

[55] Eduardo Romano, "Grotesco y clases medias en la escena argentina," *Hispamérica* 15, no. 44 (1986): 36.

[56] Jean Graham-Jones, *Exorcising History* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2000), 46.

[57] Roberto Mario Cossa, "El pensamiento vivo del autor," *Teatro* 5, no. 22 (1985): 40.

factory is a far better option than staying down on the farm and growing rice."[58] This let-them-eat-cake assessment of the effects of neoliberal policies in the developing South reflects the naturalization of exploitation of workers. Moreover, Stiglitz's estimation illustrates the growing proletariatization of workers in the manner in which formerly agrarian workers now participate in the industrial mode of production. The increasingly seemless transnational capital flows aim at generating new projects for capital reproduction. Consequently, the system must reproduce the capital-worker relation implicit in said process whereby workers are deprived of the full product of their labor. In short, capital accumulation necessitates the exploitation of workers.

A fetishistic globalization masks the veritable struggles of the workers who produce traded commodities. It also advocates an ahistorical triumphalism with the tendency to generalize the effects of neoliberal policies in different regions. Despite the transnational project, the implications of the ideological bargains and betrayals are never identical. Positing analogies requires watchful precision, inasmuch as neoliberal topographies differ—as I demonstrate in my work. However, notwithstanding the regional nature of these studies, social developments grow increasingly and more immediately interconnected than ever before. One of the most consequential shifts in international politicoeconomic flows has been the portentous influence of the Bretton Woods organizations—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—in social organization around the world.

The economic impact of these institutions reverberates in multiple areas of daily experience, production, and class activity. In their role of "institutional foundations of

[58] Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontent* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 4. Stiglitz has become a staunch critic of the International Monetary Fund in the past decade. He also argues that globalization can yield positive results so long as every country participates in it on its own terms, namely, in light of its culture and traditions.

neoliberalism," as Antonio Ugalde and Núria Homedes describe them,[59] organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank promote neoliberal policies of detrimental impact in developing economies: "structural adjustment plans" (SAPs) and international free-trade agreements. Structural adjustment can be viewed as "a generic term to describe a *conscious* change in the fundamental nature of economic relationships within society."[60] It is a process in which these organizations establish a set of conditions ruling their lending practices to underdeveloped or developing economies.[61] In order to stimulate a higher gross domestic product and income per capita in economically troubled nations, the immediate objectives of SAPs have included the increase of trade liberalization (through import-export and tariff policies), the promotion of domestic saving, and a healthy balance of trade.[62] In response to this, governments have been compelled to implement a series of policies, which include deregulation of prices, reduction of public expenditure, removal of import quotas, and devaluation of the domestic currency.

In Brazil and Argentina, the implementation of SAPs has had far-reaching and complex implications.[63] Several of these connotations are the focus of my case studies, because these theatre productions were staged at a time when many Argentineans and Brazilians had to acknowledge that the promise of a comprehensive improvement of living conditions and economic development was unfulfilled. These plays depict a social web producing and produced by agents endorsing and profiting from neoliberal politics.

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[59] Antonio Ugalde and Núria Homedes, "Latin America: Capital Accumulation, Health, and the Role of International Organizations," in *Public Sociologies Reader*, ed. Judith Blau and Keri E. Iyall Smith (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 139.

[60] Pamela Sparr, "What is Structural Adjustment?" in *Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment*, ed. Pamela Sparr (London: Zed Books, 1994), 1.

[61] Bob Milward, "What is Structural Adjustment?" in *Structural Adjustment: Theory, Practice and Impacts*, ed. Giles Mohan et al. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 25.

[62] Finn Tarp, *Stabilization and Structural Adjustment: Macroeconomic Framework for Analysing the Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.

[63] For a thoughtful explanation for the preponderance of neoliberalism in Latin America, see Robert N. Gwynne and Cristóbal Kay, "Views from the Periphery: Futures of Neoliberalism in Latin America," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no.1 (2000): 1431-56.

Unintentionally or not, they are products that emerged from the sociopolitical circumstances of pauperization and exclusion.

In the case of Brazil, Presidents Fernando Affonso Collor de Mello's (1990-1992), Itamar Franco's (1992-1995), and Fernando Henrique Cardoso's (1995-2003) administrations formulated a series of measures: an abandonment of protectionism and the promotion of economic liberalization; a commitment to "international insertion" and a desire to avoid marginalization; greater acceptance of US-driven politics; greater efforts to integrate with, participate in, and influence multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the Organization of American States; and the adoption of a more open attitude towards sovereignty.[64] Trade barriers were lowered, subsidies were eliminated, and thirty to forty thousand public employees were dismissed. The opening of the economy was sudden and reckless, and destroyed important sectors of the economy.

In the summer of 2002, plunging investor confidence, a currency that lost 20 percent of its value in a single month, and the prospect of a new government defaulting on the public debt led to a financial crisis, and an urgent request for an IMF loan of thirty billion dollars. The IMF demanded that, in exchange for an initial disbursement of twenty four billion, the new administration had to meet a series of budgetary goals over a period of three years.[65] Given the dire circumstances of the Brazilian economy, all candidates for the presidency in the impending elections acquiesced to these pressures. James K. Galbraith criticized what he called the "Brazilian swindle." "Who benefits?" he writes. " In the first place, private holders of Brazilian assets, who have an opportunity to escape before a severe devaluation. In the second place, foreign bankers, whose loans will receive interest longer

[64] Alexandra Barahona de Brito, "International Dimensions of Democratization: Brazil," in *The International Politics of Democratization: Comparative Perspectives,* ed. Nuno Severiano Teixeira (New York: Routledge, 2008), 123-24.

[65] Richard Peet, *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO* (New York: Zed Books, 2003), 85.

than would otherwise be the case. And in the third place, domestic political forces inside Brazil that oppose growth in public services and social reform."[66]

In Argentina, the military administration after the 1976 coup d'état implemented a series of neoliberal policies, such as trade liberalization and capital market deregulation, that demolished both the working class and the small- and medium-business owners.[67] During President Raúl Alfonsín's freely elected administration (1983-89), the democratic political situation was often threatened, and the macroeconomic situation became worse. The heterodox *Plan Austral* (Southern Plan), whose purpose was to stabilize the economy, fell through and the neoliberal paradigm gained momentum.[68] President Carlos Menem's administration (1989-99) privatized state-owned corporations, particularly public utility companies, and trade barriers were lowered, causing the balance of trade to plunge. Foreign consumer products flooded the market and many local unskilled workers lost their jobs.[69]

Between 1999 and 2001, the government borrowed from the IMF to make payments to banks and international financial interests and, naturally, to service Argentina's spiraling foreign debt.[70] The conditions for the loans were that the Argentine government had to maintain market-oriented economic policies, together with austerity plans and budget deficit reduction. In December 2001, the IMF refused the Argentine government's request to release the disbursement of 1.3 billion dollars; the organization argued that the government had failed to meet the mutually agreed target of zero fiscal deficit. Although the Argentine

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[66] James K. Galbraith, "The Brazilian Swindle and the Larger International Monetary Problem," *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy* 23, no. 1 (2003): 86.

[67] Viviana Patroni, "Disciplining Labour, Producing Poverty: Neoliberal Structural Reforms and the Political Conflict in Argentina," in *Neoliberalism in Crisis, Accumulation, and Rosa Luxemburg's Legacy*, ed. Paul Zarembka and Susanne Soederberg (San Diego, CA: Elsevier, 2004), 97.

[68] Gwynne and Kay, 143.

[69] Damián Pierbattisti, *La privatización de los cuerpos: la construcción de la proactividad neoliberal en el ámbito de las telecomunicaciones, 1991-2001* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2009), 29-30.

[70] Norma Giarracca and Miguel Teubal, "'Que se vayan todos': Neoliberal Collapse and Social Protest in Argentina," in *Good Governance in the Era of Neoliberalism: Conflict and Depolitisation in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa,* ed. Jolle Demmers, Alex E. Fernández Jilberto, and Barbara Hogenboom (New York: Routledge, 2004), 78.

deficits were very small, the IMF demanded a budget surplus in order to prepare for an economic turndown. Without this capital injection, Argentina defaulted on its payment obligations, leading to the largest debt default in history.[71] The government implemented the *corralito* (little animal pen) that restricted money withdrawals from private and public banks.[72] Popular riots in the capital city and the provinces erupted. There was mass looting of food stores and supermarkets. Many people were arrested; thirty-nine people died, mostly because of police brutality.[73] President Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001) resigned, to the ubiquitous popular chant of "¡Que se vayan todos!" (All of them must go). For over a decade, Argentineans had been led to believe they had entered the "First World." The corralito represented the end of the fantasy: Argentina was another victim of neoliberal exploitation.

Violence

> You gringos are always worried about violence done with machine guns and machetes. But there is another kind of violence that you must be aware of, too.… My job was to take care of the *dueño*'s dogs. I gave them meat and bowls of milk, food that I couldn't give my own family. When the dogs were sick, I took them to the veterinarian. When my children were sick, the dueño gave me sympathy, but no medicine as they died.[74]

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[71] Syed Javed Maswood, *International Political Economy and Globalization* (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Publishing, 2008), 110.

[72] Catalina Smulovitz, "Judicialization of Protest in Argentina: The Case of *Corralito*," in *Enforcing the Rule of Law: Social Accountability in the New Latin American Democracies*, ed. Enrique Peruzzotti and Catalina Smulovitz (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 56-58.

[73] Carlos M. Vilas, "Neoliberal Meltdown and Social Protest: Argentina 2001-2002," in *Imperialism, Neoliberalism and Social Struggles in Latin America*, ed. Richard A. Dello Bueno and José Bell Lara (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 119-41.

[74] Charles Clements, *Witness to War* (New York: Bantam, 1984), 247.

The words of a Salvadorean farmer are an indictment of the pervasive blindness to everyday socioeconomic violence—what Johan Galtung calls "structural violence."[75] Although the specifics of the quotidian, of the socioeconomic practices differ through space and time, physical pain is part of the history of the body and, therefore, of human history. The impulse to freedom from oppression seems as implacable as the struggle for survival.

Marc Pilisuk and Joanne Zazzi identify seven premises of a theory of contemporary violent conflict in the neoliberal paradigm.[76] Their first claim is that sets of beliefs and values provide an ideological framework for the rationalization of violence. Second, networks of elites and military power behave in their interest without fear of countervailing forces. Third, multinational corporations with the support of government actions endeavor to extract as much capital from local communities as possible. Fourth, and closely connected to the aforementioned, local populations may be evicted or displaced from their land, and deprived of their means of subsistence. Fifth, powerful strategists at the service of the elite, such as intellectual whose work is funded by corporate grants or think-tank endowments, supply the educated justification for the protection of corporate interests. These strategies require the construction of difference; this is the sixth premise, namely the creation of enemies or scapegoats. Finally, the seventh axiom is the cyclical continuation of violence: "the pursuit of economic interests through suppression of dissent, displacement, and killing leads to a cycle of violence in which retribution is met with further retaliation."[77]

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[75] "Structural violence divides into *political*, *repressive* and *economic*, *exploitative*; supported by structural *penetration*, *segmentation*, *fragmentation* and *marginalization*." To this, Philippe Bourgois adds that structural violence implies social inequality "ranging from exploitative international terms of trade to abusive local working condisionts and high infant mortality rates." Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 31; Philippe Bourgois, "The Continuum of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador", in *Violence in War and Peace*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 426.

[76] Marc Pilisuk and Joanne Zazzi, "Toward a Psychosocial Theory of Military and Economic Violence in the Era of Globalization," *Journal of Social Issues* 62, no. 1 (2006): 41-62.

[77] Ibid., 51.

These seven propositions become evident in the three plays I analyze. In studying these productions, Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco*, José María Muscari's *Shangay té verde en 8 escenas*, and Newton Moreno's *A refeição*, I intend to show how the consumption of the body is the crux of the circuits of violence under the auspices of neoliberal doctrine. I activate the five conceptual frames (body, work, consumption, exploitation, and violence) to elucidate certain modes of neoliberal commodity exchange represented onstage and taking place in the field of theatre production and marketing in certain contemporary economies. These three performances offer complex examples of commodity circulation based on neoliberal exploitation.

There are historical, political, and dramaturgical differences between the plays. Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco* is an earlier theatrical production, written by a well-established, consecrated playwright. Gambaro has been writing drama and prose for over forty years, and her considerable prestige as a playwright derives from a dramatic body of work that broke new ground in the sixties. Her œuvre bears great cultural capital in the field of theatrical and literary production. As an inherently political writer, she has written works engaging Argentina's violent and turbulent history at different moments in time. Gambaro's work differs from the other two works in several ways. First, her writing style in the play I analyze is focused on language. *Es necesario entender un poco* exemplifies her ongoing concern with the aesthetics of language. Given that Gambaro writes in various genres, it is not surprising that her work is more often than not studied in terms of its literary characteristics; the diverse registers of discourse she displays in her writing make these features particularly intriguing.[78] Scholars who concentrate on Gambaro's œuvre are more often than not based in literature departments. In fact, Judith Milhous's and Robert Hume's assertion that "well over

[78] See Francine Masiello, *The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Clara Ibarzábal, "Detrás de las palabras perdidas: 'Es necesario entender un poco,'" *La revista del CCC*, no. 2 (2008), n. p., accessed April 30, 2009, http://www.centrocultural.coop/revista/articulo/93/.

90 percent of the criticism of plays published today is … written as though plays should be treated as plays" seems rather apt.[79] Milhous and Hume claim that much scholarship is invested in studying plays as autonomous texts, rather than works for performance. I cannot attest to the accuracy of the figure they quote with regards to the scholarship on Gambaro at large, but it seems plausible when reading the limited academic work that examines *Es necesario entender un poco*. Most studies concentrate on language, and while they may allude to the text's purpose (to be staged), they focus on the words on the page for the most part.[80] Given the subjects of the play—literary works, translation, miscomprehension—this attentiveness to the construction and effects of language is important, but there is the risk of overestimating the significance of language within the larger context of stageability.

I have based my analysis of Gambaro's work on both the text and a rather poor videorecording of a live performance. My examination of *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas* and *A refeição* builds more strongly on actual performance, for I was present during at least one performance (in the case of *Shangay*, two performances) of these plays. In these two cases, I draw attention to the choices made in production because I believe the decisions made by the director and performers may underscore or reveal cultural assumptions regarding the subject of the play. Milhous and Hume contend that "dramatic criticism comprises two basic activities: analysis of the script (production analysis) and analysis of actual performance of the script (performance analysis)."[81] Like many scholars' work, my study encompasses both approaches, yet given my attention to the productions I saw, there

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[79] Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Producible Interpretation: Eight English Plays 1675-1707* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 5.

[80] Stéphanie Urdician, "Un engagement en écho: Le *Marat/Sade* de Peter Weiss," in *Itinéraires: Mélanges offerts à Évelyne Martin-Hernandez*, ed. Danielle Corrado and Viviane Alary (Clermont-Ferrand, France: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), 193-203; Miguel Angel Giella, "Un mundo a la deriva. A propósito de *Es necesario entender un poco*," in *El teatro y su crítica*, ed. Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1999), 169-74; Alessandra Maria Dutra dos Santos, "Griselda Gambaro e a problemática das fronteiras em *Es necesario entender un poco*," *Aletria: Revista de Estudos de Literatura* 9 (2002): 149-53.

[81] Milhous and Hume, 33.

is an irresistible propensity toward performance analysis. I propose possible interpretations of the works based on the performance and the script, in a specific sociohistorical context. My analysis can only make sense insofar as the plays were staged in a particular place, at a particular time, and by a particular cast. My goal is not to ascertain what reaction the productions try to elicit from the audience or whether they succeed in their apparent objectives, but rather I am more interested in explicating what the performances generated, the ways in which they did it (regardless of their intention), and under what conditions they did it.

In contrast to *Es necesario*, *Shangay* and *A refeição* are examples of a newer wave of theatre produced by a younger generation of practitioners. The subject matters, themes, performance imagery and sound, and, quite explicitly in *Shangay*'s case, milieu, seem to fit into a twenty-first-century theatrical aesthetic. Both José María Muscari and Newton Moreno are young dramatists/directors/actors whose careers truly unfolded after the dictatorial regimes fell in their respective countries. Whereas Gambaro's contribution to the stage is mostly literary,[82] these younger theatre workers take part in their productions in many ways. For example, both of them are openly gay and their sexual identity explicitly informs their engagement with the theatrical production. Conversely, Gambaro's work often evinces certain heteronormative assumptions. Muscari and Newton's works push the boundaries of a more traditional theatrical *bienséance*. Nudity, profanity, eroticism, sex, and brutal physical violence appear in different permutations. In addition, Muscari's and Newton's personal histories unfolded at the same time as the political objectives of the 1968 generation failed to materialize and neoliberalism flourished. There is no "prior to neoliberal economics" for either of them, except possibly as an intellectual construct.

[82] In 1999, Gambaro said she attended rehearsals of her plays. In 2008, she claimed that she was willing to give feedback on the performances, if so allowed. From her assertion, it seems that it was seldom the case. Reina Roffé, "Entrevista a Griselda Gambaro," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 588 (1999): 112; Griselda Gambaro, "Desconfío de tanta aprobación," interview by Olga Cosentino, *Revista Ñ*, June 28, 2008.

The performances discussed in this dissertation evince a non-metaphorical and historical specificity inasmuch as they render the present-day socioeconomic system as manifested in the human body. In fact, it is through that very materialization of the social activities of production and consumption that the impact of neoliberal mechanisms of oppression becomes explicit. I identify in these plays a portrayal of the neoliberal consumption of bodies in different contexts after the fall of the late twentieth-century military dictatorships. Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco,* the focus of the first chapter, was staged in 1995 during President Carlos Menem's neoliberal administration. The piece traces the journey of a Chinese widower called Hue from China to France in the eighteenth century, the physical and psychic violence he endures, and his traumatic return to Asia. In light of the work's depiction of a clash of cultures, cultural imperialism, and hostile Othering, I propose a reading of Gambaro's play within the context of Menemist Argentina. I examine the cultural, political, and economic negotiations that operated in the construction and articulation of Otherness in support of the Argentine government's neoliberal program through the lens of Fernando Coronil's influential and provocative theory of Occidentalism. In Gambaro's Hue—a broken man with a crippled body bearing the weight of an exploitative system of production—there is an incorporation of neoliberalism through a complex of legal, economic, and social institutions and praxis.

The racialization of Hue's body and language delineates a sociopolitical system of discipline—to use Foucault's term—and economic exploitation impinging on corporeal identities and capabilities. The consumption of his bodily and cultural capital reveals the neoliberal efficiency of Othering. Thomas Lemke contends that "neoliberal practices are not necessarily instable [*sic*] or in crisis when they rely on increasing social cleavages or relate to an incoherent political program.… On the contrary, relinquishing social securities and

political rights might well prove to be its raison d'être."[83] The energies of neoliberalism require and bring about the consolidation of institutions that reify class difference.

In the second chapter, "Eating Entertainment: Modes of Consumption in *Shangay,*" I posit a series of biological implications of labor exploitation through the lens of Marx's theories of capital accumulation and the consumption of labor power. The concept of food is a critical tool to explain the socioeconomic relations produced and developed in the performance space and at the theatrical event. By reading Marx in terms of biological consumption, I argue that the examination of the modes of ingestion, consumption, devouring, and physiological expenditure of food suggests ways to elucidate the incorporation of neoliberalism into the bodies of all those who participate in the production and consumption of theatre.

This chapter studies simultaneous acts of consumption and devouring involved in *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas*. In addition to explicating the economics of Muscari's artistic consecration, I propose a look at the setting and the environment of the staging, analyzing its visual and sound qualities to generate a milieu where different planes of consumption occur. The location of the theatre in Buenos Aires critically affects the interpretation—and the consumption—of the performance. Staged at a *teatro-bar* (theatre-bar) in the fashionable Palermo Hollywood neighborhood in Buenos Aires, the play is set in an "Oriental" restaurant. In this class-produced environment, the event reproduces different systems of commodity consumption. Comprised of Oriental trinkets and music, Muscari's scenography ironically foregrounds the Orientalism of a segment of Buenos Aires's bourgeoisie. I examine the juxtaposition of mass-produced material properties onstage and the Orientalist portrayal of Asian people and culture, in order to posit that the visual and aural excess of commercial goods contributes to the commodification of the human being.

[83] Thomas Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique," *Rethinking Marx* 14, no. 3 (2002): 57.

The subject of the final chapter presents the end of an intellectual trajectory, an examination of the implications of neoliberal consumption in terms of metaphors and material embodiment. In this section, the most concrete and physicalized example of capitalist consumption takes place: anthropophagy. In its three scenes, Brazilian playwright Newton Moreno's *A refeição* displays different instances of cannibalism. In these aberrant actions, the body appears as the material of social struggles. Flesh becomes food in a framework shaped by economies of emotion and empathy.

Although all three scenes receive scrutiny, the chapter centers on the second scene. In it, the voracious consumption of a beggar's flesh most overtly highlights class difference and the mechanics of the capitalist mode of production. By comparing the actual workers' experience and the theatrical representation of abject bodies, I draw attention to the manner whereby the material reality of labor exploitation reveals itself. The metaphor of capitalist cannibalism acquires another meaning, for it ceases to be a trope. As the playwright argues, "O ato canibal explode questões e vontades presas dentro de cada um que nunca foram reveladas." (The cannibalistic act detonates issues and desires, trapped within everyone, that were never revealed.)[84] The phrase describes in simple and plain language what concretely takes place in neoliberal circuits of commodity production and exchange. Consumption and devouring constitute the inherent processes of capital reproduction, despite all attempts at concealment and disavowal of the fact. Government agents, private actors, and international organizations invest great power and resources to tout economic efficiency, optimization, and innovation, purportedly attainable only via the application of neoliberal guidelines and modus operandi.

To what extent can this dissertation contribute to the field of theatre studies at large? Throughout this work, the methodological premises vary somewhat from case study to case

[84] Newton Moreno, "*Como se preparou esta REFEIÇÃO,*" (unpublished manuscript, 2005), Microsoft Word file (my translation).

study. This choice serves a deliberate purpose. The structure of the dissertation underlines the marked particularity of performances originating and responding to local actions, connections, and positions—a veritable entanglement in the socioeconomic network of neoliberalism. Bodies are situated in sociohistorical spaces of interrelated social actors, operating in complex and entwined networks.[85] There are innumerable factors involved in the process of embodiment. Sensual, lived bodies develop through praxis in the context of everyday social relations; these embodied practices also activate the production of the lived world. Due to the multiple dynamics operating simultaneously, neither a single focus nor a single theory helps to explicate creative production. A constantly evolving process of production is not simply a case of embodiment of habitus—though it is that, too. Nor is it strictly a case of discursive construction, yet that also plays into it. Simultaneously, biological processes create, reproduce, and exhaust human material constitutions. These formations take shape concurrently and in irreducibly dialectical modes.

The theoretical apparatus deployed establishes criteria of analysis that may extend to other areas of theatre history. To contribute to the greater scholarly discourse and activity, I suggest different approaches to the study of capitalist consumption encroaching upon the worker and, in particular, upon the body producing and produced through labor. Because of the concrete nature of the body shaped and shaping social relations, a historical materialist study of its construction and consumption can reveal the interests and behaviors of social agents. I hope that applications of these analytical lines of thought elicit innovative conversations directed to the questioning of assumptions concerning the nature and production of (theatre) workers' bodies.

Finally, I posit that Latin American political theatre tends to be (myopically) considered in relation to endogenous political circumstances. However, these case studies

[85] Bryan S. Turner, "An Outline of a General Sociology of the Body," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 494.

suggest that Argentine and Brazilian performance industries operate within a national history, and as part of a global sociopolitical, economic, and cultural system. In very different ways, the performances elicit reflection and scrutiny over the alleged advantages and ghastly consequences of widespread neoliberalism in the Southern Cone. By examining the notions of consumption and devouring in this light, I put forward a critical apparatus that may apply to the examination of other performance practices developed in a neoliberal global economy.

Chapter 1

Bearing the Face in Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco*

Los hermanos sean unidos,
porque esa es la ley primera;
tengan unión verdadera
en cualquier tiempo que sea,
porque si entre ellos se pelean
los devoran los de ajuera.
(The brothers and sisters must be united
Because that is the first law.
They must be truly united
In any and all times
Because, if they fight among themselves,
They will be devoured by the outsiders.)[1]

In a land of immigrants, what does it mean to be an outsider? How is Otherness constructed? Furthermore, in the relationship between observed-other and observer-self, what does the process of Othering reflect about the self? Precisely how do rhetorical and material social practices contribute to the self-definition of purportedly native Argentineans vis-à-vis the immigrant Other? Written and staged in 1995 at the Sala Casacuberta of the Teatro Municipal General San Martín, Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco* (It is

[1] José Hernández, *Martín Fierro* (Madrid: Castalia, 1994), lines 4691-96. Translation in Davydd J. Greenwood, "Feminism and Action Research: Is 'Resistance' Possible?," in *Traveling Companions: Feminism, Teaching, and Action Research*, ed. Mary Brydon-Miller, Patricia Maguire, and Alice McIntyre (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 167.

necessary to understand a little) offers an opportunity to address these crucial questions.[2] The play departs from the playwright's earlier dramatic pieces that alluded, to a greater or lesser extent, to violence and repression instituted by de facto military governments. Instead, *Es necesario entender un poco* illustrates another sort of domination. It allows an interrogation of the newly acquired "democratic freedom," and the inequity of the neoliberal program implemented by President Carlos Menem and his cabinet of technocrats in the 1990s, in light of the sizeable section of the population who was disenfranchised as a result of the cultivation of these economic principles. The pervasive government-sanctioned language of exclusion pushed for divides not only among classes but also along the lines of ethnic and national origin, a practice we can trace back to the late nineteenth century.

The epigraph is an excerpt from the epic poem *Martín Fierro*. José Hernández's work is a prime example of the *gauchesca* genre.[3] Conspicuously due to nineteenth-century Argentine literary men's extolments, most particularly those expressed by Ricardo Rojas and Leopoldo Lugones, the epic became a cultural symbol of Argentine national identity—a stature that still exists. The gauchesca reproduced binaries of inclusion and exclusion that bolstered the ideology of the plutocratic Nationalist government in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Josefina Ludmer argues, *Martín Fierro* reveals the "existence of two separate juridical orders … and demonstrat[es] how one of the two, applied in a differential mode, can place the other outside the law."[4] The gauchesca "combined and alternated

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[2] Griselda Gambaro, *Es necesario entender un poco*, in *Teatro 6: Atando cabos, La casa sin sosiego, Es necesario entender un poco* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Flor, 1996), 60-120. Henceforth, the play will be cited in text. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

[3] The gauchesca was a literary movement allegedly representing the language and lifestyle of the gauchos. Its highest point was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[4] Josefina Ludmer, "The Gaucho Genre," in *Discovery to Modernism*, ed. Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2:628.

challenge and lament in an effort to represent another contradictory pact, this time with a newly arrived 'other:' the immigrant."[5]

Over a century later, a binary social arrangement is still alive. This chapter's Argentine case study connects constructions of Otherness with the power imbalance implicit in a neoliberal political economy. My intention is to read *Es necesario entender un poco* as a work emanating from a network of economic, political, and cultural activity activated within a particular democratic regime, and its economic result—Menemist neoliberalism. I argue that the play links discursive formations of Othering to the animation of ideological strategies endorsing the Argentine government's neoliberal program during the nineties. The neoliberal establishment exploited the Argentine social construction of an Oriental Other; in the play, Gambaro questions the validity of such presumptions as she concentrates on peremptory orders of identity.

After providing a synopsis of the plot of the play, I begin the chapter by offering a schematic picture of an embryonic economic liberalism in Argentina in the nineteenth century and its virulent corollary: late twentieth-century neoliberalism. What follows is the examination of an array of cultural representations of Asians in mass media. This analysis unmasks the series of social assumptions that inform the audience's reception of the visual and linguistic features of the production, and the spectators' emotional and intellectual reactions to Gambaro's depiction of violence. I contend that the dramatist illustrates violence in different arenas—most conspicuously, though not exclusively, in the linguistic and religious fields—to expose patterns of socioeconomic oppression. Through a close reading of written and performed text, I show how these vehement representations operate linguistically as well as corporeally. Gambaro shrewdly makes the human body conspicuous, thus portraying the materialization of Othering onstage in order to draw

[5] Ibid., 619.

attention to—and critique—a categorization of social agents based on cultural and phenotypical difference. The play may be better understood when it is juxtaposed to contemporary systems of ethnic discrimination deploying racialized rhetoric and practices. Consequently, I provide a sociological history of discrimination and exploitation in the Americas, most particularly in Argentina, which may help explain how the Menemist administration could in fact build a sociopolitical apparatus to buttress its neoliberal agenda.

The theatrical epitome of exploitation occurs when the protagonist is deprived of his agency. Gambaro's play bares the artificially devised criteria abetting the reification of social and class differences in a dominant mode that, as Raymond Williams describes, is consciously selective and organized.[6] I view these schemes as endorsements of the legislation, dehumanization, and subsequent commodification of the human body inherent in a capitalist mode of production. The conclusion of the chapter suggests alternative discourses of liberation. Taking into consideration Gambaro's critique of systems of alienation, I claim that the play may also propose renewed avenues of resistance against dominant neoliberal forces in a coordinated and collective oppositional effort.

The exaltation of neoliberal ideology by multinational corporations, international organizations (such as the Bretton Woods Organizations),[7] and participants in international economic forums (the best-known taking place annually at Davos, Switzerland) and in the G-7,[8] calls for a body of discursive practices that champion its economic efficiency and ostensible potential for egalitarian prosperity. Sociologists Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt

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[6] Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," in *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, 2005), 43.

[7] The Bretton Woods Organizations are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. They were founded in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in 1944.

[8] The G-7 is the annual meeting of finance ministers of the seven most industrialized countries: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States, and Canada.

posit that discourse is a process whereas ideology is an effect.[9] If the production of discourse yields an ideological effect whereby dominating and subordinate positions are established and refined, the deployment of discursive violence warrants some attention. An examination of contemporary cultural artifacts responding to explicit sociopoliticoeconomic arrangements necessitates at least a tangential engagement with discursive practices, since they impinge on and impel the ideological enshrinement of neoliberalism.[10] Discursive formations determine the constitution of social subjects, subjectivities and identities, their relations, and their habitus within the context of praxis.[11] Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham contend that what is crucial is to concentrate on *ideological* discourses containing "forms of signification that are incorporated into lived experience where the basic mechanism of incorporation is one whereby sectional or specific interests are represented as universal interests."[12] It is important to analyze forms of discursive practices. However, it is even more imperative to concentrate on the social manifestation of capital accumulation they enable and produce by animating a language that naturalizes (class) difference.

Democracy is one of the most explicit of cases of ideological discourse formation. Perry Anderson adduces that the election of representative bodies of the political state, presented as the sovereign popular expression, merely masks inequity in civil society with the juridical equality between exploiters and exploited by alleging they are equal in the state. "This separation [of the masses from the work of Parliament] is then constantly presented and represented to the masses as the ultimate incarnation of liberty: 'democracy' as the

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[9] Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology…," *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (1993): 496.

[10] The term "ideology" is laden: for a complex study, see Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1994); David Hawkes, *Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2003). For a nuanced and persuasive examination of connections between discourse and ideology from a sociological perspective, refer to Purvis and Hunt, 473-99.

[11] Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham, *Foucault and Law: Towards a Sociology of Law as Governance* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 7.

[12] Purvis and Hunt, 497.

terminal point of history."[13] Anderson's observations seem appropriate to explain Argentine recent politics. After years of dictatorship, Argentina's return to democracy in 1983 was described as a panacea. Presidential candidate and later President Raúl Alfonsín of the *Unión Cívica Radical* declaimed a slogan during the campaign for the 1983 elections (the first democratic election since 1973): "Con la democracia se come, se cura, y se educa." (With democracy one eats, one is cured, and one is educated.)[14] The "defense of democracy" on the political stage propped the planning and execution of state policies and plans. In 1989, Carlos Menem's campaign trope was of an economic nature; his purported objective was to launch a "revolución productiva" (productive revolution) that would not impose hardships on the working or middle classes.[15] Once in power, however, his policies mutated from populist to neoliberal, at least from the electorate's point of view.[16] Thereafter, the administration deployed another discursive arsenal, this time aimed at validating a neoliberal economic program. It became flagrantly apparent that behind the smoke and mirrors of neoliberalism a "savage capitalism" was making a killing.[17]

If there is any interest in imagining how the world might be different, then studying how it came to be is of utmost importance. Fernando Coronil astutely questions the practicality of holding on to rigid demarcations of scholarly approaches when concentrating

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[13] Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* 100 (1976): 28.

[14] For an analysis of Alfonsín's discursive practices, see Myriam Southwell, "'Con la democracia se come, se cura y se educa…' Disputas en torno a la transición y a las posibilidades de una educación democrática," in *La Argentina democrática: los años y los libros*, ed. Antonio Camou, María Cristina Tortti, and Aníbal Viguera (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2007), 307-44; Gerardo Aboy Carlés, *Las dos fronteras de la democracia argentina: La reformulación de las identidades políticas de Alfonsín a Menem* (Rosario, Argentina: Homo Sapiens, 2001).

[15] Susan Carol Stokes, *Mandates and Democracy: Neoliberalism by Surprise in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 45.

[16] A full year before the election, Menem was already meeting with the most influential and powerful businesspeople in the country, such as leading managers of the multinational Bunge y Born and the head of Bridas, Carlos Bulgheroni. This leads Stokes to believe that the seeds for austerity and pro-market policies were sown well before Menem took office. Ibid., 71.

[17] The expression "savage capitalism" became prevalent in discussions of the effects of capitalism after Pope John Paul II uttered it in the interview "Io, il Papa tra l'Ovest e l'Est," by Jan Gawronski, *La Stampa*, November 2, 1993.

on globally rife neoliberalism. Besides disturbing geographical and political spheres, contemporary globalization complicates "disciplinary protocols and theoretical categories, rendering obsolete approaches polarized in terms of oppositions between the material and the discursive, political economy and culture."[18] Raymond Williams advocates the analysis of "determination by multiple factors."[19] In his breakdown of overdetermination in Marxist theory, he asserts, "The concept … is more useful than any other as a way of understanding historically lived situations and the authentic complexities of practice."[20] As Peter Gay contends, "Overdetermination is in fact nothing more than the sensible recognition that a variety of causes—a variety, not infinity—enters into the making of all historical events, and that each ingredient in historical experience can be counted on to have a variety—not infinity—of functions."[21] Consequently, I bring together multiple Argentine arenas of social engagement to grasp the complex relation between the play as a cultural artifact and the milieu where it percolates. In the dialectics of politics and culture, *Es necesario entender un poco* relates to and is shaped by the larger system of circulation, evincing a transformative behavior—"creativity"[22]—that arises from the social flows and contradictions of Menemist neoliberalism.

Although responding to the Argentine state of affairs, Gambaro found the idea for the work in a foreign source. She explains in her introductory remarks to the play script that the idea for the plot originated in a true story (60). She acknowledges not being able to recall

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[18] Fernando Coronil, "Towards a Critique of Globalcentrism: Speculations on Capitalism's Nature," in *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 63-87. Coronil seems to display a Foucauldian perspective on this matter. Foucault seeks "to detect the changes which affect the discursive formations *themselves*: (a) the displacement of boundaries which define the field of possible objects." Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 56. Coronil, however, utilizes a materialist perspective by focusing on concrete economic production systems.

[19] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 83.

[20] Ibid., 88.

[21] Peter Gay, *Freud For Historians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 187.

[22] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 54.

the name of the author in whose book she read this tale.[23] Moreover, the story shook her so much that she didn't finish reading the book.[24] The plot appears to be based on the life of John Hu, hired in 1720 by Jesuit priest Jean François Foucquet as scribe under a five-year contract. [25] Like Hue, John Hu was absolutely dependent on Foucquet for communication. The Chinese man's behavior turned increasingly erratic, first during the trip and afterwards in Europe. He became sullen, stopped copying any texts for Foucquet, and even vanished for a week. In the end, the Jesuit had Hu committed in the asylum at the hospital of Charenton. The hospital fees remained unpaid, so Hu became a charity case. In 1725, after a two-year imprisonment at Charenton, Hu was aided by another Jesuit who had known him in Canton and who disliked Foucquet. The cleric paid for his passage to China. Despite Hu's failure to perform his job as a scribe, he complained to the head of the Propaganda house in Canton. Eventually, he was compensated.[26]

Gambaro's play is inspired by this story. Its main character Hue, a Chinese widower, agrees to travel to France with a Catholic priest in order to help him translate the *I Ching* and the other four thousand books that the cleric is bringing back to Europe. Divided in ten scenes, the play follows Hue's journey from China to France, and his laborious return to Asia. The scenes depict an increasing degree of cultural and physical violence against Hue. From the outset, Hue's contribution to the priest's project seems questionable because he

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[23] Historian Jonathan Spence's book addresses the story in very narrative fashion. It is plausible that this was the book Gambaro was reading but it does not seem to be available in Spanish—though it is available in German and Italian. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Question of Hu* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988). Clara Ibarzábal alleges that this was the book to which Gambaro referred. Such statement assumes Gambaro read it in a foreign language. This is not the only book available that tells Hu's story, however. Clara Ibarzábal, "Detrás de las palabras perdidas: 'Es necesario entender un poco,'" *La revista del CCC* 4, no. 2 (2008): n. p., accessed April 30, 2009, http://www.centrocultural.coop/revista/articulo/93/.

[24] Laura Cilento, "'Es necesario entender un poco' de Griselda Gambaro: puesta en forma de la internacionalidad," in *Poéticas argentinas del siglo XX (Literatura y teatro),* ed. Jorge Dubatti (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1998), 379.

[25] David E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 80-81. Cécile Leung contends that Hu was invited by Foucquet. Cécile Leung, *Etienne Fourmont* (Leuven, Netherlands: Leuven University Press, 2002), 151.

[26] Mungello, 80-81.

speaks Chinese only, a fact of which the priest is well aware. During the seven-month journey to Europe, the main character realizes that the people around him do not speak his language. Once in France, the priest shows no patience for Hue's lack of understanding and orders the coach driver to whip him into submission in order to continue the journey to the priest's home. Perceiving Hue's confusion, the priest urges him not to try to understand everything at once—"ya entenderás" (in time you will understand) (75). But he never does. People around him, ignorant of his language, believe Hue is crazy. When the priest leaves Hue under his attendants' care, they have him committed to Charenton asylum. There, Hue meets the Marquis de Sade, who is searching for actors to stage a version of the assassination of Marat, and Carlota (Charlotte Corday). Thus, Gambaro's play alludes to Peter Weiss's *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* (most commonly referred to as *Marat/Sade*).[27] Only after six years of confinement does the priest facilitate Hue's return to China, as promised.

Drawing from this experience, the play establishes a binary of two cultures that in the crudest way may be characterized as East and West. It suggests the dichotomous categorization that underscores a sociohistorical disparity by bringing into play an "Oriental Other" subjected to what Fernando Coronil calls "Occidentalism."[28] Edward Said's work on Orientalism, Coronil argues, focuses on the representations of the "Orient" by "the West," to a great extent assuming "the West" somewhat unproblematically. Rather than looking through the lens of Orientalism, which concentrates on the shortcomings of the West's representations of the Orient, an analysis of Occidentalist practices addresses the negotiation

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[27] Peter Weiss, *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung Jean Paul Marats dargestellt durch die Schauspielgruppe des Hospizes zu Charenton unter Anleitung des Herrn de Sade* [The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat As Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade] (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1963).

[28] Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (1996): 56.

between colonizer and colonized. It focuses on the relational loci, elucidating the construction of the Other always in terms of the self—the observer—where the Other and the self engage in asymmetrical power relations.[29] "By 'Occidentalism,'" Coronil claims,

> I refer to the ensemble of representational practices that participate in the production of conceptions of the world, which (1) separate the world's components into bounded units; (2) disaggregate their relational histories; (3) turn difference into hierarchy; (4) naturalize these representations; and thus (5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations.[30]

Said recognizes that the cornerstone link between the "Orient" and "Occident" is power inequality. All the same, unlike Said, who alleges that "Orient" and "Occident" "support and to an extent reflect each other,"[31] Coronil arranges a theoretical framework to shift the attention from the observed to the relationship between parties. Thus, he avoids the Other's reification as an object of study. The study of Occidentalist practices necessitates a thorough analysis of the paradigm of representation that generates these "bounded units."

Instead of making claims on the author's intentionality, which at best would be conjectural, I suggest ways to look at a cultural artifact produced against and within a system of discursive practices generated by the government and the once prosperous—and now pauperized—middle class in the 1990s, which sought to meld class and ethnic identification into crude and reductive categories. Insofar as "autochthony can best be studied as a trope without a substance of its own," as Peter Geschiere and Francis Nyamnjoh ar, discourses on claiming a native origin derive from the dialectical tensions of

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 56-57.

[31] Edward Said, introduction to *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 5.

globalization.[32] The inherent contradictions and the concomitant sociopolitical materializations of the capitalist system inform the animation of certain representations. According to Coronil, capital, after all, subjects "all realms under its power to ever more abstract forms of control."[33] This chapter's project is to account for the Occidentalist operations and the economy of cultural dominance—rooted in violence and consumption—illustrated in the play and, more importantly, to locate them within a historicized social context in Argentina, whose origins can in part be traced to the birth of the Argentine nation-state.

The Argentine nineteenth century witnessed the development of two, almost simultaneous phenomena. Both modernization—in this case, the rapid development of industry and the construction and expansion of infrastructural assets underwritten by foreign capital—and the huge waves of mostly European immigrants arriving in Argentina generated public rhetoric based on concepts of citizenship, national origins, and/or ethnic practices.[34] The economic, political, and ethnic variables rapidly reconfigured the Argentine nation. The public discourse that surfaced at the turn of the century conflated modernization and immigration as two inseparable developments. The new methods of accruing wealth through speculation or through intermediary services (jointly characterized as "business") challenged the traditional methods of production of tangible goods. Many Argentines, nonetheless, attributed the new economic operations not to the onslaught of global market forces and the growing dependence on foreign capital but to the influence of the immigrant. In the 1880s, Argentina attracted enormous flows of capital investments. At one point, 40

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[32] Peter Geschiere and Francis Nyamnjoh, "Capitalism and Autochthony: The Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging," in *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 184.

[33] Fernando Coronil, "Toward a Critique," 65.

[34] For a study of Argentine immigration and modernization in the nineteenth century, see Gino Germani, "Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 2, no. 11 (1966): 165-82.

percent of British savings invested overseas was infused into the Argentine economy. European investors proffered extensive loans through the purchase of an array of bonds traded in Berlin and London.[35] The Argentine foreign debt increased from ten million in 1880 to fifty million pounds in 1890.[36] President Miguel Juárez Celman's inflationary policies generated great distrust among foreign investors; as a result, the stream of foreign investment came to an abrupt halt.[37] Juárez Celman abrogated travel subsidies to almost all immigrant workers who were purportedly detrimental to prosperity.[38] Argentine intellectuals blamed foreign residents for the damaging effects of modernization. Industrialization, capitalist enterprise, and issues of citizenship, of ethnicity, and of class blended into an amalgamation of ill-defined critique of the immigrant sector: ostensibly the culprit of the national economic backlash.

Almost a century later, during the 1970s military dictatorship, the beginnings of neoliberal economic policies took root. The de facto government instituted commercial guidelines that opened national borders to foreign imports. In allowing liberal importation of commodities, the government ruthlessly crippled a national process of industrialization that had relied on import-substitution policies.[39] In addition, the administration ended price controls and imposed wage controls, increased taxes, and renegotiated the foreign debt in response to the International Monetary Fund's insistence. Although the Gross National

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[35] Michael Pettis, *The Volatility Machine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 82.

[36] Rodolfo Puiggrós, *Pueblo y oligarquía* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2006), 101.

[37] The Bank of England had to rescue Baring Brothers, whose balance sheet included several million pounds in Argentine securities, to forestall the collapse of the English banking system. Baring Brothers, in short, was too big to fail. Pettis, 83.

[38] Juárez Celman's administration subsidized passages for immigrating workers. Immigrants would repay the government once they find work in Argentina. A similar policy was implemented by the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Fernando Devoto, *Historia de los italianos en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2008), 104; Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *"Facundo" and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 144.

[39] Eduardo E. Domenech and María José Magliano, "Migración e inmigrantes en la Argentina reciente: Políticas y discursos de exclusión/inclusión," in *Pobreza, exclusión social y discriminación étnico-racial en América Latina y el Caribe*, ed. María del Carmen Zabala Argüelles (Bogota: Siglo del Hombre Editores and CLACSO, 2008), 425.

Product and manufacturing rates increased significantly in 1979, by 1981 Minister of the Economy José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz's ("probably the first and most brilliant of the 'Chicago Boys'"[40]) neoliberal strategies yielded dismal results.[41] In 1982, newly appointed president General Leopoldo Galtieri declared war on Great Britain for the recovery of the Malvinas Islands to deflect attention from the economic crisis.

In the 1983 elections, Raúl Alfonsín defeated the Peronist candidate Ítalo Argentino Luder with 51.75 percent of the votes.[42] During Alfonsín's presidency, poverty worsened. In the nineteen districts surrounding the city of Buenos Aires,[43] which constitute the country's industrial core, almost 45 percent of the population was deemed to live in poverty. Of these poor, almost 70 percent were considered pauperized: new "paupers" were working-class or formerly middle-class families that, because of the prolonged economic slump, had been pushed into a degree of poverty hardly differentiable from structural poverty.[44] The failure of the economic *Plan Primavera* (Spring Plan), the inability to meet international financial obligations, the depreciation of the currency and ensuing hyperinflation, and the subsequent social unrest led to Alfonsín's resignation and an early call for elections in 1989.

During the 1990s, years of profound economic turbulence, the Menemist government deployed, at the insistence of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other international forces, a series of policies aiming at a structural adjustment of the economy (SAPs). Under President Menem, the Argentine executive branch of power systematized

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[40] The "Chicago Boys" are free-market economists trained at the University of Chicago, inspired by Milton Friedman. They were particularly influential during Gen. Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile. They also impinged upon the Argentine military junta. Eduardo Rosenzvaig, "Neoliberalism: Economic Philosophy of Postmodern Demolition," trans. Ronaldo Munck, *Latin American Perspectives* 24, no. 6 (1997): 60.

[41] Gary W. Wynia, "Argentina: The Frustration of Ungovernability," in *Politics, Policies, and Economic Development in Latin America*, ed. Robert G. Wesson (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), 30.

[42] Laura Tedesco, *Democracy in Argentina: Hope and Disillusionment* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 54.

[43] Unless otherwise specified, the appellation Buenos Aires refers to the capital city and not to the neighboring province of Buenos Aires.

[44] William C. Smith, "State, Market, and Neoliberalism in Post-Transition Argentina: The Menem Experiment," *Journal of Interamerican Studies & World Affairs* 33, no. 4 (1991): 45-82.

another set of stratagems to shift scrutiny away from the failures of neoliberalism. In order to justify the economic devastation of a very large and vulnerable sector of the population, the Menemist strategies entailed the articulation of discursive maneuvers that would support and ultimately rationalize economic measures that rendered everyone worse off or downright destitute—everyone, that is, except the very rich and privileged.[45] In its embrace of neoliberal globalization, the administration introduced a policy that claimed that an economic blast-off would unify society. However, to achieve its goal it had to exploit asymmetrical social relations with the aim of constructing these social affiliations. So rather than unify, the administration reaffirmed a "fractured world sharply divided by reconfigured relations of domination."[46]

The insidious discourse deployed in the public arena set an impoverished middle class against the already-strangled lower classes, forging chasms not only between classes but also along the lines of ethnic and national origin. The Argentine administration carried out a deleterious course of action, not unlike the anti-immigration propaganda in the nineteenth century. Sadly, these measures exacerbated social antagonisms. Rampant unemployment rates and low wages among the labor force produced racialized anxieties. The administration sought support for its policies by displaying and endorsing a century-old

[45] "La realidad desmintió la promesa de superar por medio del globalizado 'mercado libre' la crisis de los años 80, produciéndose el deterioro de la hegemonía política neoliberal. Los problemas sociales ya no pueden ser explicados como dificultades provisorias de un proceso globalmente positivo de expansión del mercado y saneamiento productivo, y las dirigencias políticas se fueron aislando de sus bases populares tradicionales en un escenario de elitización, con mayorías hundidas en la pobreza. En síntesis, la crisis de legitimidad de la política se interrelaciona con la pérdida de dinamismo de la economía y la desarticulación social." (Reality refuted the promise to overcome the eighties' crisis by means of the globalized "free market," as the neoliberal political hegemony deteriorated. Social problems could no longer be explained as provisional problems of a globally positive process of market expansion and production reorganization; political leaderships became increasingly estranged from their traditional popular bases in a context of elitization with majorities sunken in poverty. In summary, the crisis of political legitimacy interconnects to the loss of economic dynamism and social disarticulation.) María Susana Bonetto and María Teresa Piñero, "La recuperación de un discurso contrahegemónico y sus implicancias para América Latina," (paper, VI Congreso Nacional de Ciencia Política de la Sociedad Argentina de Análisis Político, Rosario, November 2003), 4, accessed July 28, 2009, http://www.saap.org.ar/esp/docs-congresos/congresos-saap/VI/areas/01/boneto-pineiro.pdf.

[46] Coronil, "Toward a Critique," 64.

antilabor, anti-immigrant rhetoric. Immigrants from neighboring countries, especially undocumented immigrants and workers, became the scapegoats for a catastrophic economic situation whose causes had little to do with migrant workers. At the height of the Menemist crisis, members of Congress presented several drafts for anti-immigration laws that would purportedly curb the flow of illegal aliens into the country by either restricting their entry or by expelling those already within national borders. The objective was to guarantee that Argentine nationals filled the positions these immigrants "usurped." A 1996 survey found that 81 percent of the Argentine population agreed on a stringent restriction of foreign labor, 91 percent felt Argentines were hurt by immigration, and half of those polled endorsed the expatriation of "illegal immigrants."[47]

Within this context, Gambaro's work suggests how Othering is an act of violence against the underprivileged, silenced strata, and how the neoliberal strategies of Othering serve not only to authorize unequal distributions of wealth and political participation but also to ensconce them, by naturalizing inequity within economic, political, and cultural systems. Inasmuch as the beginning and ending of the play take place in China, Gambaro locates difference in what the Argentine audience already reads as exotic: East Asia, the "Far East," the Argentine Antipodes. The "Orient" represents a site of exotic difference, most readily legible through visual markers—what to most Argentine spectators is naturally Other. Mass media and advertising have been willing agents in the construction of the ethnocultural Other, both sustaining and exploiting a co-constructed alterity, rendering difference a market tool to authorize and strengthen an Argentine neoliberal capitalism.

In 1990s Buenos Aires, a television commercial aired promoting a specific brand of pumice stone. An attractive East-Asian woman, wearing an ambiguously Oriental dress—

[47] Alejandro Grimson, "Ethnic (In)Visibility in Neoliberal Argentina, " *NACLA Report on the Americas* 38, no. 4 (2005): 27.

suggestive of a *qipao*—looks at the camera and says, "*Yo soy china. Usted no lo es*" (I am Chinese. You are not). She takes the product, a bleached-white stone, shows it to the camera, and continues, "*Esta piedra es china.*" (This stone is Chinese.) She holds another generic, grayish pumice stone and adds, "*Ésta no lo es.*" (This one is not). The Oriental imagery employed in the promotion of the pumice stone *Piedra China* (Chinese stone) serves to underscore the purported authenticity of the product. My conjecture is that *Piedra China* suggested that the promotion of the product, in its "technological" simplicity, would benefit from an allusion to ancient rituals of personal care.[48] Its origin, however, is strictly a marketing illusion: Piedra China is in fact a registered trademark of the company Segismundo Wolff S.A.C.I.F.I and the product is made in Argentina.[49] The woman's assertion suggests that the product is not just the Piedra China, for which the line would have been "ésta es la/una Piedra China" (this is the/a *Piedra China*), that is to say, the product with its brand name. Instead, since the item's brand name is split by the verb *es* (is), the wording depicts an object with an adjective—a "Chinese" stone. The product's alleged origin becomes a source of legitimacy, an authority sought through the deployment of unambiguously Orientalizing elements: an East Asian woman dressed in a flamboyantly colorful qipao—a garment with national standing but neither commonly worn nor highly

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[48] In the United States, some companies make similar claims. Pumice stones are linked to purity and ancient Asian practice. The following case illustrates how pumice stones evoke almost supernal Balinese traditions. "The Balinese culture has used the healing power of volcanic sand from Mount Agung (Bali's largest live volcano) for medicinal and spiritual purposes from its ancient beginnings.… The Volcanic sand comes from a spiritually 'hot' place where lush, water-spinach fields overflow bubbling spring water into the ocean." Similarly, Sophie Benge suggests exfoliation with a pumice to achieve an outer glow that complements an inner meditation. Another (purportedly scholarly) source claims that the Egyptians used pumice stones to exfoliate their skins. Carenonline.com, "Sensatia Volcanic Sand Exfoliator Soap," Caren Inc., accessed September 13, 2009, http://www.carenonline.com/Sensatia_Volcanic_Sand_Exfoliator _Soap_p/sb-svs-0115 .htm; Sophie Benge, *Asian Secrets of Health, Beauty, And Relaxation* (North Clarendon, VT: Periplus Editions, 2000), 3; Paul Cain, "High-tech Nature Takes on Healthy Exfoliation," *Skin Inc. Magazine,* October 2006, accessed September 13, 2009, http://www.skininc.com/treatments/facial /19784904.html.

[49] The earliest registration of trademark by Segismundo Wolff S.A.C.I.F.I according to the Registro de Marcas (Trademarks Office) of the Instituto Nacional de Propiedad Industrial (National Institute of Industrial Property) is dated August 3, 1981. However, the brand existed by 1976—though the owner of the trademark is not listed in the records. Due to its popularity and assertive marketing strategies, the brand has become a generic denomination of pumice stone. Instituto Nacional de Propiedad Industrial, "Actas 1288104 and 1026857," accessed September 12, 2009, http://www.inpi.gov.ar/templates/index.asp.

regarded in China[50]—who claims to be Chinese.[51] In watching this commercial, people have often asked, "But is she *really* Chinese?" For all we know, she could have been an Argentine-born woman of East Asian descent. It doesn't seem to matter.

Even more blatantly Orientalist was the commercial airing in the eighties promoting Arroz Gallo Oro, a brand of rice. An Asian cook looked at the camera and advised the viewer on the importance of rice.[52] In heavily pseudo-Asian accented Spanish he describes the grain and the manner in which it should be cooked: "El aloz, la glan base de toda comida que nunca debe pegalse ni pasalse," thus "distorting" the pronunciation of Spanish by imbuing the statement with a phonetic stereotype of Asians.[53] After the portrayal of several "Argentine-looking" individuals tasting different rice-based dishes, the cook looks at the camera, holding a box of rice next to his face. He points at the box and says, "El de la caja amalilla" (The one in the yellow box). With a hand gesture, he directs the viewers' attention to his face, alluding to his "yellow" complexion.

Arguably, the most conspicuous case is that of a famous television talk-show host, Marcelo Tinelli, who has been known to address a Korean actor as *ponja*, thus normalizing the use of the appellation to describe a person—*any* person—who has—or is perceived to have—an East Asian physiognomy.[54] The INADI (National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism) reported that in 2008 Tinelli urged a dancer wearing a kimono to

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[50] Antonia Finnane, "What Should Chinese Women Wear?: A National Problem," *Modern China* 22, no. 2 (1996): 105.

[51] The brand's more contemporary campaign has forgone such an Orientalizing visual advertising. However, their radio commercial starts with a loud sound of a gong, followed by copy sung to the tune of the French nursery rhyme *Frère Jacques*. "Nuestros clientes," Say Publicidad, accessed September 14, 2009, http://www.saypublicidad.com.ar.

[52] For a more thorough examination of the connotations of rice as an "Oriental food," see chapter 2.

[53] In standard English, the phrase is "rice, the great foundation of every meal that must never stick or be overdone."

[54] *Ponja* involves the reversal of syllables of *Japón*, Japan in Spanish. A comparable epithet in the United States would be "Jap."

"attend to the needs" of the ponja.[55] Unfortunately yet predictably, the INADI report only focused on the representation of women as sex objects; it disregarded the Orientalizing treatment of the Asian population.

As shown by these multiple cases, such exoticization of Asianness is merely symptomatic and by no means exclusive to Tinelli and his cohorts. The television show *Todo x 2 pesos* (Everything is two *pesos*) featured an "Oriental" female character called Sushi Tepanaki[56] played by Irene Cheung, an actress in her mid-thirties who had very recently arrived from Hong Kong.[57] The show included a game-show parody during which Cheung would play the hosts' assistant called Sushi. The character became ubiquitously famous for yelling "mucho orto" when a game participant won the measly cash prize offered.[58] The audience is led to believe that, given her poor command of Spanish, she is not aware of the blue nature of her utterance.[59] Thus, she can say what the "native" Argentinean actors cannot say. Her alleged ignorance of the cultural practices ostensibly justifies the mockery of the Other's unfamiliarity with the codes of appropriate speech for television. The character is infantilized since she cannot participate as an equal in the social verbal negotiations. In fact, the breach in language does not stand for defiance but for naiveté, given how non-threatening the statements appear to be, coming from her.

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[55] The dancer replied that her specialty is the Tokyo kiss, rubbing one's nose against another's. INADI, Observatorio de la Discriminación en Radio y Televisión, *Informe sobre el programa 'Showmatch,'* 3, accessed June 10, 2009, http://www.inadi.gov.ar/uploads/showmatch.pdf.

[56] *Teppanyaki* is a style of Japanese cuisine that uses an iron griddle to cook food. Thus, the character's name likewise refers to Japanese food, one of the products that most successfully evokes and connotes Japanese culture.

[57] *Todo x 2 pesos* aired on Azul Televisión in 1999, and on Canal 7 from 2000 to 2002. Produced by Marcelo Tinelli's production company Ideas del Sur, the aesthetic and style derived from earlier television projects such as Alfredo Casero's *Cha cha cha*. Tinelli is not a writer, performer, or director of the show. "Todo x 2 pesos," Ideas del Sur, accessed August 23, 2009, http://www.ideasdelsur .com.ar/v2007/.

[58] "Mucho orto" is a raunchy expression meaning "much (good) luck." Its vulgarity derives from "orto," a crude term for "rectum."

[59] Pablo Plotkin, "Freakadelica," *Suplemento NO de Página 12* May 4, 2008, accessed May 19, 2009, http://www.pagina12.com.ar/2000/suple/no/00-05/00-05-04/NOTA1.HTM.

In Argentine discourse, East Asia has become ponja, with eponymous language, ethnicity, and race. As the case of Irene Cheung-Sushi Tepanaki illustrates, everything remotely East Asian (even Argentine-born and raised) is ponja.[60] And ponja is absolute difference: *un*gainly, *un*interesting, *un*attractive, and *un*worldly. Tepanaki may be attractive but she is still dull—maybe even dumb. She lacks the witty charm on which Argentineans pride themselves. Ponja represents traits that Argentineans (particularly *porteños*)[61] disown as features of a veritable Argentineness. These operations describe a process of Othering through which the porteño avows his privileged "authentic Argentine origin"; they also unveil the linguistic consumption of this difference. In the case of ponja, the categories of *chino* (Chinese), *japonés* (Japanese), *coreano* (Korean), and all other East Asian ethnicities converge into a homogenizing arrangement that undergoes a process of *porteñización*, the imprint of a local linguistic dynamic of creating words through a syllabic transposition.[62] Renaming "on my terms" is a violent act of cultural appropriation. The change of a name seeks to efface an identity through linguistic coercion, as did the North American slave traders' practice of changing African victims' names. Richard Harvey Brown contends that "notions of cultural difference readily become systems of judgment and coercion by which one group marks off and dominates others," further averring that these concepts are discursive.[63] The porteño's reversal of syllables underscores the perpetuation of a local

[60] In his compilation of anecdotes of his days as a sports reporter, Guillermo Salatino obnoxiously uses the term ponja to refer to a Japanese man sitting next to him during a flight. This vernacular now appears in print. Guillermo Salatino, *El séptimo game* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Del Nuevo Extremo, 2006), 169.

[61] A *porteño* is a native of the city of Buenos Aires.

[62] The inversion of syllables in the creation of porteño slang is pervasive. For example, the individual of Spanish descent is deemed a *yoyega*, thus reducing all of Spain to Galicia. Yoyega is a slight variation of the reversal of syllables of *gallego* (Galician). Other derisive nicknames include *ruso* (Russian) for Askhenazi Jews, *turco* (Turk) for Sephardic Jews and Arabs, *charrúa* (an indigenous nation in Uruguay) and *yorugua* (a rearrangement and abridgement of syllables of *uruguayo*) for Uruguayans, *bolita* (little ball) for Bolivians, and *paragua* (umbrella) for Paraguayans.

[63] Richard Harvey Brown, "Cultural Representation and Ideological Domination," *Social Forces* 71, no. 3 (1993): 660.

practice of homogenizing difference and the intrinsic violence in subjugating certain groups to a hegemonic language.

Given such a naturalized construction of ponjas, Gambaro's placement of difference in the East Asian renders a legible (and unthreatening) sign to Argentine audiences through the subterfuge of exotizing the Other. Arguably, the most resonant statement in the play to bring ethnic oversimplifications and essentializations to the fore is in the initial stage directions: "Entra la Madre. Viste pantalón y túnica chinas. Camina a pasitos, como si la hubieran criado con los pies atados.... Ni la Madre ni Hue tienen rasgos orientales" (61; The Mother enters. She wears Chinese pants and tunic. Her footsteps are short, as if she had been raised with her feet bound.… Neither the Mother nor Hue bear Chinese features). The mother wears Chinese attire, in itself a complex issue, since the director's interpretation of "what is Chinese" is at stake. For instance, in the 1995 production directed by Laura Yusem at the Teatro Municipal General San Martín, Graciela Galán's costume design dressed the mother in gray, loose-fitting pants and hip-length tunic made of a fairly thin material that provided little structure to the garments, and a darker gray headscarf.[64] Hue wore a deep-orange caftan, made of *liencillo*, a lightweight cotton fabric, also broad and loose-fitting.[65] Neither attire is particularly effective in evoking "Chinese," since the breadth of the figures and the gossamery fabrics do not follow Chinese fashion patterns; Hue's costume better suggests a Middle Eastern caftan. The text calls for a Chinese tunic for Hue's mother.

What is currently meant by Chinese tunic is a twentieth-century garment: the *zhongshan* suit that Mao Zedong chose to wear rather than the Western suit, in order to assert the difference from the West.[66] A "Chinatown" interpretation of Chinese garments would

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[64] Graciela Galán's sketches indicate that the costume was turquoise, and the turban white. I cannot ascertain whether she changed the color palate, the blueish lighting altered the effect onstage, or whether the quality of the film on which my analysis is based is poor. The costume looked blueish gray to me.

[65] Graciela Galán, *Es necesario entender un poco*, scenographic sketches, accessed September 12, 2010, http://www.acceder.gov.ar/images/do/5/8/b/58bb3400842bef4b8764dff31d4800ef.pdf.

[66] Finnane, 99-100.

evoke to most Argentine spectators the Westernized East Asian, a foreigner submerged in a capitalist environment in which the outsider makes a living from reproducing an imagined China. Would the garments worn in China read as Chinese to the Argentine spectator? Is that a requirement stated in the stage directions, or is "authenticity" privileged over "intelligibility"? Furthermore, what *is* Chinese attire—to which China do we refer? Is it the ambiguous China of the Argentine imaginary, or is it invoking a specific, historicized Chinese apparatus? These queries shed light on the arbitrariness of even the (apparently) simplest of stage directions. Primarily, the question lies in the uncertainty of the content of "Chinese attire." "Chinese clothing" lacks essence or inherent meaning. The costume is as much of a construct as is anything else that is *different*.

Neither Chinese character, on the other hand, exhibits any Chinese physical trait (61). The roles were originally performed by Rita Cortese and Horacio Roca, both of whom show physiognomies of purported European descent. The mother's and Hue's features are rendered Chinese through a discursive Occidentalization.

> PADRE: Su idioma es una jerga endiablada, Dios me perdone.
>
> HUE: ¿Y yo? ¿Por qué no aprendí el tuyo?
>
> PADRE *lo mira harto. De pronto, se tienta locamente*. Porque sos chino, ¡con los ojos así! ¡Apretados como culo de gallina! *Ríe.*
>
> (68; PRIEST: Your language is damn gibberish, may God forgive me.
>
> HUE: And I? Why didn't I learn yours?
>
> PRIEST *looks at him, annoyed. Suddenly, he can barely hold his mirth.* Because you're Chinese, with eyes like this! Tight as a hen's asshole! *He laughs.*)

It is safe to venture that, when saying "con ojos así," the priest is stretching the skin surrounding the outer eye area, thus evoking Oriental "ojos apretados." However, the

utterance and physical gesture do not correlate with Hue's body. Instead, through language and sign, the priest imprints on the "same"—that is, not "different"—body a mark of racial difference. If the priest must stretch the skin to convey Hue's eyes, then his eyes are different *from* Hue's. The Asian character with "ojos apretados," conversely, would find it very hard to compress the width of his eyes to imitate the rounder eyes of the priest. This would necessitate a change in the shape of the eyelid; this would be possible, for instance, through double-eyelid surgery.[67] The shape of the eye awards the individual a certain degree of symbolic capital in the West. This was certainly the case among young Japanese-Brazilians in the sixties, who lamented, "We would have no problems in Brazilian society if we did not have this face and these eyes."[68] In the United States, Asian-American women most often ask for "double-eyelid" surgery that creates a crease above each eye, making the eyes look wider. "Cosmetic surgery is a means by which they hope to acquire 'symbolic capital,' … in the form of a look that holds more prestige," argues Eugenia Kaw.[69] In the performance, the very action implies dissimilar possibilities, where the priest, at least very precariously, can ostensibly manipulate his body more easily than Hue can. The clergy exhibits greater to power to mold himself vis-à-vis the Asian character. Insofar as he establishes a greater command over his body, he displays a privileged ability to construct an identity, which relies on always establishing a fissure between him*self* and the *other* character.

The play troubles the purported chasm between these agents. Several aspects of the play disturb reductive views on Asian identity. *Es necesario entender un poco* proposes an assessment of preconceived notions of ethnic difference; it calls attention to the physical and aural assumptions subsumed in Othering. Gambaro's stage directions, whereby the Chinese

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[67] Eugenia Kaw, "Medicalization of Racial Features: Asian American Women and Cosmetic Surgery," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (March 1993): 75.

[68] Tadashi Maeyama, *Iho ni "Nihon" o Masuru: Burajiru Nikkeijin no Shukyo to Esunisiti* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobo, 1997), 56-57, quoted in Nobuko Adachi, "Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?," *Latin American Perspectives* 31, no. 3 (2004): 61.

[69] Kaw, 78.

characters do not show defined Asian facial features, put into question the divisive conception of ethnic heterogeneity based on biological characteristics, namely, a racialization of ethnicity. Actors Roca and Cortese explicitly bear features spectators recognize as akin to theirs. Their bodies evince their European ancestry. Besides, the origin of Roca's and Cortese's last names—Spanish and Italian respectively—agrees with immigration history in Argentina, since by far the greatest number of immigrants came from Spain and Italian. Accordingly, the actors' phenotypes and surnames are in harmony with bourgeois expectations of Argentineness. Moreover, the actors' prior participation in well-received television programs has conventionalized their appearances. They have become familiar faces integrated into an ostensibly homogeneous Argentina, given their regular presence in the cultural landscape. Thus, the audience and the actors share an affiliation because the performers' last names and their body characteristics echo those of their bourgeois spectators. Costume-designer Galán's ambiguous costumes further destabilize preconceived notions of Chinese attire, leading to a reexamination of constructs of Chinese culture. These strategies suggest the arbitrary expectations regarding visual culture.

Lastly, Chinese and European characters in the play allegedly speak a Chinese language and French, yet they actually speak Spanish. Although they supposedly do not understand each other, the performers use the same language onstage. The dramatic choice requires a willing suspension of disbelief, yet it also unmasks the invention of linguistic prestige. Thus, the sensorial evidence of difference evanesces: aural and visual indications of difference are precarious. These symmetries call into question the alleged difference between Asians and Argentineans. Gambaro's work posits the following difficulty: if Argentine-looking actors perform Asian characters, despite their looking and sounding like the porteño audience does, to what extent are Argentineans and Asians different? The audience must confront the contradictory bases of social formations of ethnic and cultural boundaries and stereotypes, the animation of Othering, and the pursuit of dominance impelling these

practices. Whoever establishes the criteria of difference—that is to say, the "authentic" native and the "exotic" foreigner—wields a potent weapon to defend her interests.

Es necesario entender un poco evinces the power inequality inherent in a schema of Othering. The relationship between Hue and the West (the missionaries and, specifically, the priest) is inscribed in a latent Orientalism. As Edward Said persuasively claims, "[Latent Orientalism] was a part of the culture, as much a language about a part of reality as geometry or physics. Orientalism staked its existence, not upon its openness, its receptivity to the Orient, but rather on its internal, repetitious consistency about its constitutive will-to-power over the Orient."[70] The priest is Edward Said's Orientalist: the authority "whose job in society was to interpret the Orient for his compatriots."[71] The cleric's project is to translate into Western language (French) the literature of the Orient—the *I Ching* and the other four thousand texts he takes with him to France (66). Thus, he is also what Coronil calls an Occidentalist, because he participates in the relational structure of cultural flow. Coronil argues that Occidentalism "is thus not the reverse of Orientalism but its condition of possibility.… A simple reversal would be possible only in the context of symmetrical relations between 'Self' and 'Other'—but then who would be the 'Other'?"[72] The priest's translation of the books is a project of appropriation of the Other's writing in what amounts to cultural expropriation. The accumulation of non-Western production lays bare the asymmetrical relations of power on which these cross-cultural exchanges rest. The priest takes a copious assortment of books from China to France. What does Hue receive from the priest? What could Hue actually read? Whereas the cleric can speak some Chinese, Hue can *only* speak Chinese. He cannot speak the priest's native language. The cultural negotiation is skewed in favor of the bilingual cleric. The disproportionate exchange reproduces the

[70] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 222.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism," 56.

asymmetries Coronil characterizes. This is not a case of constructive cross-pollination in that cultural reciprocity is skewed. It privileges the European character who, in order to make use of these cultural artifacts, must abuse Hue.

By invoking Michel Foucault's theory, Santiago Castro-Gómez compellingly traces what he calls "the invention of the Other": "the mechanisms of knowledge/power from which these representations are constructed."[73] In order to engage the problem of the Other from a theoretical standpoint, Castro-Gómez calls for a perspective that contemplates the process of material and symbolic production in which modern societies have participated since the beginning of the sixteenth century. In Latin America in particular, the nineteenth century was the apogee of what Angel Rama called the "lettered city." It was a period in which nation-states were configured and (self)defined.[74] Writing was the authoritative exercise that legitimized the model of "civilization," a normalized logic organized around a dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion. Nations grounded their authority in the creation of regulative systems (schools, hospices, asylums, prisons) and hegemonic discourse (maps, grammar, manuals, constitutions): organizations validated by writing that authorized a network of regulation and discipline. Hence, writing is a source of validation of the "imagined community," which relies implicitly on the definition of limits and difference.[75]

By attempting to translate the canonical Chinese texts into French, the priest engages in a scheme both hermeneutical and predatory. The *I Ching* is not only a manual of divination but also a philosophical treatise, a book of wisdom for both Confucianism and Taoism. Beatriz González Stephan argues that the manual operates as an articulation of the central axiom of modernization, the civilization of barbarism. The translation of the *I Ching*,

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[73] Santiago Castro-Gómez, "The Social Sciences, Epistemic Violence, and the Problem of the 'Invention of the Other,'" *Nepantla: Views from the South* 3, no. 2 (2002): 271.

[74] Angel Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (Montevideo: Arca, 1998).

[75] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1999).

as well as that of the other four thousand books the priest imports to France, implies the phagocytic consumption of the Other's culture in order to define from a hegemonic standpoint a binary of "civilization" (Western principles authorized by the regulative writing of a historical narrative) and "barbarism" (the Other whose history is written by dominant formations).[76] Those imaginaries are actualized insofar as they are associated with institutions such as schools, law, prisons, hospitals, the state, and the social sciences—all of them systems of a disciplinary nature.[77]

Eduardo E. Domenech and María José Magliano identify a case of such regulative systems in contemporary pedagogical curricula in Argentina aimed at integrating immigrants into the social, political, economic, and cultural fields.[78] They argue that there are two co-existing views in the social imaginary—immigrants as "enrichment" on the one hand, and as a "threat" on the other.[79] The educational programs seek to cull the contributive features of immigrants while quelling their dangerous elements. Hence, the process of "imagination" involves the concretion of disciplinary structures linked to a body of knowledge—what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, borrowing Foucault's terms, has identified as the implementation of "epistemic violence."[80]

Hue's confinement in Charenton asylum is an example of this aggressive practice.[81] The authorities consider Hue crazy due to his inability to understand French customs.

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[76] Beatriz González Stephan, "Modernización y disciplinamiento: La formación del ciudadano—del espacio público y privado," in *Esplendores y miserias del siglo XIX: Cultura y sociedad en América Latina*, ed. Beatriz González Stephan et al. (Caracas: Monte Ávila, 1995), 431-55.

[77] Beatriz González Stephan, "Economías fundacionales: Diseño del cuerpo ciudadano," in *Cultura y tercer mundo: Nuevas identidades y ciudadanías*, ed. Beatriz González Stephan (Caracas: Nueva Sociedad, 1996), 17-47.

[78] Domenech and Magliano, 445.

[79] Ibid., 427.

[80] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* ed. Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 280-81; Castro-Gómez, 275.

[81] It should be noted that Gambaro employs her poetic license to juxtapose two events that, "historically" speaking, occur several decades apart. Hue went to Europe in 1720, whereas the events portrayed in Peter

MÉDICO. Si fuera loco…

SACRISTÁN. ¡Lo es! No entiende nada de nada. Y sus costumbres no son las nuestras.

MÉDICO. No es asunto menor no respetar las costumbres, peor no comprenderlas.

(95; DOCTOR. If he were insane…

SACRISTAN. He is! He doesn't understand a word. And his customs are not ours.

DOCTOR. It is not a frivolous issue not to observe customs; not understanding them is worse.)

Hue endures the harshness of violent discipline as a result of an apparent delirium. In Foucault's sense, a discursive delirium relates to the subject's "silent gestures, wordless violence, oddities of conduct," any behavior that operates against the dominant stratum.[82] Hue's inability to understand and speak French reads as senseless, delirious gibberish. Because "language is the first and last structure of madness … [and] on language are based all the cycles in which madness articulates its nature," the inability to command the sanctioned language signals difference, according to Foucault.[83] This produces a heterogeneity that relies on religion as a criterion of reason. "Religion can play the double role of nature and of rule," argues Foucault, "since it has assumed the depth of nature in ancestral habit, in education, in everyday exercise, and since it is at the same time a constant principle of coercion."[84] The Church—or its invocation—wields its authority to keep Hue in the asylum, for the doctor cannot refuse his admission when the Church recommends the

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Weiss's play purportedly take place in 1808. Robert Cohen, *Understanding Marat/Sade* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 65.

[82] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Random House, 1988), 99.

[83] Ibid., 100.

[84] Ibid., 244.

Chinese man's confinement (96). Moreover, during their trip to France, the cleric asserts Hue's difference by appealing to the Christian supremacy over the East Asian. The ultimate authority is unavailable—or denied—to Hue; on the other hand, the priest professes a fluid relationship with God, a claim that legitimizes his despotism.

The clergy's claim to the exclusive access to God's message sets up an irreducible power disproportion between the ecclesiastics and believers excluded from the clerical hierarchy. Catholic theologians have prescribed the preeminence of the clergyman to mediate and intercede on behalf of the congregation. This became one of the critical issues at stake during the Reformation. In 1524, Desiderius Erasmus responded to Martin Luther in his treatise *De Libero Arbitrio*, where the Dutch theologian defended the clergy's supremacy in the exegesis of the Scriptures.[85] He rejected the elucidation of the Scriptures by those who merely bear the Spirit of Christ; their understanding could be tinged by error or deception. In his opinion, one should not "through irreverent inquisitiveness rush into those things which are hidden, not to say superfluous."[86] Furthermore, Erasmus wrote, "How can it be believed that for more than thirteen hundred years he [Christ] would have concealed the error in his Church and not have found anybody among so many saintly men worthy to be inspired with the knowledge of what these people claim to be the chief doctrine of the whole gospel?"[87] Later, during the fourth session of the Council of Trent in 1546, the Church arrogated the right to interpret the Scriptures.[88] If the Church shelters the legitimacy of its interpretation of Scriptures from potential critics, since only the power of Christ can prove

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[85] Desiderius Erasmus, "On the Freedom of Will," in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 44-46.

[86] Ibid., 39.

[87] Ibid., 46.

[88] "In order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall—in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine—wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures—hath held and doth hold." *Canons and Decrees of the Sacred And Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. J. Waterworth (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 19.

the clergy wrong, who can ascertain that it is the power of Christ speaking but the Church itself?

In *Es necesario*, the priest co-opts the Church's authority to imbue his dictum with sacrosanct authentication in invoking the purported kinship between the clergy and God. Hue, now a Christian due to missionary endeavors in China, is denied access to God, forcing him to seek the priest for mediation. The cleric believes that the Church is the instrument to bridge the separation of God and humans. At the beginning of the play, Hue displays confidence in his ability to speak languages. He relies on his Christian faith to establish a flowing communication with God. Conversely, his mother questions his ability to contribute to the translation process.

> MADRE: ¿En qué idioma? No hablás ninguno.
>
> HUE: Hablaré el de Dios.
>
> (64; MOTHER: In what language? You don't speak any.
>
> HUE: I shall speak God's language.)

Hue's mother's skepticism foreshadows the obstacles Hue will face in Europe. Unlike her son, she views the entire project with apprehension. She is wary of the differences in language skills and its impact on Hue's fate. She distrusts the priest's assertion that he was anointed by God's grace. Such a claim, she mumbles, only helps justify any dealing—whether honest or abusive—by the clergy (65-66). In a reaction somewhat evocative of Martin Luther's early criticisms of the Catholic Church, Hue's mother introduces the possibility of a manipulation from the dominant class to incorporate subaltern groups. She is clever to notice that a party—in this case the Catholic clergy—may preempt a position of privilege by the mere act of claiming such entitlement. Inasmuch as they endeavor in their missionary work to assimilate alternate groups by deploying a message of catholic inclusion, the clergy acquires rights already subsumed in the system. Thus, Antonio Gramsci argues, the dominant group retains power via consensus: the subordinate groups have a reason to

support the dominant faction. "Me dijeron que esta ciudad estaba cerca del cielo y que el Papa estaba cerca de Dios" (106; I was told that this city was close to Heaven and that the Pope was close to God), a bereft Hue utters after years in the Charenton asylum. The manipulation of the interaction between deity (ultimate authority) and Hue (the individual) sustains the prevalence of the European missionary/colonizer. It deprives the subject of a means to engage the imposed culture with any agency.

Hue does not command the language of the missioner's native land, the ecclesiastical metropolis. Whereas knowing French—derived from Latin, the pre-Vatican II Church's lingua franca—allows the priest and the rest of the European characters onstage to interact intelligibly, Hue's language proves to be an inadequate means of communication. Nobody, except the priest, can understand what he says. Thus, the religious colonizer must become the interpreter. It is the priest who wants to translate the four thousand books he imports from China, with Hue's help. But how can Hue be of assistance if he does not possess a command of the French language? Hue may probably help the priest to understand the nuances of the Chinese texts, but only the priest can negotiate the differences between French and Chinese. The language constraint confines Hue to a partial—and thoroughly mediated—interaction with the colonizing culture. Accordingly, the priest becomes the arbitrator, the barbarians' translator, and the direct connection to God. The colonizer describes himself discursively by monopolizing both the social and the spiritual languages and asserting its obvious and "natural" privilege. The colonized subject—the subaltern—does not have a voice.

Marx offers a critique of the overwhelming influence of religious creed over the human being: "[Christianity] teaches, as religion is bound to teach: submit to authority, for *all authority* is from God."[89] He views religion as a human construct, an illusion, a product of

[89] Karl Marx, "*Rheinische Zeitung* No. 195, July 14, 1842, Supplement," *Marxists.org*, accessed June 11, 2009, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/07/10.htm.

the human brain that facilitates the process of alienation (*Entfremdung*). Jon Elster draws attention to a footnote in the first volume of *Capital* where Marx persuasively establishes an analogy between the mechanisms of exploitation in capitalism and religion.[90] Elster points to the following passage in Marx's treatise:

> In the economic domain, for example, financiers, stock-exchange speculators, merchants and shopkeepers skim the cream; in questions of litigation the lawyer fleeces his clients; in politics the representative is more important than the voters, the minister more important than the sovereign; in religion God is pushed into the background by the "mediator," and the latter is again shoved back by the priests, *who are the inevitable mediators between the good shepherd and his flock*.[91]

The priest's appeal to messianic discourse resembles that of Menem during the 1989 presidential campaign, when he commanded, "Síganme, no los voy a defraudar" (Follow me, I will not let you down).[92] With vice-presidential candidate Eduardo Duhalde, he waved at the crowds from his *menemóvil* during parades.[93] The campaign slogan ascribed to the candidate a sacred purpose and the extraordinary means to attain it. The homology articulated by Marx elucidates the mechanisms of a new religion evinced in the worship of no-holds-barred capitalism. In Menem, the religious mediator became the economic mediator: the obsequious prophet of neoliberalism.

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[90] Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 479-81.

[91] Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin Classics and *New Left Review*, 1990), 907 (emphasis mine).

[92] There is a plethora of examples in the Bible where Christ summoned his disciples. In the following excerpt, Christ promises a reward for following him. "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.'" Matt. 4:18-20 (NIV).

[93] The word *menemóvil*—Menem's automobile—evokes an earlier term: *Papamóvil*—the Pope's automobile. Thus, the religious/messianic nature of Menem's promises was further stressed.

According to Daniel Azpiazu, Eduardo M. Basualdo, and Hugo J. Nochteff's assessment, Argentineans earnestly went along with Menem's anti-inflationary Convertibility Plan after years of crushingly high inflation.[94] The government, however, "utilized the success of the Plan to peddle a larger neoliberal shock program that enriched few and impoverished the majority of Argentines."[95] In the 1990s, stable jobs were lost in the formal sector; new jobs emerged in low-productivity industries. In 1997, merely 29.7 percent of the country's population was stably employed—"the lowest percentage since the 1940s with the exception of 1996."[96]

In light of such developments, President Menem and his associate in the Ministry of Economy, Domingo Cavallo, publicly blamed illegal immigrants for the high unemployment rates. The government's xenophobic discourse made of the illegal immigrant the scapegoat for the social anxieties derived from the catastrophic economic condition. It energized what may be described as dormant xenophobia: the vigorous albeit disavowed repudiation of non-European populations.[97] In the 1990s, racial prejudice assumed a colloquial vocabulary of exclusion that marginalized not only the Argentine-born populations of indigenous descent but also the non-European immigrants. Since 1992, the official—in other words, the government's—discourse on migratory policy, has suggested two different views on foreign nationals living on Argentine soil.[98] On the one hand, it has glorified European immigration,

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[94] The main feature of the *Plan de Convertibilidad* (Convertibility Plan) was that the Argentine peso would maintain its exchange rate against the US dollar at a fixed ratio of 1:1. This was referred to as "uno a uno" (one to one). Law No. 23928, March 28, 1991, B.O. 1.

[95] For a breakdown of the Menemist economic program, see Smith, 45-82; idem., *Authoritarianism and the Crisis of the Argentine Political Economy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Javier Corrales, *Presidents Without Parties: The Politics of Economic Reform in Argentina and Venezuela in the 1990s* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

[96] Daniel Azpiazu, Eduardo M. Basualdo, and Hugo J. Nochteff, "Menem's Great Swindle: Convertibility, Inequality and the Neoliberal Shock," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 31, no. 6 (1998): 19.

[97] Fernando Sabsay, "La adormecida xenophobia," *La Nación*, February 5, 1999.

[98] Migratory policy subsumes immigration policy (the management of human movement) and immigrant policy (related to migrants' new living conditions). Marco Martiniello, "The New Migratory Europe: Towards a Proactive Immigration Policy?," in *Immigration and the Transformation of Europe,* ed. Craig A. Parsons and Timothy M. Smeeding (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 308.

privileging white racial characteristics and essentialist constructs of the First World inhabitant. The incorporation of European immigrants into the Argentine population would in fact reinforce the "Argentine" phenotypical traits, especially those more prevalent among Western Europeans. On the other hand, immigrants from neighboring countries (Uruguay being an exception) as well as Peru have been targets of xenophobia, particularly those whose phenotypical traits differ from those of a white Western European population.[99] The increase in "darker faces" on the streets jeopardized the articulation of a European Argentina, especially when the Menemist government eagerly opened economic and diplomatic venues to "entrar al Primer Mundo" (to enter the First World). Foreign Secretary Guido Di Tella's forecast that "en el año 2020, el 20% de la población [en la Argentina] será boliviana o paraguaya" (in 2020, 20 percent of the [Argentine] population will be Bolivian or Paraguayan) reads as an ominous threat.[100] The influx of peoples from Latin American nations could potentially place Argentina among the developing countries of the world, something as dreaded as darker complexions, eyes, and straight hair. Immigrants whose phenotype pronounces their "difference" are not only more visible, but they endure the xenophobic practices and rhetoric a fortiori supported by the official discourse.

These worries do not surface in isolation; a neoliberal ideology necessarily engenders anxieties with regards to a nation-state's self-determination in the face of an insidious, deterritorializing system. Whereas commodities and financial capital circulate across national borders, human migration operates under different constraints where the nation-

[99] Enrique Oteiza, Susana Novick, and Roberto Aruj, *Política migratoria, inmigración real, y derechos humanos en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Exactas UBA, 1996), 5.

[100] "Bolivianos," *Página 12*, June 11, 1999.

state intervenes. The state is redefining its purpose: it does not fade but it is "losing some of its historical functions and powers and assuming others."[101]

Globalization, neoliberalism, and ethnic differentiation are inextricably linked global dynamics; it is important to recognize the manner in which this arrangement informs day-to-day practices. The entangled relation between racialized discourse and world economic politics produces a dialectic tension actualized in micropolitics of neighborhoods.[102] The expansive economic activity and discursive praxis of neoliberal globalization tinge localized politics of affect: global politics spark the animation of local imaginations, seeping into "highly localized structures of feeling by being drawn into the discourse and narratives of the locality."[103] These articulations are realized in everyday conversations and pervasive press enunciations. Macroevents, therefore, influence localized activity and thought. Local narratives through which the quotidian is interpreted are charged with a subtext deriving from local interpretations of greater regional experiences. Arguably the most unrestrained of them is globalization.

The modern ethnic movements have a high potential for violence, Arjun Appadurai argues, "especially in an era when the cultural space of the nation-state is subject to the externalities of migration and mass media."[104] Immigration troubles the nation-states' claim of legitimation, since it disturbs the foundational belief in a commonality of affinities of some kind. The credence of the nation-states' autonomy has relied on the traditional principle of natural affinity of large-scale groups. The tension between smaller groups and large-scale constructed identity translates to strains in the economic and legal arenas, where

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[101] Terence Turner, "Shifting the Frame from Nation State to Global Market: Class and Social Consciousness in the Advanced Capitalist Countries," in *Globalization: Critical Issues*, ed. Allen Chun (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 101.

[102] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*: *Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 153.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 156.

prerogatives and privilege are mostly linked to these large-scale identities. Appadurai claims that the logic of the nation can serve all kinds of groups as a means to monopolize some or all of the state, or at least a good fraction of its entitlements. He contends that "this logic finds its maximum power to mobilize where the body meets the state."[105] The paradoxes of capitalist labor history—the intrinsic relationship between the freeing of labor and countervailing tendencies toward its compartmentalization—set the stage for today's autochthony movements (and the concomitant threats of communal violence).

In Argentina, the immigrant's engagement with the state activates violent undertakings of control and juridical codification—schemes underlying the modern nation-state project. Perry Anderson underscores the importance of the State, "abstracted from its distribution into social classes" in the system of capitalist domination; he claims that, in contrast to economic expectations, juridical rights are stable.[106] The cyclical behavior of capitalism—booms and busts—negates any genuine confidence in the gains of the labor reformist movement. These victories engender further expectations that capitalism is inexorably incapable to meet. As the present world economic juncture illustrates, capitalism's "very 'dynamism' is thus potentially destabilizing and capable of provoking crises when growth fluctuates or stalls."[107] Conversely, the rights and privileges guaranteed with the representative juridicopolitical system evince much more steadiness. Anderson argues, "The ideology of bourgeois democracy is far more potent than that of any welfare reformism, and forms the permanent syntax of the consensus instilled by the capitalist State."[108]

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[105] Ibid., 157.

[106] Anderson, "Antinomies," 28.

[107] Ibid., 29.

[108] Ibid.

The Menemist discourse that demarcates degrees of inclusion in the body politic according to legal criteria masks the economic systems of capitalist domination. Furthermore, the specious arguments against foreign labor intimate that the nation is stable, efficient, and equitable when it fends off exogenous disruption. "To describe a membership category is to attribute a moral character to its incumbents," according to Harvey Brown.[109] Horacio Sabarots notes that a new stigmatized character, the "illegal immigrant," racializes individuals with indigenous or "native" traits while placing them under suspicion of "illegality" because, due to their indigenous phenotype, they are guilty of "bearing the face" of difference or *portación de cara*.[110]

> Estos estereotipos ... como el de "cabecita negra," "negro" o simplemente "cabeza" tal como circula entre los adolescentes actualmente, van a ser complementados recientemente con un adjetivo nuevo estigmatizante pero ahora sí claramente excluyente, como es la figura del "inmigrante ilegal" o simplemente "ilegal" … racializando y poniendo bajo sospecha de ilegalidad a todos aquellos que por poseer rasgos físicos indígenas o nativos (que no reconoce fronteras nacionales), por "portación de cara," cargan con el estigma.
>
> ('Little black head', 'black', or simply 'head,' as is used among adolescents currently, is recently complemented with a new stigmatizing—and now clearly excluding—adjective, such as the idea of the 'illegal immigrant' or simply 'illegal' … racializing and placing under suspicion of illegality all those who, due to their physical indigenous or native features—that do not

[109] Harvey Brown, 659.

[110] Horacio Sabarots, "La construcción de estereotipos en base a inmigrantes 'legales' e 'ilegales' en Argentina," *Intersecciones en Antropología* 3 (2002): 100, accessed September 12, 2010, http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci_pdf&pid=S1850-373X2002000100008&lng =es&nrm=iso&tlng=es.

adhere to national borders—due to their 'bearing the face' must suffer the stigma.)[111]

Moreover, "portación de cara" is a penalized offense: illegal immigrants are featured in newspapers in the police section and the front page. The term "illegal" is never contested, even prior to a judicial ruling. It is never alleged; it is always as apparent as his or her physical traits. Sabarots argues that there is a sequence of xenophobic symbolic constructions. The *latinoamericano*—including especially those of Bolivian, Paraguayan, or Peruvian origin—is inexorably assumed to be an illegal immigrant. Hence, he is a criminal.[112]

This racist categorization suggests Foucault's concept of biopolitics. The French intellectual contends that racism allows power "to treat the species, to subdivide the species it controls, into the subspecies known, precisely, as races."[113] In addition to the fragmentation of society, racism serves to justify the implication that there are enemies of the state at the biological level. Their elimination—for killing them is rationalized in this view—would eradicate the threat to the population. In this particular case, one could argue that there is an attempt to protect the Argentine "white" race from the biological perversion of other darker races that pollute the body of xenophobes. Foucault imagines the following inner monologue: "The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I—as species rather than individual—can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be. I

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[111] Ibid.

[112] "La construcción simbólica de la ilegalidad de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos tiende hacia una presunción de culpabilidad del inmigrante de su propia situación." (The symbolic construction of illegality of Latin American immigrants tends toward a presumption of the immigrant's guilt of his/her own situation.) Ibid., 104.

[113] Michel Foucault, "*Society Must be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Macmillan, 2003), 255.

will be able to proliferate."[114] It suggests a struggle for subsistence in the biological sense: the survival of the fittest. Biopower will only kill for the sake of purging the race of dangers to its existence: to ensure "the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race."[115]

On the economic plane, Max Weber identifies a similar compulsion in capitalism, which he calls an economic survival of the fittest. Weber ascertains that "the worker who cannot or will not adapt himself to them [the norms of capitalism] will be thrown into the streets without a job."[116] Racial anxieties, I argue, are not strictly related to a biological component, though in many cases they are articulated as such. In this case, xenophobia and class are inextricably linked: there is the assumption that darker, indigenous-looking individuals are poor undocumented workers who often must toil under unabashedly exploitative circumstances, sometimes even as victims of human trafficking.[117]

Placing the ponja in the hierarchy Sabarots describes is problematic when the case is examined in terms of class strata. The East Asian population has been for the most part economically successful in Argentina, particularly in and around Buenos Aires. Early on, Japanese and Korean immigrants established community networks that facilitated loans to families in order to finance their own businesses.[118] Korean Argentineans opened mostly small-scale textile factories.[119] They became quite conspicuous in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Once, where Jewish textile retailers used to be most prominent. The

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 55.

[117] Pedro Calvo, "Todavía quedan más de 5.000 talleres ilegales en la Ciudad," *Clarín*, July 15, 2007.

[118] For example, in the neighborhood of Boedo (in the city of Buenos Aires), the eponymous group of intellectuals, including Leónidas Barletta—founder of Teatro de la Campana—and Roberto Arlt, met in Mr. Yamagata's café. Arlt described a real "bar de japoneses" (Japanese bar) located in Cerrito and Lavalle streets as a meeting point of drivers, thugs, and pimps. Isabel Jacqueline Laumonier, "Cafés, tintorerías y tango," in *Cuando Oriente llegó a América* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2005), 165.

[119] Carolina Mera, *La inmigración coreana en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 1998), 124-25.

Japanese Argentine community owns many *tintorerías* (dry-cleaning stores), truck gardening businesses, and floriculture ventures—especially around the peripheral neighborhoods of Escobar, Florencio Varela, Longchamps, and Burzaco in the province of Buenos Aires.[120] East Asian communities are still a minority in Argentina, but their racial visibility makes them conspicuous in the social imaginary.[121] Racial visibility relies on the socially constructed physiognomy of the ponja. The ponja also *porta la cara* (bears the face) of difference. However, unlike the latinoamericanos of indigenous descent, the ponjas have accomplished economic success. Furthermore, oftentimes the East Asian community is the creator of jobs: "white people" are frequently employed by Japanese Argentine producers. Carolina Mera alleges that Koreans generally hire "Argentine" workers for their retail stores (although cashiers and managers tend to be Korean), and Bolivians in their textile workshops.[122] The asymmetrical socioeconomic position of ponjas and *criollos*[123] also engenders further resentment toward the "foreigner."

Gambaro's play problematizes the portación de cara. According to the text, Hue does not exhibit East Asian physical traits. They are first imposed on him by the priest and later confirmed by the coach driver when he calls him *"amarillo"* (74; yellow). The European inflicts on Hue the constructed categorization of conquest and domination, a process embedded in the experience in the Americas. Aníbal Quijano points out, "The idea of race, in its modern meaning, does not have a known history before the colonization of America.

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[120] James Lawrence Tigner, "The Ryukyuans in Argentina," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1967): 467-68. *Bonaerense* is the adjective to describe denizens of both the province and the city of Buenos Aires—which are two distinct geopolitical regions. Porteño is strictly connoting those from the city. Thus, bonaerense is oftentimes used to describe those living in the province, whereas porteño refers to residents of the city.

[121] Sabarots, 101.

[122] Mera's description seems to be a sweeping statement; she does not provide any evidence. However, her portrayal fits the vox populi on the matter. Furthermore, I have observed a greater Korean presence in Once in the first decade of the twenty-first century. I cannot vouch, however, for the specificity of Mera's explanations. Mera, 124-25.

[123] Criollos are American-born descendants from Spanish colonizers. In some countries, the word *criollo* has come to mean "local" or "native."

Perhaps it originated in reference to the phenotypic differences between conquerors and conquered. However, what matters is that soon it was constructed to refer to the supposed differential biological structures between those groups."[124] First applied to indigenous populations, "race" is a fallacious attempt at naturalizing difference for the purpose of establishing a hierarchy of domination.[125] "Skin color," furthermore, is a later social invention, originating among the Anglo-American colonizers.[126] With the growing expansion of the dominating white race across the globe, yellow and olive joined the categories of white, Indian, black, and *mestizo*.[127] Deploying racial and skin color differentiation, therefore, recalls the colonization and exploitation of the Americas. It reproduces the act of conquest of the body: the naturalization of social roles and division of labor relies on racial difference. Hence, any hierarchical classification of allegedly biological inequality supports the labor structure of the colonizing economy. In calling Hue "amarillo," the coach driver places the Chinese man's body at the base of a workforce pyramid, a role that robs Hue of any autonomy. Hue's body is of negligible worth in the economic system. Hence, the coach driver shoves Hue into the carriage with little care for his wellbeing or respect for his feelings:

> HUE *llora de humillación*. ¿Por qué me ha pegado? ¿Se lo ordenaste?
>
> PADRE. No.
>
> HUE. ¿Y entonces?

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[124] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," trans. Michael Ennis, *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 534.

[125] Audrey Smedley makes a somewhat similar argument. In the eighteenth century, "'Race'", she writes, "developed in the minds of some Europeans as a way to rationalize the conquest and brutal treatment of Native American populations, and especially the retention and perpetuation of slavery for imported Africans." After the United States Civil War, "Because of the cultural imperative of race ideology, all Americans were compelled to the view that a racial status, symbolized by biophysical attributes, was the premier determinant of their identity." Audrey Smedley, "'Race' and the Construction of Human Identity," *American Anthropologist* 100, no. 3 (1998): 694-95.

[126] Smedley contends, "There are no 'racial' designations in the literature of the ancients and few references even to such human features as skin color." Furthermore, "No structuring of inequality, whether social, moral, intellectual, cultural or otherwise, was associated with people because of their skin color." Ibid., 693.

[127] Quijano, 536-37.

Padre. Es un hombre libre.

HUE. ¿Y yo?

Padre. No podíamos esperar más.

(74; Hue *cries in humiliation*. Why did he beat me? Did you order him to do so?

Priest. No.

Hue. So?

Priest. He is a free man.

Hue. And I?

Priest. We couldn't wait any longer.)

The priest's disregard for Hue's discomfort implies the denigration of the colonized individual by the imperialist subjugator. Hue is an object, an animal that sleeps in the barn. At Charenton, Sade wonders about what Hue may be—"¿Qué es eso?" (What's this?)—implying that Hue is a thing. The marquis also refers to him as a dog—"¿Qué hacés tirado como un perro?" (What are you doing lying like a dog?)—and as a barbarian—"En este banco. Como una persona" (100-1; On this bench. Like a person).

Moreover, the debasement of the individual also entails the commodification—and pitiful valuation—of the colonized body. The exchange rate between time and Hue's welfare establishes the Chinese man's comfort as of little value. When the coach driver ties the Chinese man's hands while he beats him into submission and fastens them to a hook like a side of beef, Hue's body is bound and enslaved, suggesting its quantifiable monetary worth—hence, its expendability and its insignificance.[128] At Charenton, the physician checks each body part disjointedly: thorax, belly, cranium, and legs (95). The character stands in front of the physician wearing underpants. Roca's build appears scrawny, depicting some

[128] In Yusem's staging, the carriage was suggested with props and chairs. Without a visible rope, Hue's wrists were "tied" in front. Griselda Gambaro, *Es necesario entender un poco*, VHS, directed by Laura Yusem (Buenos Aires: Complejo Teatral San Martín, 1995).

degree of emaciation. The doctor anatomizes Hue's body, which he considers an object of fragmented examination. It is a veritable dissection of a docile animal, appropriate for a veterinary doctor but not for a physician.[129]

According to Gramsci, one of the most important functions of the State is to provide a cultural infrastructure to improve the masses' cultural and moral levels that meet the needs of the capitalist production engine and, thus, the objectives of the dominant classes.[130] By cultivating a better-educated and skilled populace, the State pursues the ideological conditioning of the proletariat.[131] Moreover, through the lens of liberal economics, the maximization of productivity is crucial: efficiency requires the extraction of the greatest yield possible from the combination of inputs from a system of production. The optimization of returns on capital investment (and, for capitalists, investment in labor power or "human capital" is a capital investment)[132] necessitates a compliant body whose labor power may be increased through education.[133] If a body's contribution is detrimental to the optimization of

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[129] By introducing the term "docile," I am aware that a complex arrangement of poststructuralist axioms comes into play. Indeed, Foucault's views on the eighteenth-century disciplinary schema—"a relation of docility-utility''—posit that these practices increase "the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)." Insofar as economic exploitation separates labor from its product—a position shared by Foucault and Marx—the French intellectual claims that "disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination." I take on the relation "docility-utility" presented by Foucault with caution. As Madan Sarup contends, "[Foucault] ignores the fact that the exercise of power depends on material conditions existing independently of it. One of the main problems of Foucault's work is that discourses/practices seem to be virtually independent of the production process, of class struggle, of politics." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, ed. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), 137-38; Madan Sarup, *Marxism/Structuralism/Education* (Lewes, UK: Falmer Press, 1983), 102.

[130] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notes*, trans. and ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 246.

[131] Anderson, "Antinomies," 27.

[132] "Schooling, computer training course, expenditures on medical care, and lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are capital too in the sense that they improve health, raise earnings, or add to a person's appreciation of literature over much of his or her lifetime.… Expenditures on education, training, medical care, etc. are investments in capital. However, these produce human, not physical or financial, capital, because you cannot separate a person from his or her knowledge, skills, health, or values the way it is possible to move financial and physical assets while the owner stays put." Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 15-16.

[133] Marx contends that investment in education increases labor power. "In order to modify the general nature of the human organism in such a way that it acquires skill and dexterity in a given branch of

production—namely, the minimization of total production costs—then labor produced by the embodiment of human capital represents an excessively costly input, which can and should be replaced to ensure efficiency. In a social system fixated on the optimal production, human capital must produce labor at competitive rates—or else it becomes a hefty burden on the economic machine.

In the face of such constraints, Hue's economic productivity is put into question. The doctor reluctantly agrees to keep Hue at the asylum, despite his belief that the underprivileged represent an expense to society (96).[134] But first, Hue's tameness must be confirmed. The doctor feints and Hue recoils. When the physician senses his fear, he actually slaps Hue, accusing him of cowardice (97-98). Next, the doctor declares that Hue may be housed at Charenton because he fulfills two requirements: "es muy frugal" (97; he is very frugal) and can perform any task as cheap labor. "Cualquier cuerpo que ocupa un lugar y no produce, es un estorbo,"[135] the physician affirms, stressing that a human being's worth altogether correlates to its efficiency. The sacristan avows, "¡Producirá, producirá!" (97; He will produce, he will produce!). Hue's productivity is thus established: the cost of his human body input to the economic engine ensures reasonable returns.

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industry, and becomes labour-power of a developed and specific kind, a special education or training is needed, and this in turn costs an equivalent in commodities of a greater or lesser amount. The costs of education vary according to the degree of complexity of the labour-power required. These expenses (exceedingly small in the case of ordinary labour-power) form a part of the total value spent in producing it." Marx, *Capital*, 275-76.

[134] According to production theory, an increase in the productivity of factors of production would decrease total costs *if* the input whose productivity has increased is substituted by an input whose productivity has diminished significantly. Hence, human capital must continually match or surpass the productivity rates of other forms of input, such as machinery or land. Otherwise, it will be replaced by more efficient inputs. Consequently, if some form of (human) capital causes either the stagnation of or a decrease in productivity, it is a negative contribution to the optimal levels of production.

[135] The phrase allows for two meanings: "Any body that *takes up space* and doesn't produce is a nuisance," or "any body that *fills a position* and doesn't produce is a nuisance." The first possible choice suggests the scarcity and, therefore, the opportunity cost of a body's imprint in space. The second option underscores the importance of efficient productivity and the compartmentalization of labor.

Foucault argues that "the practice of confinement and the insistence on work is not defined by economic conditions."[136] The precepts were driven by an ethical impulse to attenuate moral libertinage. Confinement institutions have "not only the aspect of a forced labor camp, but also that of a moral institution responsible for punishing, for correcting a moral 'abeyance.'"[137] However, in the play, together with the Church's entreaty, it is Hue's ostensible productivity that guarantees his stay at Charenton. Despite his inability to communicate verbally with the European characters, Hue is expected to work (107). The doctor conveys his orders by miming. He pretends to drag firewood in order to ask Hue if he has performed the task. Hue is able to understand and nods (111). Despite the ineluctable obstacles to establishing an oral exchange, the physician finds alternate ways to convey orders to ensure Hue produces. Those who cannot afford (literally "cannot buy") firewood must endure cold temperatures. The fact that Hue is both imprisoned and destitute would preclude his access to fuel to keep himself warm (98). However, he is able and required to carry the firewood into the building. Probably the doctor and wealthy inmates who can afford the luxury—such as Sade—will enjoy the privilege, but not Hue. The Chinese man carries the heavy load indoors, panting from exertion (108). He has lost much weight, drained by the cold weather and malnutrition. Hue does not benefit from his labor; the onerous chore depletes his physical resources, resulting in a consumption of his body. His commodity/body matter provides the capital to produce material comfort for others.

The commodification of labor sustains the capitalist world project structurally, in view of the fact that the control on the labor force and its yield underlies the thrust of the world capitalist system. Quijano posits capital as a social relation based on the commodification of the labor force. He states, "Only with America could capital consolidate and obtain global predominance, becoming precisely the axis around which all forms of

[136] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 54.

[137] Ibid., 55.

labor were articulated to satisfy the ends of the world market, configuring a new pattern of global control on labor, its resources, and products: world capitalism."[138] At the end of the twentieth century, the capitalist dynamics of workforce control continued to assert their domination over labor. The Argentine neoliberal economic program authorized "the most comprehensive antilabor measures ever."[139] Privatizations of public services, airlines, and the national oil company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales, together with the opening of trade barriers for imports and other neoliberal strategies, allegedly propelled Argentina into the First World. However, due to the Plan de Convertibilidad that eliminated the possibility of competitive devaluations, the inclusion of the Argentine capitalist economy into the world market would have to rely on the exploitation of labor: under fixed exchange rates, competitiveness depended exclusively on salaries and labor productivity.[140] The working class, chiefly supportive of the Peronist regime, waited for three years before rallying against government measures that were wrecking local industries and, therefore, its labor force. In 1992, despite having a Peronist cabinet in power, the unions organized the first general strike with the support of the Confederación General del Trabajo (General Confederation of Labor), a national trade-union amalgamation.

Whereas the CGT strenuously expressed its disapproval of the government's pauperizing program, *Es necesario entender un poco* does not blatantly portray class allegiances against economic oppression. In the play, class loyalty appears to be an elusive aspiration and, as Georg Lukács contends, "The aspiration only *yields the possibility* [of truth]."[141] In order to achieve the goal, there must be conscious deeds of the proletariat—a

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[138] Quijano, 550-51.

[139] Ronaldo Munck, "Postmodernism, Politics, and Paradigms in Latin America," *Latin American Perspectives* 27, no. 4 (2000): 11.

[140] Alberto R. Bonnet, "La crisis de la convertibilidad en la Argentina," *Theomai* 99 (2002): n.p., accessed September 12, 2010, http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/pdf/124/12490103.pdf.

[141] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist* Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 73.

working class that *must* avoid the hazards of a fallacious multiplicity of mutually independent objects and forces.[142] Instead of representing cases where a conscious proletariat endeavors to instigate revolution, the play features several instances of rivalry among members of the same class.

Hue encounters a pervasive crisis of poverty among a population that fails to comprehend the ubiquity of the problem. Upon arriving in France, the Chinese man meets a local beggar who pesters the recently arrived men for a handout. Appalled at the pauper's indigence, Hue gives him his new coat.[143] Once on European soil, the priest and Hue stop at an inn where a beggar asks for food. Displaying his understanding of Christian compassion, Hue gives the beggar his coat. However, the cleric demands that he reclaim the garment, which he had bought specifically to clothe Hue in an appropriate attire to render him "presentable" (78-80). He says, "Claro que no. Habla a algunos. A mí me dice, ¡que te quedés con el capote!" (81; Of course not. He speaks to some people. He tells me that you should keep your coat!)

Hue asks, "¿Hay pobres aquí, como en China?" (Are there poor here, like in China?); the cleric responds, "Siempre hubo y siempre habrá pobres, Hue. Está el día y la noche, están las gaviotas, los bueyes, los alacranes. Así los pobres. No podemos remediarlo." (79; There always were and always will be poor, Hue. There is day and night; there are seagulls, oxen, scorpions. And so are the poor. We cannot help it.) In this manner, the priest naturalizes poverty. Although the beggar falls into the lumpen proletariat class rather than his own worker-class, Hue stands facing a conspicuous incongruity of the Christian doctrine and wealth distribution. The first glimmer of a universal economic difference comes into view.

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[142] Ibid.

[143] The word used for coat or cloak is "capote." "Echar un capote" is a colloquial expression meaning "to give a hand." Therefore, there is a word play. In giving the coat to the beggar, Hue is not only helping out the man in a material sense but also metaphorically.

Once Hue arrives at the asylum, he meets characters with whom he shares the dehumanizing effects of oppression. This introduces, albeit metaphorically, a somewhat more cohesive concept of class similarity. When Hue meets Carlota Corday at Charenton, she is wearing a straitjacket. In the asylum, Carlota deliriously tries to kill Hue, at first confusing him with Marat (104). Although she recognizes her error, her cruelty does not cease when she realizes that Hue is as victimized as she is. Rather, after Hue removes the straitjacket from her, she bites him ferociously. "Los desdichados no se reconocen" (100; The unfortunate do not recognize each other), Hue laments, a phrase he utters twice more before the play ends (108-9). The repetition speaks to the disassociation among sufferers. Hue, Carlota, and a madman (who plays the role of Marat in Sade's staging)—all considered veritably insane—converge in the asylum. Unlike the Marquis de Sade, an aristocrat with enough funds to support the madman and thus utilize him for the staging of his play, Hue, Carlota, and the lunatic must work for their sustenance (100). Since these characters must offer their labor power in exchange for the means of their subsistence, the play presents an exploited quasi-proletarian class in the asylum.[144]

The debasement of Hue's body has profound impact on his body and his psyche. "No hay pavor más grande..." (120; There is no greater dread…), Hue mumbles nonsensically, half crazed, upon his return to China. His mother endeavors to restore his faith, despite the apparent futility of resisting misfortune when she observes her son's broken body and spirit. As Hue furiously attempts to put on the straitjacket, hoping to conceal his humiliation and despair under the guise of lunacy, his mother beseeches, "La vergüenza no es locura, Hue." (120; Shame is not madness, Hue.) Thus, Gambaro's play

[144] "The laborer receives means of subsistence in exchange for his labor-power; the capitalist receives, in exchange for his means of subsistence, labor, the productive activity of the laborer, the creative force by which the worker not only replaces what he consumes, but also gives to the accumulated labor a greater value than it previously possessed." Karl Marx, *Wage-Labour and Capital & Value, Price, and Profit* (New York: International Publishers Co., 1976), 31. For further discussion on the reproduction of labor power, refer to chapter 2.

paints abjection. The individual cannot bear the pain in acknowledging his suffering.[145] Rather, the character reproduces the dehumanizing commodification of the body in the hands of colonizing economies demanding labor power. The dehumanization of Hue alludes to the dehumanization of the oppressed immigrants who, through no fault of their own, subject themselves to oppressive systems. The domination/colonization of their bodies necessitates contempt for and degradation of their humanness, possibly leading to the individual's self-abasement. The subject may better "make sense" of such cruel dehumanization through a mad reason rather than moral empathy.

There are casualties of neoliberalism across the globe. Contemporary neoliberalism involves the redefinition of capital flows, which includes cultural capital; globalization introduces deregularized and mobile market forces, a process that polarizes social difference not only among states but also within them. As Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista National Liberation Army maintains, neoliberalism implies the globalization of indigence irrespective of national borders.

> The progress of the major transnational companies does not necessarily involve the advance of the countries of the developed world. On the contrary, the richer these giant companies [of the developed world] become, the more poverty there is in the so-called "wealthy" countries. The gap between rich and poor is enormous: far from decreasing, social inequalities are growing.[146]

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[145] In her study of trauma and recovery, Julia Lewis Herman describes the ravaging effects of captivity. In her study, she concentrates on Jacobo Timerman and Alicia Partnoy's cases as examples of trauma resulting from political captivity. Both Timerman and Partnoy were victims of political persecution during the Argentine 1977-83 dictatorship. Given Gambaro's representations of authoritarian oppression in the past, Hue's condition may allude to post-traumatic stress disorders due to political captivity. Jennifer Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 74-96.

[146] Subcomandante Marcos, "The Concentration of Wealth and the Distribution of Poverty," in *The Zapatista Reader*, ed. Tom Hayden (New York: Nation Books, 2002), 276.

Neoliberal globalization has produced what Coronil calls the "desterritorialización de 'Europa' o el Occidente" (deterritorialization of "Europe" or the West), shifting the struggle for dominance to the realm of fluid, omnipresent market forces.[147] It is no longer possible to distinguish a "rich nation" from a "poor nation"; those categories have become merely insubstantial rhetorical devices.

"The structure of permanences and internalized relations secured within the capitalist social order is, in Marx's view, extraordinarily damaging to the lives of untold millions," David Harvey writes.[148] The final scene of the play concentrates on the broken body and spirit of Hue. There seems to be no hope: dehumanization is inexorable, class struggle a failed project. Propitiously, Gambaro offers one encouraging moment. It takes place seconds before the curtain falls. Hue's mother describes the anguish of a degraded body and spirit as she gradually sinks to the ground. She pleads, "¡Oh, Hue, ayudame a caer!" (120; Oh, Hue, help me fall!), thus countering Hue's distress at the dearth of cohesive partnership among the poor. After a long moment, Hue leans over and helps her to her feet. These seconds of hesitation concentrate the colossal anxieties of contesting a deeply entrenched system of violence. Gambaro's play faintly insinuates the possibility of recognition among the disenfranchised, whose alliance may provide communal support.

In a study of metatheatricality in *Es necesario entender un poco* vis-à-vis Weiss's *Marat/Sade*, Stéphanie Urdician contrasts the conclusion of these two plays. She identifies an unresolved philosophical dichotomy with regards to the efficacy of political engagement in Weiss's play. Gambaro's piece, instead, avows the irreducible necessity of building alliances for the affirmation and vindication of individual objectives.

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[147] Fernando Coronil, "Naturaleza del poscolonialismo: del eurocentrismo al globocentrismo," in *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, ed. Edgardo Lander (Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 1993), 103.

[148] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 108.

> La différence fondamentale entre la pièce enchâssée et la pièce cadre résiderait donc dans cet optimisme propre aux œuvres des années 90 de la dramaturge alors que chez Weiss, la question de l'affrontement entre les deux formes d'engagement reste ouverte. Sade ou Marat? Individualisme ou collectivisme?… La pièce de Griselda Gambaro semble apporter un ébauche de réponse: l'engagement individual est indissociable de l'engagement collectif.
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> (The fundamental difference between the play-within-a-play and the frame play consequently lies in this optimism specific to the playwright's works of the nineties, whereas in Weiss, the issue of confrontation of these two forms of engagement remains open. Sade or Marat? Individualism or collectivism?... Griselda Gambaro's work seems to offer a preliminary answer: individual engagement is inseparable from collective engagement.)[149]

Agency is strongly linked to political commitment.[150] An emancipatory project that engages with the Eurocentric discourse of neoliberalism demands what Subcomandante Marcos calls "pockets of resistance." The communal allegiances are the core of resistance, for "those excluded from 'modernity' weave resistances."[151] But an awareness of said exclusion does not suffice to compel the mobilization of heterogeneous individuals. Without a cohesive sense of community, the different agendas of resistance would be diluted in the midst of socioeconomic neoliberal subjugation. In Josee Johnston and Gordon Laxer's words, "Other prerequisites for collective action include deep feelings of shared identity and

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[149] Stéphanie Urdician, "Un engagement en écho: Le *Marat/Sade* de Peter Weiss," in *Itinéraires: Mélanges offerts à Évelyne Martin-Hernandez*, ed. Danielle Corrado and Viviane Alary (Clermont-Ferrand, France: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), 201-2.

[150] Harvey, 107.

[151] Subcomandante Marcos, "The Fourth World War Has Begun," *Nepantla: Views from the South* 2, no. 3 (2001): 569.

solidarity needed to form positive project identities and shared 'agency frames,' and the belief that sustained collective contention will bring results."[152] However, the authors emphasize that movements against neoliberalism cannot be effectual if they operate strictly at the transnational, national, or local level. Johnston and Laxer draw attention to the Zapatistas' use of the Internet. "We can see the Internet-related activities of the Zapatismo network not as a distraction from 'real' mobilization," they contend, "but as an invaluable tool that uses net-works to transmit information quickly."[153]

Es necesario entender un poco alludes to the promising materialization of radical coalitions against a predatory violence. Inasmuch as Hue and his mother create an alliance, thus asserting the people's ability to organize, an affiliation among the subjugated also introduces the possibility of mobilizing a voice of dissension against the oppressor. Lukács argues that oppressed groups must have a sense of the social system of domination and their own situation within it in order to realize their emancipatory objectives.[154] In the face of forceful neoliberal policies exacerbated by discourses of Otherness, coalitions may put naturalized difference into question, unsettling the purported bounded units Coronil characterizes. The play imagines the possibility, urging the oppressed (and those who pledge their solidarity to their cause) to establish partnerships for contestation. It alludes to the joint formation of pockets of resistance against neoliberalism. So long as the victims blame other victims, so long as there is division rather than coalition, bourgeois power stands in place. The discourse of difference hinders the fight against neoliberal subjugation,

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[152] Josee Johnston and Gordon Laxer, "Solidarity in the Age of Globalization: Lessons from the Anti-MAI and Zapatista Struggles," *Theory and Society* 32, no. 1 (2003): 43.

[153] Ibid., 73.

[154] "The superior strength of true, practical class consciousness lies in the ability to look beyond the divisive symptoms of the economic process to the unity of the total social system underlying it. In the age of capitalism it is not possible for the total system to become directly visible in external phenomena. For instance, the economic basis of a world crisis is undoubtedly unified and its coherence can be understood. But its actual appearance in time and space will take the form of a disparate succession of events in different countries at different times and even in different branches of industry in a number of countries." Lukács, 74.

provided that it sustains chasms among individuals. There is hope, nonetheless, if pockets of resistance can organize around concrete and pressing issues. There has indeed been evidence of increasingly conspicuous and powerful collective discourse to some extent emerging from political struggles of labor and other subordinate factions.[155] One cannot assume that globalization necessarily renders cross-cultural communication inevitable. The play shows how "humanity continues to be divided by cultural barriers, linguistic gaps, material inequalities, tactical differences, and radically different life-worlds."[156] Furthermore, the romanticization of communities may obscure the internal conflicts in them. Zygmunt Bauman warns us of the dangers of idealizing a community as an "enabling capacity." "Naturalized" traditions are in fact "reinvented by our dedication, our selective memory and selective seeing, our behaving 'as if' they defined our conduct."[157]

Due to the globalization of issues—and aren't neocolonialism and neoliberalism major matters of contention?—social movements have internationalized. The globalized concerns bank on the institution of globalized points of view with regard to issues that link anxieties of the whole world to individual, localized parts of the world. Hence, the concrete experience of the individual cases validates and substantiates the idea of global injustice.[158] In his examination of the South African struggle against apartheid, Christian Lahusen claims that "local and global issues become interrelated and this global-local link was set by universalist moral standards that were to be made equally valid at home and abroad."[159] After the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the world showed its

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[155] Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1986), 191.

[156] Johnston and Laxer, 75.

[157] Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 276.

[158] Christian Lahusen, *The Rhetoric of Moral Protest: Public Campaigns, Celebrity Endorsement, and Political Mobilization* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 327.

[159] Ibid., 326.

sympathy to the victims and survivors. The musicians of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra issued a statement before the beginning of a concert on October 9, 2001, at Carnegie Hall: "John F. Kennedy said during a critical moment of Berlin's history, 'Ich bin ein Berliner.' In this horrible moment we say to you: 'We are all New Yorkers.'"[160]

Despite hopes placed on the efficacy of transnational allegiances, the state cannot be totally effaced. Johnston and Laxer argue, "National identities are important links between the global and the local…. It is possible to have nationally-rooted projects for economic self-determination that also make transnational connections of solidarity with movements in other nations, and that allow for the co-existence of transnational and sub-national identities."[161] These communal partnerships may propel a cohesive front against neoliberal armies, debunking the myth of global economic justice. Only then can they assert genuine independence and social equity.

Let us recall that Occidentalism is not a mere discursive apparatus devoid of economic implications. Capitalism underlies reified institutions and classifications of modernity. "Cultural constructs" Coronil argues, "come to acquire, like a commercial brand, an independent objective existence as well as the semblance of a subjective life."[162] Coronil invokes Marx when he contends that these categories are necessary fetishes insofar as they are concurrently true and false. These mystifications participate in the formation and organization of social relations in capitalist society, but they also obfuscate their character.[163] Since "human individuals … have a remarkable capacity to capture and reorganize energy

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[160] Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, "Side by Side—We Are all New Yorkers," United States Embassy in Germany, accessed on May 11, 2009, http://usa.usembassy.de/gemeinsam/06e.htm.

[161] Johnston and Laxer, 78.

[162] Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism," 79.

[163] "For example, the idea that money 'begets' money, that money 'grows' or 'produces' interest in banks, is a fetishistic mystification in that money does not in fact expand by itself. Yet it is an accurate depiction of what happens in capitalist society when money is placed as capital in banks, where it is used as a means to capture value produced elsewhere. Thus money does appear to grow in banks. This appearance, as well as the obscuring of the actual source of money's 'growth,' is necessary for the constitution and legitimation of capitalist society." Ibid., 75.

and information flows in ways which are creative rather than passive," as David Harvey claims, Gambaro reinterprets and reconfigures contemporary social arrangements onstage.[164] Her work is a reply to a Menemist neoliberal exploitative program; she creatively "captures and reorganizes" social relations for the purpose of critiquing them. Performed at a time when the economy established hierarchies and its inherent class struggle was underway, *Es necesario entender un poco* portrays the detrimental effects of class misidentification. Although at times the language acquires lyrical qualities, I believe the violence onstage is all too blatant to be dismissed as metaphorical. The materiality of bodies resists an exclusively poetic or literary discursive interpretation. Gambaro uncovers the racialized and bigoted social paradigms, thus forcing the audience to reconsider the ways world citizens recognize each other. Gambaro and director Yusem recreate aggression and oppression across national boundaries, internationalizing conflict in a global village. If the unfortunate do not recognize each other, a reconfiguration of affiliations based on a deromanticized and critical understanding the micro and macropolitics of neoliberalism opens new venues and means to contest globalized exploitation. But first, it is necessary to understand a little.

[164] Harvey, 52.

Chapter 2

Eating Entertainment: Modes of Consumption in José María Muscari's *Shangay*

> It is significant that our word for the use of a commodity—consumption—is drawn from the guts and the gullet.[1]
>
> Terry Eagleton

The above epigraph introduces the semantic implications of the word "consumption." Terry Eagleton suggests that the term employed to express the use of a commodity stems from the physiological digestive process taking place in the human viscera. Thus, he implies that commodities are consumed, just as food is ingested. Furthermore, this homology posits a connection between material processes of production and use. "Consumption" is a polyvalent term linking biological and socioeconomic systems. Accordingly, eating—and not eating—may extend its meaning beyond the physiological implications of consuming foodstuffs. It may point to another more general, though no less physical, use of material objects.

Understandably, as a literary scholar, Eagleton concentrates on the deployment of these multivalencies in literary cultural products. In his essay, he focuses on the literary device of eating by expounding on authors who use food metaphors or "gustatory tropes" in their writing. He refers to Jonathan Swift, whose pamphlet propounding the breeding, raising, and ingestion of children offers one of the most provocative models where food and literary tropes operate in concert.[2] There is a fair analogy to be made: whereas the body's

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[1] Terry Eagleton, "Edible Ecriture," in *Consuming Passions: Food in the Age of Anxiety*, ed. Sian Griffiths and Jennifer Wallace (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), 206.

[2] Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal," Project Gutenberg, accessed September 13, 2009, http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1080.

material derives from food, our mind functions with words. "It is no wonder," Eagleton argues, "that eating and speaking should continually cross over in metaphorical exchange."[3] However, if attention is focused on food merely as a figure of speech, one may fail to notice that food consumption has material—namely, non-metaphorical—physiological repercussions. Food is a commodity with particular properties, incorporating and entering into distinct social relations.

In this chapter, bearing in mind the complex multivalencies of food in specific social webs, I examine some metaphorical and material animations of food participating in cultural performance. In order to contain the object of study within intelligible and demarcated boundaries, I choose to focus on prolific Argentine actor/director/author José María Muscari and one of his most commercially successful works: *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas* (Shangay, Green Tea and Sushi in Eight Scenes). This markedly dynamic play had several productions from 2004 to 2006. In this study, I concentrate on the 2006 staging, because this particular production was mounted in a theatre-restaurant. In this specific case, the multiple constructions of demographic, material, commercial, and theatrical environments produce and inform all representations and employment of food, both on and offstage. Given that the performance and its environment flaunted a parade of food consumption, foreshadowed in the title of the play, a study of the various sorts of consumption at issue in this theatrical event presents the opportunity to discern multiple capital flows around and within the performance. Moreover, I claim that these sites of capital production and exchange are far from discrete, insofar as they generate an intricate network of social relations. The dynamics of these negotiations describes a dialectical system ensuing and spawning from dispositions and practices of capitalist consumption.

[3] Eagleton, 207. For an example of a literary and dramatic analysis of food-related metaphors and representations, see John Wilkins, ed., *Food in European Literature* (Exeter, UK: Intellect Books, 1996).

Consumption (and production) of all commodities are dialectically social and metabolic. Those moments unfold in a dialectical movement where consumption transpires at cultural, economic, and biological levels under specific and irreducible social conditions. The critical apparatus I use builds upon particular assumptions derived from historical materialism and complicated by theorists from different fields of knowledge. In this way, according to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics," and their "origin and growth" contribute to a thorough examination of a social network, whose history arises from "material production of life itself."[4] The challenge, as Eagleton states it, is to ascertain "the full pressure of a cultural artefact while striving at the same time to displace it into its enabling material conditions and set it within a complex field of social power."[5]

Through a Marxian economic lens, I problematize social relations among agents engaged in the production of *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas* in terms of class, what David Harvey calls "positionality in relation to capital accumulation and circulation."[6] Accrued capital takes many forms, yet it is always, to some extent, materially conspicuous. For instance, the restaurant ambience is produced through an entangled network of social engagement, inasmuch as social, economic, and artistic agents participating—unwittingly or not—in a performance of *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas* produce a material frame for the event. In capitalism, these relationships are grounded in capital accumulation and class struggle. Considering these social organizations, I analyze production critically as a materially produced event for capitalist consumption, always bearing in mind the dialectical

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[4] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology (Selections)," in *Modern Political Thought*, ed. David Wootton, trans. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 813.

[5] Terry Eagleton, introduction (Part I) to *Marxist Literary Theory*, ed. Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 7.

[6] David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 102.

movements of consumption and production.[7] Since any kind of performance—including theatre—is a social *product*, its consumption is also at stake.[8] Such activity evinces the dialectical movements of social relations. In light of the bold evidence of these negotiations associated with *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas*, I draw attention to some social motions in neoliberal sociocultural economies. By using this dramatic work as the pivot of the study, I argue that neoliberalism produces, is produced by, and informs social relations connected to and invested in any theatrical production.

The study focuses on the particular conditions of food consumption around and within this historically specific performance, by situating them within the event's socioeconomic and geographic milieu. In this particular show, food is quite an important object of production and consumption. It packs more than symbolic value. Food consumption imprints the title, the text, the performance, and its venue. Because the performance takes place in a theatre-restaurant, the particular production, consumption, and metabolization of food entail a mobilization of objects and bodies—a mutation of physical things—operating both within the play and in its frame. These social processes are both theatrical and metatheatrical, activating accumulation of a range of forms of capital by means of the consumption of produced matter.[9] Thus, in such sites where food ingestion is

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[7] "The obvious, *trite* notion: … production creates the objects which correspond to the given needs; distribution divides them up according to social laws; exchange further parcels out the already divided shares in accord with individual needs; and finally, in consumption, the product steps outside this social movement and becomes a direct object and servant of individual need, and satisfies it in being consumed." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Penguin Books and *New Left Review*, 1992), 88-89 (emphasis mine).

[8] "Production mediates consumption; it creates the latter's material; without it, consumption would lack an object. But consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the products the subject for whom they are products." Ibid., 91.

[9] Marx contends that capital is not a thing, but a relationship "pertaining to a particular historical social formation, which simply takes the form of a thing and gives this thing a specific social character. Its first form of appearance is money. According to Bourdieu, there are several types of capital: (actual or potential) financial, cultural, technological, juridical, organizational, commercial, and symbolic—all of them social relations, as well. Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin Classics and *New Left Review*, 1990), 247, 253; Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *The Sociology of Economic Life*, ed. Mark S. Granovetter and Richard Swedberg (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2001), 101; Bourdieu, "Le champ économique," *Actes de la recherché en science sociales* 119 (1997), 52.

foregrounded, the dialectics of consumption and production seems intriguingly complex, because it has plainly social *and* biological importance. Clearly, the physical human body mediates consumption and production practices.

Some modalities of capital accumulation manifest themselves in the cultural product called *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas* in the context of Argentine theatre in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Therefore, I introduce the reader to some aspects of the Buenos Aires theatre scene, and José María Muscari's own positionality as a playwright, a director, and a cultural agent. Muscari's body of work encompasses an idiosyncratic and distinctive dramaturgy. Born in 1976, he belongs to a different generation from that of so-called political playwrights (such as Griselda Gambaro) who responded to the 1970s and 80s military dictatorship. In his distinctive manner, Muscari contributes to the development of new theatrical techniques and approaches among theatre makers. He has taught courses and seminars at important academic and cultural institutions such as the Centro de Investigación Cinematográfica (Center for Cinematographic Research), the Universidad de Palermo, and Teatro Municipal General San Martín. His training of theatre artists in Buenos Aires perceptibly fashions a performance aesthetic noted for inventive—and sometimes jarring—juxtapositions of highbrow and lowbrow elements. Muscari's work is neither vaudeville nor revue; in fact, it defies any tried-and-true formula. Informed by the artist's eclectic biography, the works challenge traditional genre categorizations. They display the fusion of performance environments where Muscari learned and developed his craft.

Even though Muscari graduated from the Escuela Municipal de Arte Dramático (Municipal Dramatic Arts School), his artistic visibility emerged out of his nocturnal performances. He had his acting debut at the Parakultural[10] in *Necesitamos oxígeno* (We Need

[10] The Parakultural was a major hub of the theatre avant-garde of the late eighties and very early nineties. Artists such as Alejandro Urdapilleta, the Gambas al Ajillo, and the late Batato Barea started their performance careers at the Parakultural. It became a symbol of the Buenos Aires "underground."

Oxygen) at the age of sixteen.[11] He developed an audience by less traditional means, bringing together a substantial mass of young followers at his *Fiestas del Deseo* (Parties of Desire) held after midnight in venues such as the Teatro del Abasto and Uni Club from 2000 to late 2004.[12] Staged at the Centro Cultural San Martín in 1995, *Criaturas de las sombras* (Creatures of the Shadows) was his first attempt at playwriting and directing.[13] Later work has been featured in renowned cultural events in Argentina. His *Salsipuedes* (Escape-if-you-can) earned him the award for Best Show at the 1997 Bienal Arte Joven (Young Art Biennial).[14] The "dramatic installation" *Belleza cruda* (Raw Beauty) played at the 2004 Festival de Verano Porteño (Buenos Aires Summer Festival) at Ciudad Cultural Konex.[15] With his postmodern *Electra Shock*—a very free adaptation of Sophocles's tragedy—Muscari participated in the 2006 Konex Festival, whose focus was "Greek Theatre in The City."

In 2006, Muscari staged the play *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas* at the Chacarerean Teatre. The piece is, as its title suggests, eight loosely bound scenes tracing the break-up of a gay male couple in an Asian-themed restaurant. The play was advertised—and rightly so—as the depiction of a love story gone awry. Over the course of these eight episodes, interspersed with flashbacks of their relationship, Lucas learns that Alejo is leaving

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[11] José María Muscari, "Microsite de dramaturgos," Portal de Dramaturgos, accessed 23 June, 2009, http://www.portaldedramaturgos.com.ar/josemariamuscari.

[12] Marcelo Saltal and Rafael Sabini, "Cuando ser uno mismo sacude," *Revista El Abasto,* August 2007, accessed June 23, 2009, http://www.revistaelabasto.com.ar/Jos%E9Mar%EDaMuscari.htm; Beatriz Trastoy, "José María Muscari: hacia un teatro más allá de las definiciones," *Archivo Virtual Artes Escénicas,* accessed April 24, 2006, http://artesescenicas.uclm.es/index.php?sec=texto&id=44&PHPSESSID =a21db99a4fcebf0d693e3363ab6ea64a. The Uni Club is a discotheque sometimes also used as a performance space.

[13] "Artistas: José María Muscari," Archivo Virtual Artes Escénicas, accessed June 19, 2009, http://artesescenicas.uclm.es/index.php?sec=artis&id=12&PHPSESSID =15f339e1800b03f4128626c498549f57.

[14] José María Muscari, "Microsite de dramaturgos," Portal de Dramaturgos, accessed June 23, 2009, http://www.portaldedramaturgos.com.ar/josemariamuscari. The word *salsipuedes* is a play on words: it is a city in the Argentine province of Córdoba as well as the conflation of the words *sal si puedes* (escape/leave if you can).

[15] "Electra Shock," Ciudad Cultural Konex, accessed June 23, 2009, http://www.ciudadculturalkonex.com /web/actividades.php?codigo=57. Fundación Konex is a very prestigious sponsor of the arts in Buenos Aires (see introduction). It has its own theatre spaces at the Ciudad Cultural Konex (Konex Cultural City) where newer or more innovative artists exhibit their work.

him for the more "masculine" Mariano, with whom Alejo will move to Spain. In the second half of the play, Lucas's mother Zulma stops by the restaurant and stokes the conflict between lovers. As the action unfolds, two actresses (playing performers who work as waitresses at the Asian-themed restaurant) dance and tell stories to create what they call an "Oriental" night in an otherwise "non-thematic" establishment. As effective Brechtian techniques, these brief performances interrupt Alejo's and Lucas's conversation and break the play into eight scenes. At the beginning of each scene, its title appears projected on a screen in Spanish and in purportedly Asian characters. In the last scene, "kazoku" (translated in the play as "in the family") (25), Alejo kisses Lucas abruptly and leaves the restaurant. Zulma encourages her son to come home with her and watch the film *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* together. Lucas rebuffs her; he prefers to be alone rather than with her (25). At long last, he recognizes the futility of trying to save the relationship.

What was rather uncommon for the Buenos Aires stage was the manner in which the production did not suggest a reductive mockery of blatantly sexual gay relationships by exaggerating formulaic stereotypes of sleazy hypersexual depravity (except to those who find BDSM a perversion). Lucas and Alejo represented a fairly "ordinary" couple that must face one partner's infidelity. Critics praised the show—and forewarned potential spectators—by calling it an ironic revelation of gay clichés, a parody of the genre's conventions, a discovery of a mysterious territory, a performance of a high-impact gay subject (and not suitable for the squeamish). It features, *La Razón*'s critic Javier Firpo cautions, "besos de verdad … y trastes al aire" (real kissing and bare buttocks).[16] More recent reviews reproduce these views, stressing the "transgressive" nature of Muscari's work.

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[16] Cecilia Sosa offers a similar assessment: "En *Shangay* hay besos de verdad (un poco distintos a los Florencia de la V y el Sr. Uriarte), mucho baile en calzón y culos al aire." (In *Shangay* there are real kisses—somewhat different to those of Florencia de la V [a transgendered actress] and Mr. Uriarte [a character in the commercially successful television series *Los Roldán*]), much dancing in underwear, and bare asses.) "'*Shangay*' Escrita, Dirigida y Portagonizada [*sic*] por Muscari," Pressenta Producciones Comunicación, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.pressenta.com.ar/vernota.php?id=197.

"Muscari es Muscari" (Muscari is Muscari), critic Cecilia Sosa asserts as she hypes his "transgressive" personality, a trait that the actor/director/playwright disavows.[17] In his review of Muscari's 2008 purposefully autobiographical show *Crudo* (Raw), Martín Wullich observes how the performer successfully draws audiences' attention by way of transgression and provocative projects, which have rendered him quite famous in off- and not-so-off theatre circles.[18] *Shangay* is not highbrow art attracting spectators with great symbolic capital. Its subject matter may still repel audiences with sharply honed, sophisticated palates for revered works, which tend to be plays by formerly provocative playwrights or revivals of cultured plays mostly—though not exclusively—visible at venues such as the government-run Complejo Teatral Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires Theatre Complex), or the Ricardo Rojas and de la Cooperación Cultural Centers. Muscari's productions may eventually be staged in such spaces, but it is not his goal to achieve this sort of consecration. He never intends to cater to intellectuals; he asserts that his work's target is the public at large rather than the intelligentsia.[19]

Muscari's work is widely known for its gay themes or characters. *Piel de chancho* (Pigskin), a play he wrote and directed at the Teatro del Pueblo in 2006, opened with a minimalist scenery. As spectators entered, they saw an austerely furnished set, where the focal point was a porn girl-on-girl film playing on a television set. One of the three protagonists was an in-the-closet lesbian struggling with the possibility of coming out. *Cash*,

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[17] Sosa, "Felices juntos," *Página 12,* September 19, 2004, Radar Section; Edgardo Pérez Castilo, "El humor lo pongo en duda," *Página 12*, July 19, 2007, Culture Section, Rosario edition.

[18] José María Muscari, comment on "La prensa y *Crudo*," *Crudo* blog, September 6, 2008, accessed April 24, 2009, http://crudoteatro.blogspot.com/2008_09_01_archive.html. It is evidently impossible to provide a flawless parallel between the Buenos Aires and New York theatre venues' commercial cachet. In Argentina, the "off" circuit is somewhat homologous to off-off-Broadway. However, artists who have achieved name recognition would belong to a quasi off-Broadway sphere. Some of these theatre practitioners would disavow their belonging to a more commercially enticing segment. Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the French publishing industry can provide a useful apparatus to study this phenomenon. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

[19] Diego Segura, "Los prejuicios nos cagan la vida," Actoresonline.com, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.actoresonline.com/notas-muscari.htm.

staged at Teatro Maipo in 2009, featured a male gay committed couple. Arguably, his personal investment in staging the everyday experience of an LGBTQ person was most evident in *Crudo*. In the autobiographical show, he discussed his love life, his financial situation, his parents, and their neighbors. He showed pictures of his relatives and friends; he disclosed his monthly expenses, his weekly meal plans, and his proclivity for bodybuilding supplements. In one of the show's most stirring moments, Muscari shared his anguish at being legally incapable of adopting a child. In a most articulate and sincere way, he addressed the audience during the performance. He (non-rhetorically) asked for any sort of explanation so he could finally understand and capitulate to ineluctable legal restrictions.[20] *Crudo* legitimizes the conflation of the artist and the individual taking place within certain circles of the cultural field. According to audiences attending his shows, Muscari himself is the source of attraction.[21] His aesthetics produces a particular persona and an œuvre critics and distinct audiences celebrate as a challenge to mainstream straitlaced norms—as entries to his blog site seem to indicate, for instance.[22]

The press's sweeping assessment of Muscari's transgressive work seems to be based on his flagrant representation of (his) gayness in sexualized terms. Showing naked bodies onstage allegedly "transgresses" some non-verbalized standards critics in major media sources fail to identify—even if they can avow the breach of the undefined imperatives.[23] Although the rules of social (sexual) decorum are impossible to pin down entirely, they

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[20] These restrictions have been recently lifted legislatively. Law No. 26618, July 21, 2010, B.O. 1-4.

[21] In his blog, Muscari reports what famous producer Lino Patalano said to him while *Shangay* was running with great success at the Maipo theatre. According to his recollection, the producer said to him, "La gente viene a la boletería y ni saben lo que van a ver. Sólo dicen 'dame para la de Muscari…' Eso no lo pierdas nunca. Es muy difícil de lograr que el público diga tu nombre en la boletería, nene." (People come to the box office and have no clue of what they are going to see. They just say, "Give me tickets for Muscari's…" Don't ever lose that. It is very difficult to make the audience say your name at the box office, kid.) José María Muscari, "Dame para 'la de Muscari,'" *Mundo Muscari* (blog), April 14, 2010, accessed September 12, 2010, http://mundomuscari.blogspot.com/2010/04/dame-para-la-de-muscari.html.

[22] José María Muscari, *Mundo Muscari* (blog), http://mundomuscari.blogspot.com.

[23] Muscari purportedly displays "el afán transgresor de los cuerpos desnudos" (the transgressive insistence on naked bodies). Cecilia Sosa, "Felices juntos," *Página 12,* September 19, 2004, Radar Section.

nonetheless exist as practiced classificatory constructions deployed, as Pierre Bourdieu asserts, "below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control of the will."[24] Reviewers ascribe to themselves the ability to at least discern the boundaries of social appropriateness, despite the elusive nature of these dictates. Although critics cannot articulate these margins, like Justice Potter Stewart, they know a break from "superior" taste when they see it.[25]

Much of what is considered transgressive by critics is Muscari's blatant (homo)eroticism. Reviewers and audiences are drawn to Muscari and his productions for the very reason that his works are different from the heteronormative aesthetic. Muscari's so-called peripheral position, both menacing and depraved, allures and captivates. Many loyal followers define themselves as Muscari fans because of the "alternative" nature of his productions.[26] They are self-declared open-minded observers, fascinated by a new "transgressive" aesthetic that contests the establishment's doxa, who assert their desire for this particular aesthetic. This coterie defines its taste for his art in a "quasi-negative way," using Bourdieu's term,[27] by snubbing criteria of socially accepted (bourgeois) taste. These agents in the field of theatre production and consumption legitimize his work when deemed an amalgamation of progressive responses to bourgeois predispositions.

Muscari can actually play with these dualities. At one of the performances of *Shangay* I attended, he noticed four young and attractive women at a table next to him. He drew the

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[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 466.

[25] In *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, Justice Potter Stewart offered the following definition of obscenity: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it." *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 U.S. 184 (1964).

[26] On September 2, 2010, Facebook reported that 1203 members "liked" him. Danila Terragno reported in her blog that he had 4906 "friends." Danila Terragno, "Feizbuk y Clipeado," *El Gran Salto* (blog), April 19, 2010, accessed September 2, 2010, http://elgransalto.blogspot.com/2010/04/feizbuk-y-clipeado.html. For some examples of fans' appreciation of Muscari and his work, see *Mundo Muscari* (blog); *Feizbuk* (blog), http://www.feizbukteatro.blogspot.com; José María Muscari's Facebook page, accessed September 2, 2010, http://es-es.facebook.com/pages/Jose-Maria-Muscari/191650343141.

[27] Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 294.

audience's attention to them and described them impromptu as "desperate housewives." Thus, he facetiously hinted at the similarities between them and the bourgeois suburbanites in the eponymous television show, without conveying either censure or approval. Despite resisting dichotomous categories, Muscari, *enfant terrible*, is either celebrated or condemned for his carnivalization of theatre conventions—evident in the mix of genres and the confluence of highbrow, mass, popular, and erotic performance components—as well as for his disregard for assumptions and expectations of decorum, and appropriate (gay) self-restraint.

Notwithstanding the substantial legal strides toward recognition of and respect for the LGBTQ population, Argentina has a virulently homophobic history. From the cultural canonization of Esteban Echeverría's 1839 short story *El Matadero* (*The Slaughter House*) and the military junta's exhibition of virile, strong bodies revering the feminized Patria (Homeland), to the reproduction of homosocial (and rabidly homophobic) character of male competition in soccer, the history of Argentina manifests a chauvinistic disownment and repudiation of homosexuality.[28] At the political level, nonetheless, the LGBTQ community has gained some legal protection. The Argentine Congress passed and President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner promulgated a bill legalizing same-sex marriage in 2010, thus amending the Civil Code.[29] This legislation provides a legal framework for what has become increasingly visible in mass culture. LGBTQ characters, love stories, and physical displays of sexual desire now appear prominently in family-oriented television series. Furthermore, since 2004, the international LGBTQ film festival Diversa screens every year a collection of

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[28] Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 68, 114. After a soccer game against Uruguay on October 14, 2009, Diego Maradona inveighed against his critics in a press conference, "A los que no creían, a los que no creyeron,… que me la chupen, que me la sigan chupando.... Ustedes me trataron como me trataron, sigan mamando." (To those who didn't use to believe, to those who didn't believe,... blow me, and keep on blowing me…. You treated me the way you treated me, [so] keep on sucking it.) Ángel González , "Maradona: '¡Que la chupen, que la chupen!,'" *Elmundo.es*, October 15, 2009, accessed January 5, 2010, http://www.elmundo.es/elmundodeporte/2009/10/15/futbol/1255566051.html.

[29] Law No. 26618, July 21, 2010, B.O. 1-4.

provocative motion pictures. This endeavor is sponsored in part by the City of Buenos Aires and the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Visuales (National Film and Audiovisual Arts Institute).[30]

In addition, there has been an emergence of conspicuous cases that have challenged a heteronormative view. For example, Cris Miró became the first transvestite to headline a straight revue on Avenida Corrientes.[31] She was a significant figure insofar as the debates on homosexuality included her success in crossing over.[32] Producer and television-show host Mario Pergolini—always portrayed as an example of a progressive and rebellious character due to his irreverent television and radio broadcasts—recurrently ridiculed Miró in his famous television program *Caiga quien caiga* (Let the Chips Fall Where They May). This drove Hugo Salas, film critic of *El Amante* magazine, to censure the ongoing mockery; in so doing, he explicitly rebuked the indiscriminate use of the expression "*progre*" (progressive) to describe Pergolini.[33]

With the advent of the new millennium, the LGBTQ community and its closet was a subject of interest in mass media. Whereas LGBTQ people used to be mostly fodder for mockery in comedies that stereotyped gays as deviants and sexual predators, younger generations have grown up surrounded by a different range of images and engagements regarding sexuality and gender performance. In 2001, the so-called *destape gay* (gay coming-out) was promoted by *Revista Noticias*.[34] Its cover featured four iconic "out" men in popular

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[30] Diversa, "Diversa: Festival Internacional de Cine Gay/Lésbico/Trans de Argentina," PRISMA Asociación Civil por la Diversidad, accessed June 26, 1009, http://www.diversa.com.ar/2008/index_en.htm.

[31] Avenida Corrientes is, like New York City's Broadway, the epicenter of Buenos Aires commercial theatre.

[32] Jeffrey Tobin, "A Question of Balls: The Sexual Politics of Argentine Soccer," in *Decomposition: Post-Disciplinary Performance*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case, Philip Brett, and Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 118.

[33] Osvaldo Bazán, *Historia de la homosexualidad en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Marea Editorial, 2006), 390, 484.

[34] The publication is a politics-oriented magazine evincing a fervid allegiance to neoliberal values. It is best known for decrying corruption, scandal, and controversy, though always connoting its strong political ideology. It is published by Editorial Perfil, which together with Editorial Atlántida prints the majority of mass-market magazines.

culture: Fernando Peña, a notoriously polemical actor and radio talk show host; Gastón Trezeguet, a contestant on the television show *Gran Hermano 3: el debate* (Big Brother 3: The Debate); Julio Bocca, a renowned ballet dancer; and journalist Juan Castro.[35] The last became a gay icon, due to his professional visibility, his elegance, and his beauty. In fact, Castro's status is addressed in *Shangay*: Alejo expresses his finding Castro extremely attractive, but beyond his reach.[36] These prominent men became gay emblems in the public eye. Consequently, it is fair to say that every spectator would understand the allusion to Castro and his cultural significance. Similarly, Lucas refers to watching videos of Antonio Gasalla and Carlos Perciavalle.[37] These guileless references to overt homosexuality evince the noteworthy recent change in mainstream perceptions of LGBTQ people and their lifestyles.

An acceptance of Muscari's reputation and the appreciation of his artistic production, based on the spectators' advocacy for a collective reassessment of society's engagement with its LGBTQ community, brand the director and his work as evidence of rebellious intent. Muscari denies such claims: "La trangresión está puesta en el que ve; no me siento un transgressor." (Transgression is in the eye of the beholder; I don't see myself as a transgressor.)[38] However, as Jonathan Dollimore argues, transgression may in fact reproduce in another arena the very exploitation that it otherwise resists.[39] A pseudo-revolutionary art

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[35] Ibid., 380. Peña disavowed the term gay, calling himself a *puto* (fag). His performances and radio shows always generated controversy. Peña died of liver cancer in 2008.

[36] Lucas criticizes Alejo for wanting other men, including Castro. Alejo replies,"Juan Castro no estaba a mi alcance. Era un pibe de la televisión, un ícono gay. A muchos les gustaba. Hasta las minas se calentaban con Juan Castro." (6; Juan Castro was out of my reach. He was a guy on television, a gay icon. Many liked him. Even chicks get horny for Juan Castro.) The past tense is due to the fact that Juan Castro died in 2004 in a notorious accident/suicide that was garishly covered by the press.

[37] Gay actors Gasalla and Perciavalle used to perform together in café concerts (dinner theatre show featuring variety numbers) in the sixties and seventies. They became famous for performing in drag onstage, in television, and film.

[38] M. L., "José María Muscari actúa 'a la gorra,'" Auténtico Teatro, accessed September 1, 2010, http://autenticoteatro.blogspot.com/2009/08/jose-maria-muscari-actua-la-gorra.html.

[39] Jonathan Dollimore, "Transgression and Surveillance in *Measure for Measure*" in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 85.

is, using Eagleton's phrase, a "licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off."[40] To younger audiences engaging his work, Muscari's products may suggest a deviation from the norm, a contestation (intentional or not) of the status quo, but the purported rebellion—maybe even an alleged (aesthetic) revolution—materializes as a social behavior confined to a certain range of experience. The social segment of theatre-going consumers of Muscari's work relishes these cultural products, believing in what Jon McKenzie calls the "transformational potential of theatre and performance."[41] Therefore, these audiences champion the prospect of social efficacy. They disavow the rigid model of critical assumptions and ideologies regulating one's assessments of a performance's capabilities. This sort of denial of social presumptions suggests the creation of a liminal-norm whereby, according to McKenzie, "the valorization of liminal transgression or resistance becomes itself normative."[42] The degree of contestation in performance thus becomes the audiences' gauge of artistic/social competence and virtue of the work.

An artistic and cultural clout protects Muscari's representations of heteromorphic gender performance from reactionary criticism. His prestige in the alternative theatre scene shelters his impugnation of heteronormative sexuality, since "those who are already socially privileged can afford to indulge in greater sexual transgression," as Katherine Sender contends.[43] Bourdieu's theories help explain Muscari's consecration within a certain sociocultural circle. Some cultural agents consider his work transgressive because, Bourdieu writes, "these ritual acts of sacrilege, profanations which only ever scandalize the believers,

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[40] Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981), 148.

[41] Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 34-35.

[42] McKenzie contends that the theorization of a liminal-norm may in itself become subversive. Ibid., 50.

[43] Katherine Sender, "Sex Sells: Sex, Class, and Taste in Commercial Gay and Lesbian Media," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9, no. 3 (2003): 353.

are bound to become sacred in their turn and provide the basis for a new belief."[44] The reception of allegedly transgressive works of art unveils the paradox of the way art works. Thus was the case in *Shangay*. Butt fucking onstage? A man spreading his lover's ass and slowly letting his spit drool between the partner's ass cheeks as lubricant, while eyeing his audience as if to *épater le bourgeois*? The litmus test of the spectator's worldliness was his or her reaction to these titillating elements in *Shangay*. Did the spectator turn his eyes away in disgust or shock? Did she gasp while watching the scene closely? Did he sit back nonchalantly, conveying a "been there, done that" attitude? I noticed that reactions varied, but younger spectators tended to get higher grades on the test.

Although Muscari's work may be kitschy, crude, and crass to middlebrow audiences, these theatrical moments are deemed fresh and irreverent by the sophisticated connoisseurs of the artistic field. Theatre critics deploy their symbolic capital; and mostly young audiences celebrate new aesthetics rejecting previous artistic genres to convey, in Bourdieu's words, "indifference to power or money and the 'intellectual' refusal of the 'spirit of seriousness.'"[45] Collectively, they canonize Muscari and his cultural production as a new "transgressive" expression in the theatre scene. Muscari himself comments, "Creo que 'lo transgresor,' 'lo polémico,' lo 'kitch [*sic*] o bizarro' de mis obras a veces hacen que sean como 'de moda,' y lo que está de moda, al mercado siempre le gusta. Yo no sé lo que es la moda; yo hago lo que tengo ganas." (I think 'what's transgressive,' 'polemical,' 'kitsch or bis' in my plays sometimes make them 'trendy,' and the market always likes what's trendy. I don't know what the trend is; I do what I want to do.)[46] His works are a new concept, a different product bearing a newly coined label. "Muscari is Muscari" posits a new category in the classification of theatrical works.

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[44] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 80.

[45] Ibid., 105.

[46] Lorena Meritano, "José María Muscari en 'Habla Lorena,'" *Hoy Internacional*, December 21, 2009, accessed January 6, 2010, http://concordiahoy.com/noticias/7789.html.

The intelligentsia buttresses Muscari's reputation by consecrating his production with the clique's stamp of approval. Invoking both the longstanding reputations of the press media that employ them and their renown as experienced reviewers, theatre pundits arbitrate the quality of shows and the artists behind them, thus making—and breaking—the artistic relevance of theatre-related cultural producers in the social web of agents. Bourdieu focuses his attention on the artist vis-à-vis the art dealer, claiming that the cultural businessman is "at one and the same time the person who exploits the labour of the 'creator' by trading in the 'sacred.'"[47] The argument applies to those individuals who have some stake in the consecration of the artist. A reviewer, like an art dealer, "is the person who can proclaim the value of the author he defends," Bourdieu writes.[48] Critics influence the theatre business inasmuch as their writing and their advice endorse a particular artist on an aesthetic level. Their support of Muscari relies on their accrued symbolic capital, their assumed competence to legimitize an artist and her œuvre. A critic's reputation is at stake; by supporting an artist, she is putting her authority on the line. She invests her symbolic capital in a cultural product and its producer with the expectation of profit—an even greater symbolic capital that ensures employment in a shaky economy, with the concrete possibility of working for the best-paying media outlet.

According to Bourdieu, the value of a work of art in society, that is to say, in the market, does not strictly stem from its cost of production. Rather, it subsumes the result of complex networks of agents in the field of production whose negotiations yield a commercial value beyond the labor value invested in the work.[49] Thus, spectators and critics accumulate cultural and symbolic capital from attending Muscari's performances; they appropriate what Bourdieu describes as "the product of accumulated labor in the objectified

[47] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 76.

[48] Ibid., 77.

[49] Ibid., 81.

state which is held by a given agent."[50] Muscari's cultural production is in-corporated (embodied) by the audience and reviewers through a labor process entailing an opportunity cost—for instance, time put in, monetary expenditure, or other types of deprivation by the investor. In return, the spectator and reviewer accumulate cultural distinction *and* legitimized competence (cultural and symbolic capital, respectively) in the realm of theatre appreciation.

Shangay and Muscari have been subject to particular attempts at consecration. For example, as a result of an impressive accrual of prestige by presenting his work at several Argentine theatre festivals from 2004 to 2005, Muscari was invited to work on the 2006 staging of *Shangay* in Barcelona. This represented a significant coup. In the theatrical cultural field in Buenos Aires, exporting a work yields great prestige together with opportunities to earn hard currency.[51] In February 2006, Muscari garnered further recognition when *Shangay* won the *Estrella de Mar* award ("Star of the Sea"—although literally starfish) for Best "Alternative" Production in the seaside city of Mar del Plata; in addition, he was nominated for Best Direction. From its inception in 1973, the Estrella de Mar prize was designed as a tool to promote tourism as well as to entice producers and actors' cooperatives to bring their

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[50] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *The Sociology of Economic Life*, ed. Mark S. Granovetter and Richard Swedberg (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2001), 101.

[51] Sometimes, the economic motivation is disavowed by artists. In an interview, Eduardo Pavlovsky lists an array of international festivals and venues where his plays were staged. Throughout the interview, Pavlovsky displays great artistic pride in his work, underscoring its cultural/ideological impact among non-Argentine audiences. At the same time, he inveighs against irresponsible neoliberal policies and the outrageous Argentine foreign debt—describing these phenomena always in the passive voice. His vituperation ends abruptly; he says, "[V]olvamos al teatro" (Let's return to theatre). He continues, "Tengo plena conciencia que con el teatro uno no cambia nada. Lo que sí me ha halagado, es que ciertas cosas que tienen que ver con el teatro, o que he escrito, gozan de algún nivel de conocimiento en otros grupos. Por ejemplo, aquí en España, me han llamado de varios lugares que conocen obras mías, se reunen, hablamos, y me doy cuenta que hay un cierto efecto en estos grupos." (I am fully conscious that one does not change anything with theatre. What has indeed flattered me is that certain things related to theatre or things I have written receive some degree of recognition within other groups. For example, here in Spain, they have called me from several places where they know my plays; they meet, we talk, and I realize that there is a certain effect on these groups.) The change in subject is abrupt, distancing theatre from financial issues. When speaking of theatre, instead, he refers to signs of prestige (and disavowed symbolic capital). This speaks to Bourdieu's "bad faith"—the denial of the economy. Miguel Ángel Giella, "Con Eduardo Pavlovsky, cinco años después," *Latin American Theatre Review* 22, no. 1 (1988): 79; Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 50.

shows to Mar del Plata during the summer season.[52] Producers join forces in this endeavor for the purpose of supporting theatre as a tourist attraction.[53] It is an opportunity for agents in the theatrical and tourism fields to collaborate in the conversion of symbolic capital into financial profits. Both parties—theatre impresarios and the local government—capitalize on enshrining Mar del Plata by establishing artistic prizes conferred by the tourism-promoting agencies.

In the field of theatre production, an award increases the symbolic capital of producers, managers, promoters, and creators themselves. Prestige, despite not necessary increasing immediately the economic profitability of the agents involved, accrues symbolic capital—capital that, in the long run, can yield economic profits, according to Bourdieu.[54] Yet to generate income, the agents must be knowledgeable and good players within what the French sociologist interprets to be "the laws of the functioning of the field in which cultural goods are produced and circulated."[55] These patterns prescribe two simultaneous, antinomic negotiations: new producers establish themselves by disavowing financial interests for the sake of highbrow prestige, yet they yield to economic pressure and limitations so as to cash in their symbolic capital for monetary capital.[56] Insofar as cultural capital can be embodied or incorporated, it is the result of a production (or acquisition, as Bourdieu describes it[57]) measurable in terms of economic capital. Economically scarce resources, of which time is

[52] Luis Martínez Tecco, "Premio Estrella de Mar," Municipalidad del Partido de General Pueyrredón, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.mardelplata.gov.ar/indexnw.asp?ID=3013010000&SEL=3013010000.

[53] "Se presentó 'Mar del Plata levanta el telón," *Noticiasmdq.com,* November 26, 2008, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.noticiasmdq.com/?p=3278.

[54] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production,* 75.

[55] Ibid, 76.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 99-101.

arguably the most personal and nontransferable, must be consumed as the means to generate cultural capital.[58] There is no production without consumption—and vice versa.

Bourdieu frequently refers to this act of consumption as a process analogous to an individual's consumption of physiological nutrients to sustain life (food).[59] His understanding of embodied cultural capital—"external wealth converted into an *integral* part of the person, into a habitus"—conveys the dual purpose of cultural capital accumulation.[60] Cultural capital participates in the social arrangements of position and human experience. Yet, in the original French, his assertion makes an even stronger case regarding the connection between cultural capital and the body: "Il [cultural capital] *est lié au corps*.… Le capital culturel est un avoir devenu être, une proprieté *faite corps*."[61] Cultural capital relates to the body of its owner physiologically; capital *becomes* body. Bourdieu contends that "the work of acquisition is work on one-self (self-improvement);" "it [cultural capital] declines and dies with its bearer (with his biological capacity…)" since "it has the same biological limits as its bearer."[62] In fact, he claims, "It is … linked in numerous ways to the person in his *biological* singularity."[63]

Audiences attend a theatre production, accruing cultural (as well as symbolic and social) capital while expending their economic capital. Spectators accumulate cultural capital by assimilating dispositions of taste—in this case, a taste for Muscari's work—within their bodies. The consumption of *Shangay* fostered the production of bodies of those who invested resources (such as time, money, and leisure) to generate their personal cultural capital. In the

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[58] Ibid., 96.

[59] "Most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment." Ibid., 99.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Pierre Bourdieu, "Les trois états du capital culturel," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 30, no. 1 (1979): 3-4. Its English version fails to convey these nuances. See Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 99.

[62] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 99, 102.

[63] Ibid., 99 (emphasis mine).

performance, there was a multiplicity of produced goods—the very theatrical sense of *production* alludes to this—ready for consumption. In all performances, there is labor power behind everything produced on and offstage that, due to the characteristics of production per se, entails a consumption of goods. Critics (eager to accrue and amass symbolic capital) and spectators (interested in cultural capital acquisition) participate in the consumption of the theatrical *work* (the labor invested in the performance) for the accumulation of capital. In Bourdieu's sense, there is an embodiment of produced capital—cultural, symbolic, economic—taking place at the social level. Moreover, if *Shangay* was acknowledged as a sophisticated work of art by its audience and critics, and if they incorporated the show into their assortment of "acquired tastes," the labor, insofar as it was one of the resources allocated to the show's execution, was also consumed. Indeed, Muscari's prestige was consumed for the audience's and reviewers' production of cultural capital. They also consumed his and his colleagues' work, assimilating this activity (both physiologically and culturally) within their body.

These paths of (cultural) capital exchange must be examined contextually. For instance, *Shangay* in Mar del Plata in the summer of 2006-07 entered into a specific system of capital accumulation. The network of capital accrual and transformation deployed at the Chacarerean Teatre in late 2006 was completely different. It is crucial to understand that the circulation of capital always takes place in history. Moreover, "Circuits of cultural capital are formed in real spaces," according to Sharon Zukin.[64] As Henri Lefebvre asserts, "(Social) space is a (social) practice," produced by each society, "each mode of production, along with its specific relations of production."[65] Furthermore, Lefebvre argues that space is a social relationship, "which is inherent to property relationships (especially the ownership of the

[64] Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 266.

[65] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 30-31.

earth, of land) and also closely bound up with the forces of production (which impose a form on that earth of land)."[66] The "actuality" of social space is both material and formal: both a product (subject to consumption) and a means of production. Dialectically, space manifests its inherent incongruities as both a product of capital and as a bourgeois politicoeconomic tool. If consumption and production, as Marx argues, function dialectically, then Lefebvre's contention that space is produced entails that space is also consumed. Based on its very nature, capitalism commodifies space; it produces it as a consumable good. Space is, therefore, another commodity. Consequently, so is the theatre, and as such, it is an object of production and consumption. As with all performances, the particular environment of *Shangay* inevitably relates to the modes of consumption and production at stake in the work.

The specific nature of a venue reflects a historical and material manifestation of social systems. One of *Shangay*'s final stagings in Buenos Aires was mounted in February 2006 at the Chacarerean Teatre, after a peripatetic trajectory along a considerable list of theatres.[67] The theatre opened in 2003, financed by Sin Contactos Producciones, a production company owned by Luis Sartor, Martín Cortés, and actors Mauricio Dayub and Gabriel Goity.[68] Dayub says that the name was chosen because the partners liked the fact that it sounded local yet

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[66] Ibid., 85.

[67] Gisela Girolami, "'*Shangay*,' crónica de una ruptura anunciada," Alternativateatral.com, November 10, 2005, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.alternativateatral.com/ver_nota.asp?codigo_nota=77. Besides tours to a few provinces and a run in Mar del Plata during the 2006-07 summer season, *Shangay* was staged in several venues within Buenos Aires city limits. It was originally staged in 2004 at the Abasto Social Club, Humahuaca 3649, in the neighborhood of Almagro, a middleclass area where small theatres proliferate; they are often blackboxes or reallocated living spaces. In 2005, *Shangay* moved downtown to Maipo Club Theatre, Esmeralda 44, for a season, only a few feet away from the main thoroughfare of Buenos Aires's commercial theatre, Avenida Corrientes. The Maipo has been traditionally a theatre where revues and café-concerts were staged. Later that year, the production moved to La Antesala in Palermo (Soho), a few blocks away from the landmark Plaza Serrano. The multiple venues of the production indubitably brought about diverse audiences. As Muscari contends, the audience changed when the production moved to the Maipo. Many people, particularly yuppies, who would have never gone to the Abasto Social Club or the Antesala attended the show.

[68] "Inicio," Chacarerean Teatre, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.chacarereanteatre.com.ar/sds/principal.htm. The term "chacarerean" is a brazen Anglicization of *chacarera*, a folk dance from the northeastern provinces of Argentina and its bordering countries. The name derives from the word *chacra*—a farm. A *chacarero* is the person who works at or owns the farm. "Teatre" is playfully Spanglish for "theatre."

seemed foreign—just like the name of the neighborhood.[69] The venue was originally designed as a "teatro-bar," allowing the managers to offer traditional *comida criolla* (creole food) before and after the performances. It may be more appropriate to call it a *teatro-restaurant* (theatre-restaurant). Traditional teatros-bar purvey drinks mainly, perhaps with a modest snack on the side. At the Chacarerean Teatre, the menu featured an assortment of cold meats and cheese platters as well as empanadas and desserts; in its early days, they used to offer *locro*.[70] Whereas hors d'œuvre, empanadas, and simple desserts may be regular fare at Buenos Aires bars, criollo dishes such as locro are not at all ubiquitous among restaurants, except for those selling "authentically traditional cuisine." These attempts at purveying old-style goods in an original location are examples of David Harvey's observation: "New spaces are necessarily opened up as capitalists seek new markets … and new and more profitable sites for production operations."[71] The Chacarerean Teatre presents a new option of consumption in the food-service sector. While boasting a designation already established in the cultural lexicon (teatro-bar), it fits into a somewhat different category within the entertainment/catering industry.

The location of the teatro-restaurant informs the production and consumption of its merchandise. The Chacarerean Teatre is located at Nicaragua 5565, in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Palermo—more specifically, in Palermo Hollywood, one of its subdivisions.[72] As the largest district of Buenos Aires, Palermo has long been informally subdivided into three areas: Palermo Viejo (Old Palermo), Palermo Nuevo (New Palermo),

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[69] "Teatro, aire acondicionado y pan de campo," *Clarín*, February 11, 2004. The neighborhood is called Palermo Hollywood. I delve into the characteristics of this particular location below.

[70] Chacarerean Teatre, "Inicio," Chacarerean Teatre, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.chacarereanteatre.com.ar/sds/principal.htm. *Locro* is a very hearty winter corn-based stew, a representative example of Andean rustic cuisine.

[71] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 106.

[72] Mariano Scheinsohn and Cecilia Cabrera, "Social Movements and the Production of Housing in Buenos Aires; When Policies Are Effective," *Environment and Urbanization* 21, no. 1 (2009): 119. Palermo is currently one of Buenos Aires's most fashionable quarters, though it had fallen into disrepair some decades ago.

and Palermo Chico (Little Palermo). Palermo Viejo split in the late nineties into two new neighborhoods: Soho and Hollywood.[73] Palermo's original fragmentation into residentially and commercially distinct zones derives from a marketing-driven strategy. Architect Vahan Berberian, founder and head of the Shenk[74] real-estate firm, claims to have first branded Palermo Viejo.[75] In the seventies, Berberian wrote a flyer: "Señor vecino, usted es un afortunado. ¿Por qué? Porque está dentro del barrio de Palermo Viejo, zona de futuro y de moda." (Mr. Neighbor, you are very fortunate. Why? Because you are within the neighborhood of Palermo Viejo, an area of future and fashion/fashionable.)[76] In this manner, a real estate agent purportedly conceived a new neighborhood—formerly the working-class zone of Villa Alvear—where a new clientele bought derelict but nonetheless architecturally unique houses and renovated them. Buyers kept the old-fashioned façades yet they enhanced or added contemporary structural and decorative details. An artistic and intellectual class moved into the neighborhood, ultimately displacing residents who, facing economic hardship, were forced to sell their long-time homes to newcomers. Real estate agent Berberian remembers that these transactions were like *telenovelas*, since the neighbors sobbed inconsolably at the time of signing the transfer of their homes to the affluent buyers. Decades later, the businessman participated in the further fragmentation of Palermo Viejo based on attaching the suffixes Soho and Hollywood to the area's original name. Due to the

[73] More accurately, most of Palermo Hollywood used to be part of Colegiales, another neighborhood.

[74] Shenk means "building" in Armenian.

[75] Berberian even patented the phrase "Garay fundó Buenos Aires y Shenk Palermo Viejo" (Garay founded Buenos Aires and Shenk, Palermo Viejo). However, Mariano Oropeza suggests that the denomination Palermo Viejo or Palermo Sensible (Sensitive Palermo) derives from an imagined historical quarter described by Jorge Luis Borges in his poem "Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires" (Mythical Foundation of Buenos Aires). Emilio Fernández Cicco, "Nos daban las casas hechas pelota," *Crítica de la Argentina*, March 5, 2008, 22; Mariano Oropeza, "Un barrio a la carta. Un ensayo sobre estilos de vida y ciudad," *Estudios sociológicos* 22, no. 6 (2004): 704n5.

[76] Fernández Cicco, 22.

assertive commercial practices of its owners, Shenk is the most influential real-estate company in Palermo Hollywood and Soho nowadays.[77]

The differentiation between both neighborhoods—Soho and Hollywood—is not along strict economic parameters. These two neighborhoods occupy a specific area of the city with distinct boundaries endorsed by the city's tourism office. According to the tourism office's promotional website, Juan B. Justo Avenue, Santa Fe Avenue, Niceto Vega Street, and Dorrego Avenue delimit Palermo Hollywood.[78] Palermo Soho is a more ambiguously characterized area devoid of official boundaries. Urban authorities conceive Palermo Viejo en bloc as a dual entity arbitrarily configured, whose borders tend to coincide with major thoroughfares or other urban spatial features (such as railroads or subway lines). Palermo Soho has become a retail-oriented area featuring apparel and design stores.[79] Conversely, Palermo Hollywood has become an epicurean wonderland where a profusion of restaurants (*restós* and *bistrós*) opened, offering a more recent concept in the Argentine gastronomic vocabulary: *cuisine d'auteur.* Arguably, commercial Palermo Hollywood is mostly a service-oriented area where dining establishments propose a positively sybaritic affair. Restaurant establishments boast of their food's unique qualities to an affluent patronage.[80] Few of them are franchises; most businesses claim to sell a select and inimitable commodity. Their owners allege to provide patrons with an irreducible and ephemeral experience of eating offered in a singular environment—not unlike a theatrical performance.

However, the neighborhood has experienced substantial demographic changes due to the increase in commercial endeavors targeting affluent customers. In Palermo, old-time

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[77] Berberian tried, to no effect, to extend the Palermo brand to other neighborhoods. The most infamous case was that of Villa Crespo, which Berberian wanted to label Palermo Queens. Ibid.

[78] "Palermo Viejo, Soho y Hollywood," Sitio oficial de turismo de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.bue.gov.ar/recorridos/?menu_id=123&info=auto_contenido.

[79] Elena Peralta, "Palermo, San Telmo y Abasto, los barrios que más cambiaron," *Clarín*, December 29, 2003.

[80] "Gastronomía," Sitio oficial de turismo de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.bue.gov.ar/servicios/?menu_id=21&info=gastronomia.

dwellers watch new construction projects as their new, upper-class residents reconfigure an increasingly and alarmingly gentrified neighborhood, whose origins go back to being a traditionally lower-middle and working-class community.[81] Not immune to a process permeating global metropolitan centers, Palermo Hollywood meets all the criteria of gentrification described by Mike Savage and Alan Warde: resettlement and social concentration involving the displacement of one group of dwellers with another of higher social status; a transformation in the built environment evincing characteristic aesthetic features and the appearance of new local services; the convergence of people with a presumptive shared culture and lifestyle, or at least with shared, class-related, consumer preferences; and the economic rearrangement of property values and commercial opportunities for the construction industry.[82] All of these pertain directly or indirectly to economic and class conflicts clearly discernible in Palermo. As Lefebvre argues, the production of space "is performed solely by classes, fractions of classes and groups representative of classes."[83] Inasmuch as gentrification, as Savage and Warde argue, is "a process which entails inequalities of power and wealthy between gentrifiers and the displaced population," class struggle is the crux of Palermo Hollywood's turmoil; space is the arena where the conflict materializes.[84]

The entrepreneurs of Sin Contactos participate in this social reordering to the extent that they integrate a location to its economic method of production, thus affecting the property values in Palermo. Marx claims that land is not merely raw material when utilized as a factor of production. "Land as capital," he contends, "is fixed capital; but fixed capital

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[81] Critics of this new class of dwellers have coined the designation "palermogólico," a term alluding to the asinine and derisive term *mogólico* employed to refer to people with Down syndrome. "Argentina: Buenos Aires inventa barrios al estilo Nueva York," *El Imaginario*, August 27, 2007, accessed April 24, 2009, http://elinmobiliario.com/blog/argentina-buenos-aires-inventa-barrios-al-estilo-nueva-york.

[82] Mike Savage and Alan Warde, *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 80.

[83] Lefebvre, 55.

[84] Savage and Warde, 87.

gets used up just as much as circulating capital."[85] In order to establish the Chacarerean Teatre, the Sin Contactos organization made investments in the site. These ventures led to an increase of capital, since "the very fact of applying further outlays of capital to land already transformed into means of production increases land as capital without adding anything to land as matter—that is, to the extent of the land," Marx writes.[86] The company restored an old carpentry workshop, claiming to have maintained the original building framework. They preserved its *casa-chorizo*[87] façade (namely, narrow frontage) and construction (great depth). In addition, the renovation (in Spanish literally "recycling") accented a key feature: a transparent stage opening to a backyard, allowing the audience to enjoy the view of a native, aged tree.[88] Sin Contactos thus avers an earnest intention of preserving the neighborhood's integrity—those "distinctive aesthetic features" to which Savage and Warde make reference.[89] The establishment of a commercial endeavor where a modest workshop (associated with traditionally lower-middle-class artisan labor) operated contributes to a gentrifying movement of displacement.

However, these processes reflect a disavowal of class struggle. The protection of original architectural features and incorporation of local natural landscapes camouflage the expulsion of lower-class strata. The invocation of an original past effaces a class struggle whereby entire communities are perniciously displaced by capitalist investors. The gentrification of Palermo Hollywood is inextricably tied to neoliberal politics and a socioeconomic negotiation that choke the working class. Accumulation and class pervade—

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[85] Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 158.

[86] Ibid., 158.

[87] "The casa chorizo can be defined as a series of rooms in a row, each opening onto a lateral patio—a dwelling type very characteristic of the Rio de la Plata area. The simplest ones were those with only one room, onto which other rooms were later added to the extent that economic and family growth allowed. These houses permitted some rooms to be used as a workshop, factory, or business by the owner or the renters, who could also sublet rooms as lodging." Rosa Aboy, "'The Right to a Home:' Public Housing in Post–World War II Buenos Aires," *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 3 (2007): 497.

[88] "Inicio," Chacarerean Teatre.

[89] Savage and Warde, 80.

in fact, actuate—the economic realm constructed and mobilized in this neighborhood. For many years, Buenos Aires and by that very fact Palermo were conceived by some government administrations as a space of economic operations that would privilege landowners' rent incomes as well as encourage entrepreneurial investment ventures craved by the local government.[90] In 1997, President (and former Mayor of Buenos Aires) Fernando de la Rúa conveyed his interest in loosening building restrictions in the city, alleging that the legislation in force at the time curtailed private investment on the order of five hundred million dollars. Consequently, he argued that a new Urban Planning Code was crucial, and that he would be willing to pass it expeditiously via a decree based on emergency and necessity.[91] In cases like this, state and capitalist civil society engage in a dialectical relation. Despite private entrepreneurs' opposition to political obtrusion in the institutions of production (accumulation of surplus value) and reproduction (replenishment of labor), capitalists recognize the need for these intervention for their survival.[92] "The more it [the State] acts, the more it must continue to act," Michael Dear and Allen J. Scott pronounce.[93] Nevertheless, given that Palermo would be one of the neighborhoods most affected by the proposed regulations, the neighbors strove and were able to counter these attempts. In 2007, the city legislature and Palermo neighbors agreed on a policy that restricted the construction of tall buildings: on avenues or arteries, the maximum height would be eight stories, and on

[90] Rachel Weber describes the development of a similar phenomenon in the United States in the eighties and nineties. "Rather than retreat from policymaking, the last two decades have witnessed a proliferation of municipal regimes increasingly active in creating landscapes amenable to the quick excavation of value… Interventions into real-estate markets require states to juggle two contradictory imperatives: 'to maintain or create conditions in which profitable capital accumulation is possible,' while at the same time managing potential political repercussions.… They may solicit mass support for growth-oriented policies by ensuring some trickle-down benefits (e.g., jobs, expanded tax base, or lower taxes) and fostering a more collaborative political culture." Rachel Weber, "Extracting Value from the City: Neoliberalism and Urban Redevelopment," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 523-24; James O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (New York: St. Martin's, 1973), 6, quoted in Weber, 523.

[91] Silvia Pisano, "Flexibilizarán el Código de Planeamiento," *La Nación*, May 21, 1997.

[92] Michael Dear and Allen J. Scott, "Towards a Framework for Analysis," in *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society*, ed. Michael Dear and Allen J. Scott (New York: Methuen, 1981), 12-13.

[93] Ibid., 15.

regular streets it would be three stories. In both cases, an additional story could be constructed so long as it was set back from the street.[94] Such success on the part of community grassroots activists contested deep-rooted urban policies that followed a capitalist rationale for development.

Palermo has changed as its inhabitants have been displaced by a bourgeois class that foists a new understanding of community, resulting in the "colonization of urban land."[95] A new wave of residents moved to the area. Iconic rock singer Charly García, singer-actress Marilina Ross, and journalist-columnist Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú, among other popular figures in artistic and cultural circles, bought houses in the neighborhood.[96] A new bourgeois artistic group and intelligentsia gradually encroached upon the long-time residents' community, rendering the neighborhood a desirable area to successful, "socially conscious," "progressive" buyers.[97] This demographic change contributes to the escalating marketing of Palermo Hollywood as a more intellectual and fashionable environment than other new neighborhoods like Las Cañitas and Puerto Madero.[98] Purchasing a home in what used to be called Palermo Viejo lured these new residents, allowing them to join an offbeat *barrio* community within the perimeter of the city while rejecting the flagrantly bourgeois suburban lifestyle. Ironically, the proliferation of new better-off residents has changed the

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[94] "Destacan la prohibición de construir torres en Palermo," *La Nación*, December 1, 2007.

[95] Kevin R. Cox, "Capitalism and conflict around the communal living space," in *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society*, ed. Michael Dear and Allen J. Scott (New York: Methuen, 1981), 434.

[96] Fernández Cicco, 22.

[97] This is, as Cecilia Arizaga argues, not unlike what journalist David Brooks calls bobos (bourgeois bohemians). "It used to be easy to tell a bourgeois from a bohemian. And the bourgeois were the straightlaced suburban types, went to church, worked in corporations. And the bohemians were the arty free spirits, the rebels. But if you look at upscale culture, at the upper middle classes, the people in Silicon Valley, you find they've smashed all the categories together. Some people seem half yuppie-bourgeois and half hippie-bohemian. And so if you take bourgeois and bohemian and you smash them together, you get the ugly phrase 'bobo.'" David Brooks, interview by Gwen Ifill, *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, PBS, May 9, 2000; Cecilia Arizaga, "La construcción del 'gusto legítimo' en el mercado de la casa," *Bifurcaciones* 5 (2005): 1-12, accessed July 14, 2009, http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/pdf/558/55800503.pdf. See also David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

[98] María Rubio, "Palermo Hollywood, Vanguard and Exclusiveness," Enjoy Palermo Hollywood!, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.enjoypalermohollywood.com/seccion/1/6.shtml.

way the space is lived since the lower-middle and working classes, who used to produce a distinct space, have been effectively evicted.

There have been mixed responses among new residents to the possibility of modifying the character of the neighborhood's architecture, because its charming long and narrow houses, and two- or three-story buildings are the area's main appeal.[99] New property ownership has led to substantial renewal of older construction façades. It is not the experience of the locale by original populations that gives the neighborhood its current character. In the face of the alarming rate at which monstrously tall towers are built in the neighborhood, an aesthetic restoration of superficial architectural features animates a claim of authenticity invested in the worn quality of the material or its patina.[100] "As these objects are minutely dented, chipped, oxidized, and worn away, they begin to take on 'patina,'" Arjun Appadurai writes, arguing that in Western societies, these objects are viewed as symbolic property.[101] But the patina may be mishandled, which would suggest a lack of education or impoverishment. The wealthy new owners of buildings in Palermo Hollywood rescue the objects showing patina from the crass and ignorant in order to refurbish façades in a manner that draws attention to the effects of the passage of time, using "history as scenography," using Cecilia Arizaga's words.[102]

Visual consumption is an instrument through which gentrifiers and developers appropriate spaces and, consequently, displace lower-income residents.[103] By incorporating history into the scenographic capabilities of the venue, Sin Contactos makes that very claim when it emphasizes its building's *materiales nobles* (robust and quality material).[104] It

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[99] Alejandro Seselovsky, "Palermo Estándar," *Revista C 30*, September 21, 2008, 36.

[100] Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 32.

[101] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 77.

[102] Arizaga applies it to Palermo. Arizaga, 7.

[103] Zukin, 266.

[104] "Inicio," Chacarerean Teatre.

embraces the alleged historical weight of the edifice: an authenticity constructed on perceptions of a historical heritage, on the preservation of materiales nobles, and on individuality (a bohemian character evinced in the creative aspect of renovating a building).[105] The new proprietors co-opt the patina to validate their social status through an accrual of symbolic capital—honor, prestige—that in Bourdieu's terms is "recognized as legitimate, that is, misrecognized as capital."[106] Through architectural renovation, and the ensuing urban renewal and "ennoblement," a sense of history and a concomitant authenticity are recovered by claiming symbolic heritage. The Palermo traditional casa chorizo alludes to an immigratory past in a neighborhood where contrived ethnic food restaurants and trendy stores meet small grocery stores and other older, traditional businesses. This creates a scenographic effect of melding new and old aspects.

Accumulating patina is nothing but another manner of accumulating capital: the preservation and arrogation of traces of an evanescent, authentic past energize the capitalist ideological mission. Besides using land as fixed economic capital, the Chacarerean Teatre accrues symbolic capital when it concretizes the invocations of the past: a time when a lower class inhabited the neighborhood. Whether the past is real or constructed is beside the point. Symbolic capital encompasses all sorts of capital that are disavowed; as capital, it subsumes the power to exploit, whether actively or potentially.[107] The very presence of the venue in the environment contributes to the displacement of a local population. Therefore, it inexorably reduces the presence of lower-class workers in the neighborhood to an idealized history of immigration, whose socioeconomic implications and effects have been supposedly resolved and superseded.

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[105] Arizaga, 1-12.

[106] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), 122.

[107] Terry Lovell, *(Mis)recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice: Nancy Fraser and Pierre Bourdieu* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 71.

The dialectics of how Palermo Hollywood is perceived (materially), conceived (theoretically), and lived (through symbols and images) speaks to how spaces are socially used, formulated, and experienced. In the catering/restaurant industry, space is co-constructed by restaurateurs and their network of production of goods and services, and the patrons who engage in the production of commodities. Jointly, they create a social environment for commodity exchange. Nowadays, Palermo Hollywood combines traces of an "authentic" past and the legacy of ten years of rampant consumerism adopted during the Menemist era.[108] According to Zukin, "Space stimulates both memory and desire."[109] The area welcomes and celebrates the consumption of fares aimed at well-off customers. Amid a plethora of hip and crowded restaurants, the Chacarerean Teatre offers a cultural product with value added: a gratifying experience beyond, or in addition to, the performance onstage, by pleasing the spectator's palate. Arguably more significantly, the theatre owners strive to build a captive market for their fares to the extent that spectators can only consume food and beverages sold in their establishment. Sin Contactos must entice its clientele to forgo a pre- or post-theatre meal, and to satisfy their appetite for food and entertainment onsite. This poses a challenge; only a few yards away a legion of restaurants vies for a share of the diners' business. Evidently, spectators can choose to have an aperitif or a full dinner at any of the numerous neighboring restaurants. Still, the owners of the venue have some leverage, given the particular location where and the circumstances in which transactions take place. While spectators trickle in, servers walk among the tables providing menus for the audience to browse. The sales pitch is unavoidable, even if the spectator declines the menu. Waiters scurry around as they fill the patrons' orders. They uncork bottles, pour wine and soft drinks, and serve cold and hot food to customers. They create an ambience that

[108] For an examination on the effects of the Menemist years on urban sites of consumption, see Emanuela Guano, "Spectacles of Modernity: Transnational Imagination and Local Hegemonies in Neoliberal Buenos Aires," *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (2002): 181-209.

[109] Zukin, 268.

elicits a desire for food consumption. The very setup—tables seating four people throughout the main floor—evokes a traditional restaurant, where culinary commodities satisfy diverse appetites.

There is a luxurious aspect of the eating-out experience that exceeds digestion of nutrients. Gastronomic entrepreneurs cultivate what Marx would describe as "imaginary appetites."[110] Restaurants operate as culinary attractions rather than places for food consumption. The culinary experience displays a degree of theatricality, according to Bob Ashley: "Performance has long been a feature of the restaurant experience."[111] Assorted theatrical activities produce a gourmet performance. Servers may present the dishes to patrons with flourish, histrionically removing the cover from the customers' plates. Open kitchens unveil the traditionally concealed inner workings of the business, fabricating the illusion that customers are voyeuristically witnessing the execution of edible works of art by chefs and their crews. Around the world, dishes are revered as masterpieces and their makers as veritable artists with bountiful symbolic capital. International chef-personalities such as Gordon Ramsay and Mario Batali have nurtured their mass-media personae on television, marketing their own culinary brands with prominent recognition in the United States and the United Kingdom. On the one hand, their reputation—or symbolic capital—as exceptional chefs boosts the establishment's chances of economic profitability. On the other, they lend their name to an impressive array of cooking products for mass consumption.[112] Taste is not the only measure of their culinary craft; customers assess skills such as "plating"

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[110] Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Penguin, 1975), 359.

[111] Bob Ashley et al., *Food and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 144.

[112] Gordon Ramsay's line of cookware is available on the Home Shopping Network; so are Todd English's, Emeril Lagasse's, and Wolfgang Puck's. Mario Batali offers his wares in an exclusive website. "Kitchen Supplies at HSN.com," Home Shopping Network, accessed April 24, 2009, http://kitchen-dining.hsn.com/?o=!TNQC&cm_sp=Global *TN*Kitchen&prev=hp&sf=QC&osf=QC; "Mario Batali—Italian Kitchen Items," Mario Batali Italian Kitchen, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www .italiankitchen.com.

and originality.[113] In the restaurant business, the entrepreneurial awareness of spectacle transcends a meticulously crafted decorative scheme. Joining Fredric Jameson, we may ask, "Why should landscape be any less dramatic than the Event?"[114] Visual aesthetics play an important part in enticing the consumer to purchase the goods, since the sensory allure of dish composition participates in the theatrical experience.[115] Restaurateurs thus produce a mise en scène where chefs, kitchen crews, and servers play different roles, according to the restaurateurs' overall "concept." As Guy Debord contends, "Capitalism now can and must refashion the totality of space into its own particular décor."[116]

The production and consumption of food play an important role in the reproduction of labor power. The Marxian model of production expounds a radical acknowledgement of the biological needs of a laborer (the most fundamental necessities for her sustenance) as well as of her physiological constitution.[117] Mark E. Meaney asserts that Marx identifies two "parts" of capital: "the one that represents wages and the other that represents capital."[118] Capital must ensure a constant reproduction of labor capacity to maintain its growth rate. For that purpose, there must be an array of commodities that Marx identifies as necessary to ensure this reproduction, which does not solely entail an increase in the number of workers who offer the aforementioned capacity in the commodity market. Reproduction also occurs within the workers' biological bodies, where it takes place autogenously: cells reproduce to sustain the worker's utilitarian body. Marx asserts, "The reproduction of living, organic

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[113] In the show Iron Chef America on the Food Network, two chefs compete to make innovative dishes. The judges award scores for taste, plating, and originality. Sietsema, Robert, "Iron Chef Boyardee," *Village Voice,* February 19 2008, accessed April 24, 2009, http:// www.villagevoice.com/2008-02-19/news/iron-chef-boyardee.

[114] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 364.

[115] Ashley et al., 143.

[116] Guy Debord, "Territorial Domination," *The Society of the Spectacle*, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/7.htm.

[117] Marx, *Capital*, 274.

[118] Mark E. Meaney, *Capital as Organic Unity: The Role of Hegel's Science of Logic in Marx's* Grundrisse (New York: Springer, 2003), 80.

things does not depend on the labour directly applied to them, the labour worked up in them, but on the means of subsistence they consume—and this is the way of reproducing them."[119] In a nutshell, live organisms must eat to remain alive.

According to the law of conservation of energy, energy cannot be created or destroyed. Biologically, work is the consumption of (body) energy that enables the qualitative transformation of matter (the production of goods). Human energy is usually expressed as muscle contractions and heat production, made possible as a result of food metabolization. The antithetical metabolic pathways of anabolism and catabolism[120] describe the process necessary for reproduction of labor, because they explain the need for individual consumption for subsistence. In order to maintain homeostatic balance (the regulation of a system's stable, constant condition), an organism must eat following depletion of energy stores. Since any activity requires energy, catabolism not only propels further anabolic reactions but also sustains physical work.[121] This is, in fact, a consumption-production dialectic that materializes in the human body.

Marx's theories of labor power consider the scientific implications of biological energy pathways. Scholars have observed substantial evidence of a feasible Marxian reading of the generation of labor power through the lens of natural science. As early as the 1850s in the *Grundrisse*, Marx begins to employ the term "metabolism" (*Stoffwechsel*) in all his principal works.[122] Anneliese Griese and Gerd Pawelzig perceptively notice that

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[119] Karl Marx, "Marx's Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63," *Marxists.org*, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1861/economic/ch14.htm.

[120] "Catabolic reactions … involve the breaking down of larger molecules into smaller molecules, requiring the breaking of bonds. Any time that chemical bonds are broken, energy is released. Catabolic reactions are a cell's major source of energy … Anabolic reactions … involve the assembly of smaller molecules into larger molecules, requiring the formation of bonds. Energy is required for bond formation. Once formed, the bonds represent stored energy." On the one hand, anabolism drives the storage of energy—for instance, the energy derived from food. On the other, catabolic processes elicit the release of energy stored in cells. Paul G. Engelkirk and Gwendolyn R. Wilson Burton, *Burton's Microbiology for the Health Sciences* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2007), 111-12.

[121] Engelkirk and Wilson Burton, 112.

[122] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 312.

"metabolism," as used by Marx, is "no metaphor for visualization, but rather a rich concept."[123] They claim that Marx recognized that exchanges of matter and energy were inextricably intertwined, an assessment that verifies the theoretician's engagement with natural sciences.[124] Similarly, Paul Burkett and John Bellamy Foster point out that Marx's deployment of the idea of metabolism goes beyond a simple analogy, since "[he] saw the labor process itself as a constituting the main metabolic relation between humans and nature."[125] Although terms such as entropy, or conservation of energy, or thermodynamics are not terms that Marx employs, in *Capital* he draws a direct connection between physiology and productive activity, considering the latter to be "essentially the expenditure of human brain, nerves, muscles and sense organs."[126] Labor power can only be produced based on the biotransformation of human tissue from which energy is released to generate work: in essence, biological sorts of production and consumption.[127] Griese and Pwelzig argue that Marx's contribution ascertains that the exchange of matter and energy in physiological production and consumption pathways applies to social systems, "insofar as social life is actually life in the physiological sense, arising out of social life and developing further its material basis."[128] Therefore, as is the case with any commodity, the production

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[123] Anneliese Griese and Gerd Pawelzig, "Why Did Marx and Engels Concern Themselves with Natural Science?," *Nature, Society, and Thought* 8, no. 2 (1997): 132.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Paul Burkett and John Bellamy Foster, "Metabolism, Energy, and Entropy in Marx's Critique of Political Economy: Beyond the Podolinsky Myth," *Theory and Society* 35 (2006): 118-19, 122.

[126] Marx, *Capital*, 164.

[127] "Production is simultaneously consumption as well. [Firstly] the individual, who develops his abilities producing expends them as well, using them up in the act of production, just as in natural procreation vital energy is consumed…. Consumption is simultaneously also production, just as in nature the production of a plant involves the consumption of elemental forces and chemical materials. It is obvious that man produces his own body, e.g., through feeding, one form of consumption." Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya and ed. Maurice Herbert Dobb (New York: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 195-96.

[128] Griese and Pawelzig, 132. According to Marx, "The exchange of commodities is the process in which the social metabolism, in other words the exchange of particular products of private individuals, simultaneously gives rise to definite social relations of production, into which individuals enter in the course of this metabolism." Marx, *Contribution to the Critique,* 52 (emphasis mine).

and consumption of labor power are dialectically social and metabolic. And, inasmuch as labor power is (variable) capital in the process of production, Marx's and Bourdieu's analyses lead to similar conclusions: that capital—in a variety of forms—is found in the human body. Through the physiological in-corporation of resources, labor bears capital in her body. Labor power is not merely an abstract potential energy, but material human cells generated though food metabolization. Consequently, a form of capital accumulation entails an increase in economically efficient human flesh.

In the urban context of Palermo Hollywood, the teatro-restaurant Chacarerean Teatre animates cannibalistic consumption for the purposes of capital accumulation. Capitalists face the difficult choice of allocating surplus value to two activities in optimal proportions, leading to what Marx calls a "Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation and the desire for enjoyment."[129] At a restaurant, capitalists acquire life-giving commodities—food—for their reproduction by (re)investing the surplus value extracted from labor. Restaurant workers produce the fuel (or food) for a profit-making establishment when they generate the commodity-food for the customers' consumption. Ingesting food means the in-corporation of materialized labor (biological) energy. Teams of servers, chefs and sous chefs, and kitchen-aides sell their labor power to capitalists—restaurant owners, sometimes their executive chefs as well—as variable capital in the production process. Lacking the raw materials to produce a commodity, the worker must offer for sale, in Marx's words, "that very labour-power which exists only in his living body" as a commodity in the exchange market.[130] A worker sells her body energy to capital. As energy must be released from the breakdown of complex organic compounds present in human cells, human matter (tissue) transforms into simple compounds, some of which are waste and thus eliminated. Cells are therefore consumed. When the worker sells labor power, she expends her corporeal energy,

[129] Marx, *Capital,* 741.

[130] Ibid., 272.

and therefore her body matter, in the process of production of a commodity. In a restaurant, the dishes workers produce in fact contain the worker's cellular energy. But "labor becomes an object," Marx contends. "It exists *outside* him [the worker], independently of him and alien to him.… *The life which he has bestowed on the object* confronts him as hostile and alien."[131] Capital incorporates the worker as activity, divorcing him from his work.[132] It consumes its body for commodity production and, thus, capital accumulation. Bodily energy fuels the production of foodstuffs, consuming the workers' body. Corporeal matter feeds the production process: flesh feeds the food that feeds capital.

Food consumption is foregrounded in *Shangay*. The play is set in a restaurant and the playhouse is also partly a restaurant, thus complicating the mechanisms of consumption: the boundaries between drama and trade blur theatrically and metatheatrically. To differentiate the two levels of performance, two sets of wait staff mingle around the tables as the spectators come into the house. To begin with, there are traditional servers, dressed in dark pants and red shirts. They take food and drink orders, scribbling requests in small notepads; soon after that, they bring beverages and appetizing dishes to the table.[133] Then, there are three actor-waiters wearing Mao-style dark tops and eccentric hairdos who meander around the tables, watching the audience place and consume their orders before the show starts. The juxtaposition of a "real" wait staff (who facilitate the consumption of traditional Argentine food and beverage) and the performing staff (distinguishable through the Asian-themed costume) conflates two levels of consumption: that of culinary and artistic production. Each type of server presents to the spectator-diner a particular object of consumption. Real servers offer food; actor-waiters bring performance, conveyed and produced with their bodies, to

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[131] Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," in *The Consumer Society Reader*, ed. Martyn J. Lee (New York: Blackwell, 2000), 5. Second italicized phrase is my emphasis.

[132] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 674.

[133] At my table, we shared a well-crafted assortment of cheeses, olives, and cold meats—a *copetín* – and a flan. Both are common menu options at unpretentious restaurants. The fare met our dispassionate expectations.

the table. This dichotomy also operates within the play. The dual production and consumption of food and performance pervade the experience.

Once orders are served, the lights dim and two spotlights focus on a table on a platform in the middle of the space. Alejo and Lucas enter the restaurant, eyeing the audience as they sit at the table. Two so-called geishas interact with the main characters, both serving them food as well as providing the Oriental atmosphere by describing traditions and dancing to Asian pop music. This is a thematic "Oriental night" in an otherwise Argentine restaurant/theatre. Actresses dressed as so-called geishas invite the audience to a "noche de erotismo, geishas, y placer" (night of eroticism, geishas, and pleasure).[134] Their attire is rather Chinese-inspired, for their costumes resemble *cheongsams*. A geisha named Atila wears a colorful and spiky mullet hairstyle. Their voices and movements at all times emphasize their sexuality and draw attention to the vulgar representation of geishas as sexual workers; there is even a nude erotic dance in the play.

The geishas offer an Oriental prelude to each of the show's eight scenes. In scene one, Atila presents an outrageously Orientalist description of a Nepalese tradition. According to the purported custom, a young girl, chosen to be a Goddess or *kumani,* is concealed from the sunlight to make her eyes even more Chinese or, as Atila puts it, to achieve the "Chinazation" of her eyes (1).[135] When she turns fifteen, she returns to her family; barred from ever getting married, she will die alone. The description reveals a perceived connection between a stereotyped physiognomy and a race. Martin A. Berger's analysis of the logic of race in the United States underscores the import of phenotypical difference in the

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[134] José María Muscari, *Shangay té verde en 8 escenas*, (manuscript, n.d.), 3 (henceforth *Shangay* and cited in text). The manuscript is full of spelling and punctuation mistakes. To ensure clarity, I write the Spanish version with my corrections. The words, however, do not change. The phonetic nature of the speech thus remains intact.

[135] "Para lograr el achinamiento más extremo de sus ojos" (1; To achieve the most extreme 'chinazation' of her eyes). A kumari (not kumani) is a "living virgin goddess." Atila's account is overall rather accurate. See Sushma Joshi, "'You'll Know What We Are Talking About When You Grown Older': A Third Wave Critique of Anti-Trafficking Ideology, Globalization and Conflict in Nepal," in *Defending Our Dreams*, ed. Shamilla Wilson, Anasuya Sengupta, and Kristy Evans (New York: Zed Books, 2006), 83.

institutionalization of whiteness as a normative standard and the consequent relegation of individuals bearing the stain of nonwhiteness in their bodies to the category of "deviants."[136] In this manner, a larger, more encompassing grouping of "Others" embodies alterity and anomaly. Because the audience construes this practice as barbaric and backward, the depiction of this tradition in truth reaffirms the audience's identity as different from the Orient. In finding the Nepalese tradition primitive, spectators reassert their Western status and their claim to the Enlightenment legacy.

Argentineans see themselves as an entirely immigrant society. The commonplace expression "we Argentinians come from ships" denotes the popular discourse that asserts Argentina as a melting pot not of indigenous peoples and foreign settlers, but of a blend of European immigrants.[137] Domingo Faustino Sarmiento—a pioneer in the field of educational public policy and president of the Argentine (1868–74)—endeavored to encourage European immigration, particularly from Northern Europe.[138] This concerted effort became part of a social imaginary whereby autochthonous nations and non-white immigrants were

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[136] Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 174.

[137] Litto Nebbia's song "Llegamos de los barcos" (We Came/Come from Ships) alludes to this: "Los brasileros salen de la selva, los mejicanos vienen de los indios pero nosotros los argentinos llegamos de los barcos." (Brazilians come from the jungle, Mexicans descend from Indians but we, Argentineans, came from boats.) Litto Nebbia & Los Músicos del Centro, *Llegamos de los barcos*, Alquimia TLP-50018.

[138] "Treinta años de inmigracion aunque limitada, han dejado columbrar qué pueblos son los que contribuyen á la poblacion de nuestro territorio con mayor número de habitantes. Son los del mediodía de Europa, son las clases trabajadoras, que de ordinario traen brazos robustos, hábitos de economía y sobriedad, pero limitada instruccion. No sucede así en el Norte de la América, donde acuden los habitantes del Norte de Europa, llevando de la Alemania sobre todo y de Inglaterra, tradiciones de industria, instruccion y ciencia…. Los inmigrantes del mediodía de Europa nos traen poco en costumbres y aun en civilizacion." (Thirty years of somewhat limited immigration allow us to surmise what peoples contribute the greatest number of inhabitants to the population of our territory. They come from Southern Europe; they are working class, who commonly bear robust arms, bring with them habits of economy and moderation, but modest instruction. That is not the case in North America, where inhabitants of Northern Europe go, bringing from Germany mostly and from England traditions of hard work, instruction, and science…. Immigrants from Southern Europe provide us with very little in terms of customs and even civilization.) The spelling matches that of the original. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Educacion comun en el estado de Buenos Aires* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta de Julio Belin I Ca, 1855), 76-77.

symbolically, culturally, and socially effaced from daily experience.[139] "The triumphalist plotline of Euro-Argentina obscures the fact that after the first brutal wave of attempted annihilation, surviving native people did not disappear but rather lived in complicated relationship with the now-dominant populations," argues Amy K. Kaminsky, calling attention to the explicit elision of indigenous populations.[140] Even singer León Gieco, whose left-wing tendencies usually align with indigenous causes, referred to Argentina as a land of immigrants at a benefit concert in Madrid.[141] Ironically, the event's purpose was to raise money for medical supplies for the rural poor, the most destitute of whom are of native descent. In Argentina, the overwhelming majority describes itself as "white," whereas only 6 percent self-identify as "mestizo."[142] Kaminsky contends, "To the extent that Argentina wants to appeal to Europe not only as its equal, but also as part of the West, it projects itself to Europe as white."[143] Thus, an Asian resident seems displaced; as Atila laments, he is "solo sin su hábitat natural" (23; alone, outside his natural habitat). He doesn't meet the standards of Argentineness. Furthermore, he is reduced to an unadaptable animal in peril, far from its natural environment and thus subject to the inescapable laws of environmental determinism.[144]

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[139] Blacks who inhabit Argentina nowadays—mostly of Brazilian or African origin—have called the country a "Latin American South Africa." *Diario Castellanos*, "La discriminación nuestra de cada día," n.d., accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.castellanos.com.ar/nuevo/textos.php?id=1339. See Lucía Dominga Molina and Mario Luis López, "Afro-Argentineans: 'Forgotten' and 'Disappeared'—Yet Still Present," in *African Roots/African Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*, ed. Sheila S. Walker (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 332-47; *El negro en Argentina: presencia y negación*, ed. Dina V. Picotti (Buenos Aires: Editores de América Latina, 2001; Alejandro Solomianski, *Identidades secretas: La negritud argentina* (Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2003).

[140] Amy K. Kaminsky, *Argentina* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 101.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Roland Soong, "Racial Classifications in Latin America," *Zona Latina*, 1999, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.zonalatina.com/Zldata55.htm.

[143] Kaminsky, 105.

[144] Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was a strong believer in geographic determinism. In addition, the myth of a European Argentina still exists despite recent shifts in the ethnicity of immigrants that categorically disprove such outrageous assumptions. Undoubtedly, most of the immigrants come from neighboring countries. However, in the eighties a substantial number of Asian immigrants entered Argentina. The contingent consisted mostly of Koreans (due to a bilateral agreement enabling immigrants to obtain proper

Argentina's attempts to place itself among the echelons of Western European hierarchies spawned a cosmopolitan elite, a class of consumers "whose orientation transcends any particular culture or setting."[145] Cosmopolitanism connects directly to consumer behavior and to the manner in which the cosmopolitan individual—whether while traveling or in her local environment— regards, acquires, and expends commodities.[146] An example of cosmopolitan consumption evinces in the manner in which the play makes use of the material and symbolic nature of green tea. I revisit the first scene. Atila ends the description of the *kumani* tradition by commenting, "¿Qué sabidura, no? ¿Alguien desea té verde?" (1; *That's* wisdom, huh? Does anyone want more green tea?). The second line appears to be a non sequitur; there is no obvious correlation between a comment assessing the Nepalese's enlightenment and an offer of green tea. Atila may be strictly performing her duty as a waitress in enticing the audience to consume a product purveyed by the fictitious restaurateurs organizing an "oriental night." Yet the sequence of utterances brings forth a connection between wisdom and tea. Green tea is, after all, featured in the

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documentation) and Chinese (including Taiwanese). In the latter case, workers find it very difficult to obtain the proper immigration status to work legally in the country. At present, there appears to be an exodus of Asian immigrants returning to their countries of origin. This is probably a result of the failure of neoliberal politics of the eighties and nineties that have decimated businesses in almost all economic industries. According to the 2001 Census, Chinese, Taiwanese, North and South Koreans, and Japanese immigrants (the four major Asian immigrant groups) who entered the country from 1996 to 2001 totaled 183,341 people—only 1.8 percent of immigrants during the aforementioned period. Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, "Población-Migración: País donde vivía hace 5 años," *Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001*, accesed July 23, 2009, http://www.indec.gov.ar.

[145] Hugh M. Cannon, Arruka Yaprak, "Will the Real-World Citizen Please Stand Up! The Many Faces of Cosmopolitan Consumer Behavior," *Journal of International Marketing* 10, no. 4 (2002): 30.

[146] Argentine entrepreneur Inés Berton, owner of Tealosophy, has become a remarkably conspicuous expert in the creation and sales of "exotic" tea mixes among the wealthier, cosmopolitan consumers in Buenos Aires and Spain. Her website describes the tea-drinking experience: "Whatever the time or its name, something as simple as a few leaves, a little water, sensitivity and patience can refresh the senses and soothe the spirit, creating a moment. The people of the land taught me the respect and love for what I do. I am a tea seeker. That is how Tealosophy was born; and along with it a commitment of sharing a life philosophy, perhaps a life style [*sic*]. Tealosophy, an art of ritualized hospitality." The promotional material explicitly draws on Orientalist photographic images. Pictures of Indian landscape and inhabitants, with (misspelled) captions in French, speak to a sophisticated cosmopolitanism based on Orientalist depictions of a perennial Asian wisdom. From "people of the land," the businesswoman has co-opted a ritual for commercial profit—a veritable plunder of Western notions of Asian culture. The images, in fact, represent to a great extent the appropriation of bodies for the sake of wrapping commodities in an aura of authentic enlightenment. Inés Berton, "Travel to Tealosophy," Tealosophy, accessed July 22, 2009, http://www.tealosophy.com/eng/eng.html.

show's title. It is brought to one's attention linguistically and materially. Inadvertently or not, Atila suggests that the brew makes the tea drinker as wise as the Nepalese, who still practice ancient sage traditions.

The characters drink green tea throughout the play. Mora, the other geisha, praises it for its natural properties: a contributor to longevity, a tranquilizer, a healing brew, a diuretic, an astringent—"es casi un brebaje mágico" (2; it is almost a magical concoction).[147] At the same time, it is praised as a modern beverage. Although the brew is common in Argentina, its health-related attributes have only recently been praised and embraced, mostly among New-Age devotees who regard traditional Asian medicine as a more enlightened practice. The New-Age movement represents a deep interest in alternatives to conventional knowledge and faith, constituting a particular synthesis of Eastern cultural traditions and transpersonal psychology coming out of the sixties' Western counterculture.[148] Nowadays, certain varieties of East-West potpourris rely more and more on the combination of purportedly natural modes and pharmacological overindulgence.

Lucas's mother Zulma epitomizes the eager follower of an eclectic assortment of New-Age practices, some of them derived from Eastern traditions.[149] She practices *pacua*[150] and urine therapy; she attributes success to one's having "good energy" (10, 12, 22, 25). Her lifestyle embraces holistic medicine, yet she self-medicates with clonazepam, a muscle-

[147] "[L]as propiedades del té verde, la longevidad a la que te lleva es impresionante. Yo creo fervientemente en eso: una taza por día, una hora más de vida. Es curativo, diurético, es tranquilizante, astringente, afirmante; es casi un brebaje mágico. Té verde: la bebida del mundo moderno." (2; Green tea properties, the longevity it leads you to is amazing. I fervently believe in that: a cup a day, one more hour of life. It is healing, diuretic, it is tranquilizing, astringent, firming; it is almost a magical concoction. Green tea: the beverage of the modern world.)

[148] David J. Hess, *Science in the New Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Pres, 1993), 4.

[149] For a succinct and biting critique, see Alberto Bonnet, *La hegemonía menemista* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008), 266-67.

[150] This probably refers to ba gua zhang, a martial art.

relaxant and anti-anxiety medication (10).[151] This is one of the strange paradoxes evident among many middle- and upper-middle-class individuals: they make the most of alternative medicine while simultaneously guzzling allopathic prescription medication. Green tea purportedly acts as a source of energy, of wisdom, and of longevity; so can prescription-drug-infused urine. Consuming either one, apparently, ensures mind and body wellness. In this fashion, Asian traditions are decontextualized: they are socially constructed sources of eternal truth and wellbeing vis-à-vis a Western body of positivist knowledge and experience. The Orientalizing differentiation speaks to what Edward Said calls "the third dogma" of Orientalism: the Western belief that the Orient is immutable, frozen in time, everlasting, yet unable to define itself.[152] Amid Western artists, these Orientalist views are not uncommon. Against contemporaneous European logocentrism, Friedrich Schlegel, a visible representative of early Romanticism in Germany, beckons, "In the Orient we must search for the Romantic at its best."[153] Furthermore, he predicates, "It is to all artists that every wisdom of the eternal Orient belongs." In the twentieth century, Surrealists considered the Orient to be "an extravagantly abstract myth that provided an oppositional stance against everything they despised in Western civilization."[154] Nowadays, people who disavow—albeit rather selectively—the assumptions of Western tradition and ideology may invest the Orient with an ostensible aura of authenticity.

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[151] Rivotril, the brand name of a benzodiazepine, is part of the common lexicon. Since it is very easy to purchase prescription medication in Argentina without a prescription, people self-medicate with antidepressants and anti-anxiolytic medication. It is pervasive among young adults who take clonazepam with alcohol. "Rivotril," 26noticias.com.ar, accessed August 6, 2009, http://www.26noticias.com.ar /rivotril-17198.html.

[152] Edward Said, "Arabs, Islam and the Dogmas of the West," *New York Times,* October 31, 1976: 4.

[153] Franz Norbert Mennemeier, "The Own and the Foreign Orient. Schlegel, Nietzsche, Artaud, Brecht: Notes of the Process of a Reception," in *The Dramatic Touch of Difference*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Josephine Riley, and Michael Gissenwehrer (Tübingen, Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1990), 24.

[154] Joshua D. Gonsalves, "The Case of Antonin Artaud and the Possibility of Comparative (Religion) Literature," *MLN* 119, no. 5 (2004): 1037.

A binary underlies a positing of a Self and an Other. Informed by anthropologist Johannes Fabian, David J. Hess contends that "the Other is frequently located in a space and time of 'there and then,' as opposed to the 'here and now' of the Self."[155] Inasmuch as the suggestion and embodiment of tradition—in this case, ancient Asian praxis—appear in the shape of in-character reactions as well as of metatheatrical commentary, the past permeates the present, as if time remained somewhat unshackled. The events take place in a historical context, and our sensuous appreciation of them is contingent on time and space since, borrowing Z.A. Jordan's phrase, "all things and phenomena become 'meaningless' outside the system to which they are related."[156] The staging of *Shangay* plays with the idea of location and time. The material distinction between "here and now" and the "then and there" to which Hess refers blurs into a reality that is hard to pin down because essentially it is constructed dialectically. Whereas Sin Contactos draws attention to the authenticity of the building as an example of Buenos Aires' history, *Shangay*'s scenographic arrangement takes advantage of the architectural and interior design of the venue to build an environment where evocations of ancient traditions and contemporary iconography elude the fixity of symbolic meaning.[157]

Employing a cabaret-style seating layout, the environment conceived by scenographer Vanessa Strauch produces a sensory impact as soon as the audience enters the space. An Oriental music compilation plays as the spectators walk in, are led to their tables by the staff, and place their orders with the servers. On the open frontal stage where the geishas perform their erotically charged skits, an assortment of cheap trinkets such as plastic

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[155] Hess, 44.

[156] Z. A. Jordan, *Philosophy and Ideology* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel Publishing, 1963), 377.

[157] Valeria Baranchuk hesitates to call it scenography: "La decoración (¿escenografía?)" (The décor [scenography?]). She chooses to emphasize the restaurant aspect of the space albeit not entirely disavowing its theatrical aspects. Valeria Baranchuk, "Bifurcaciones del mundo en *Shangay - Té verde y Sushi en 8 escenas* de José María Muscari," *Telón de Fondo* 1, no. 2 (December 2005): 4.

fans and dolls is placed on a few scattered pieces of furniture. On a small stage in the center of the room (in an arena arrangement), there are a short-legged table and ottomans where Lucas, Mariano, and Zulma interact. The geishas move around freely in the venue. There are posters stuck on the walls portraying Asian pop culture designs. Throughout the house, details commonly associated with a "Western" culture show signs of attempts to render the space more Asian for the thematic night of the play. For instance, pseudo-Asian images are glued on Christian icons. The space is virtually saturated in Asian paraphernalia mostly derived from pop and mass culture.

Making no claim to one single heritage but deploying a bricolage of Oriental kitsch, the venue looks like a twenty-first-century version of an Orientalist pop museum. The overwhelming jumble of Oriental imagery and sound produces a space for sensorial consumption. Although Strauch initially suggested clean lines and clear spaces, Muscari wanted to evoke the feverishly commercial Buenos Aires neighborhoods of Once and Chinatown,[158] thus bringing to the fore the Orientalist desires of a consumerist middle class.[159] He initially borrowed "anything Chinese" his friends may have owned in order to create a muddle of baubles. In addition, Strauch used internet community websites to borrow Asian folding screens.[160] Although some props were probably replaced, since they were cheaply and easily obtained, others were borrowed for, preserved, and "recycled" in the different iterations of the show, because they are more expensive to obtain—as was the case with Asian screens.

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[158] Once is a centrally located, traditionally Jewish area that has gradually become a popular location for stores managed and/or owned by first-generation Asian immigrants, or Asian Argentineans. The Barrio Chino (Chinatown) is located on Arribeños Street in Bajo Belgrano, a peripheral residential neighborhood. Any of these can be a "site of an incomprehensible 'otherness.'" See David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*.

[159] Baranchuk, 1.

[160] "Proyecto V," accessed September 1, 2010, http://proyectov.org/venus2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4976&Itemid=53.

Speaking of early twentieth-century collections of Oriental art and objects, Thomas Kim argues that "the concretizing effect of these citations of Oriental objects and the 'spirit' of Asia is to install the Orient as the a priori signifier of beauty and grace, but also of goods and merchandise."[161] Moreover, the assortment of artifacts "performatively" constructs the Orient as a "scene of aesthetic collectibles, arrayed for the pleasure of the consumer."[162] Critiquing a bourgeois, indiscriminating appreciation of all things Oriental, a fad most noticeable since the late nineties, Muscari claims to fashion his depiction haphazardly in order to replicate middle-class systems of belief.[163] He does not exhibit what would be considered Oriental high art. Rather, the environment is composed of Oriental objects available and appealing to a middle class with questionable cultural capital: lanterns, posters, prints, all of them objects of mass production and consumption. The randomness of artifacts displayed all over the house underscores the extent to which interpretations of Asian culture produced by Buenos Aires audiences are random, unfounded, and homogenizing.

In her study of Thai restaurants in the Western markets, Jennie Germann Molz notices the copious artifacts displayed to create "an atmosphere of Thai-ness."[164] These ornaments act as indexical signs of Thai culture. More importantly, according to Molz, "The fact that all of these typically Thai items can be bought in the souvenir shops in Bangkok contributes to the feeling that the restaurant is a stage for Thai-ness."[165] Essentially, these layouts imply a material construction of environment by means of an astute scenographic

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[161] Thomas W. Kim, "Being Modern: The Circulation of Oriental Objects," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (June 2006): 383.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Baranchuk, 2.

[164] Jennie Germann Molz, "Tasting an Imagined Thailand: Authenticity and Culinary Tourism in Thai Restaurants," in *Culinary Tourism: Exploring the Other through Food*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2004), 59.

[165] Ibid.

design animated by the consumer-driven mass production of articles. The conception of the performance space animates a theatrical environment by organizing concrete artifacts to activate symbolic and imaginary values.[166] However, these negotiations do not occur in one direction or in a predetermined order. "Relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable, nor are they 'positive' in the sense in which this term might be opposed to 'negative,'" Lefebvre claims.[167] Strauch's design destabilizes time and loci by selectively "borrows" artifacts from allegedly perennial and immutable cultures, imbuing them with ahistorical symbolic value. I hesitate to claim that she wanted to suggest that this was objectionable and somewhat predatory. Rather, I think she wanted to create an avalanche of sensorial stimuli to expose a bourgeois appetite for all things Asian, and for that she needed just *anything* that looked Oriental.[168] Neither Muscari nor Strauch seem to have paid much attention to the political ramifications of this. But as a spectator, I certainly felt the scenographic arrangement of objects was rather incongruous.

Whereas in the Oriental art collections that Thomas Kim reflected on there were antiques and objects of high artistic and economic value, Muscari's scenography foregrounds an Orientalism whose aesthetic connection to the East derives from shopping in Buenos Aires's Chinatown, watching *anime*, and eating sushi. However, the milieu produced in the midst of the commercially trendy Palermo Hollywood is out of place.[169] Palermo Hollywood

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[166] Lefebvre, 42.

[167] Ibid., 46.

[168] See note 160.

[169] The only available manuscript, conceived for the original staging in Abasto, places the action in a restaurant in Abasto. According to it, Zulma praises the décor of the Orientalized Abasto restaurant, although she believes that "estaría mejor en Palermo Viejo. Bah, Hollywood" (22; it would be better located in Palermo Viejo. Or should I say, Hollywood). Muscari made changes in later manuscripts to fit the space, since his scripts are always changing ad hoc. In the original production, the metatheatrical dynamics existed, but located in Abasto. However, even if the lines are uttered in Abasto, they draw attention to the (potential) suitability of the décor in Palermo Hollywood, evincing the disjunctions between the imagined Palermo and its actual manifestation. Moreover, the spectators' experience is grounded in Palermo

suggests sophistication and exclusivity to its consumers; it is the brand it bears. Surrounded by traditional casas chorizo, and buildings emphasizing a Spanish-colonial past and decades of French cultural influence on cobblestone or newly asphalted streets, such a bombardment of cheap cultural artifacts appears extrinsic to the neighborhood. Although the restaurant's interior design displays what Zulma describes as "cool feng shui" (22), the scenographic arrangement relies on objects commercially available to anyone with a few pesos to spare. Even if their allure is utterly different, Palermo Hollywood, the Chacarerean, and Muscari's restaurant are sites decidedly constructed for sales and consumption. According to Alexander Styhre and Tobias Engberg, the spatial aspect of consumption hinges on the spatial-aesthetic organization and exhibition of commodities. The manner in which the commodities are displayed in space makes an impact on their social substance.[170] In Muscari's production, the objects onstage are not rare, auratic works of art; they are cheap assembly-line commodities through which the capitalist mode of production takes center stage. Props and staging elements are arranged to create an environment of consumption, where food and the Other's culture will be devoured.

An offering of Oriental lore complements the act of food consumption. One of the geishas shows pride in her knowledge of Oriental traditions. When Lucas interrupts one of her recitations, Mora interjects, "Esas son otras costumbres. Así que dejá de tocar de oído." (13; These are other customs. So stop BS-ing.) The geisha appeals to the Oriental stamp to make the product more enticing, especially since Orientals are different, yet univocal. Lucas confirms this when he turns to the audience and says, "De chiquito mi abuela me decía que según como tienen los ojos te das cuenta de dónde son, pero yo no me doy cuenta nunca. ¿Seré yo o a vos también te pasa? ¿A los ponjas los hacen en serie?" (12; When I was a kid,

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Hollywood. Thus, I focus on the impact of the scenography on the performance and on audiences vis-à-vis a range of array of aesthetic, social, and economic relations spatially grounded in Palermo Hollywood.

[170] Alexander Styhre and Tobias Engberg, "Spaces of Consumption: From Margin to Centre," *Ephemera* 3, no. 2 (2003): 121.

my grandmother used to tell me that you can tell where they're from, according to the shape of their eyes. But I can never tell. Is that just me or does that happen to you, too? Do they mass-produce Orientals?)[171] According to Lucas, therefore, Orientals are fungible commodities.

Lucas's remark raises two concerns. First, who is this "they" to whom he refers? The pronoun positions the subjects of conversation outside an individual, or a community, that describes itself as an "I" or a "We." Benedict Anderson's theories on imagined communities provide some insight. Anderson argues that a nation "is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them … has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations."[172] But the nation is not the only imagined community. A group establishes a binary self-definition by animating pronouns such as "We" and "They" that discriminate among individuals according to their communal affiliation and alleged homogeneity. The dichotomous construction of Self and Other speaks to what Fernando Coronil describes as Occidentalism. Occidentalist practices bind "Western representations of 'Otherness' to the implicit constructions of 'Selfhood' that underwrite them."[173] They refer to the manner in which the West defines and constructs itself vis-à-vis the Orient. Dean MacCannell proposes a similar idea when he states that "it is not merely that everything is a mirror image of the self; everything, including other human beings, *is* the self."[174] Inasmuch as the Other is a different physical entity from the Self, MacCannell's assertions suggest that the Self absorbs the Other, not necessarily making her a colonized autonomous subject, but rather a constitutive part of the Self. Lucas's statement asserts a contrast making *them* a construction skewed by the subjects' produced selfhood.

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[171] Refer to Chapter 1 for an analysis of the pejorative term "ponja."

[172] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1999), 7.

[173] Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (1996): 56.

[174] Dean MacCannell, "Cannibalism Today," in *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57.

Second, Lucas's assertion alludes to something beyond the cliché that Asians all look alike. An Asian production of workers is suggested, which in Marxist terms marks an increase of the commodity of labor power. A throng of mass-produced, transparent, and fungible Orientals seems to result from a Fordist system of labor-power production. Marx points out that "labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form.[175] "They" make mass-produced, transparent, exchangeable commodities in the form of homogeneous workers who are endowed with the capacity for work. Insofar as workers are mass produced, they become transposable commodities, and labor is nothing but an abstraction. The mode of production that commodifies labor power implacably causes inequality. Coronil reminds us, "Occidentalism is inseparably tied to the constitution of international asymmetries underwritten by global capitalism."[176] This absorption of the Other takes place in the specific historical and spatial context of a capitalist mode of production, entailing a system of exploitation.[177]

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[175] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 104-5.

[176] Coronil, 57.

[177] China did implement a systematic scheme for a mass production of laborers. The Chinese Maoists, deeming Thomas Malthus's theories "bourgeois," believed that man is primarily a producer, and thus that China's prosperity was contingent on a demographic growth. British scholar Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) believed that hopes and expectations of perpetual progress towards a utopian society were unfounded. He argued that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man." In 1949, Mao pronounced the advantages of a vast population whose accelerated reproduction would be sustained by an increase in production. The Chinese leader stated, "Even if it should multiply many times, it [the population] will be fully able to resolve the problems created by this growth. The solution lies in production… Revolution and production can resolve the problem of feeding the population." Such a demographic growth proved to be deleterious and China's population policy veered dramatically toward one of population control. The Chinese "one-child policy" in fact attempted to address what scientists in the late seventies deemed to be a grave danger to Chinese development. Using methodology and theories from the Club of Rome, Chinese scientists defined the demographic crisis in terms of natural science, appealing to Malthusian forecasts. Their conclusions were twofold. First, the demographic explosion would threaten the environment to the extent that the world population might be at risk. Second, a growth in population posed an obstacle to economic modernization: there was a call for radical solutions to avert the imminent danger to the planet's future. Thomas R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: J. Johnson, 1798; Teddington, UK: Echo Library, 2006), 9. Citation corresponds to the later edition; Pascal Rocha da Silva, "La politique de l'enfant unique en République Populaire de Chine," (paper, 2006), 10, 18-19, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www.sinoptic.ch/textes /recherche/2006/200608_Rocha.Pascal_memoire.pdf.

Orientals are visibly identical in the performance as well as interchangeable in the labor market. In an earlier version of the play, a geisha uttered the following lines:

> GEISHA. Me pone contenta la expansión oriental dentro del mercado laboral de Argentina.… Yo aprendí por ejemplo el tema del hacinamiento, en el que viven estos seres es maravilloso, incluso como método de aprendizaje. Se levantan, se toman una sopita de fideos chinos y ya están cosiendo…. Son un ejemplo envidiable de prepotencia de trabajo. Se arreglan con una sopa, un consomé de arroz; en cambio, el trabajador argentino no vive sin el asado.
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> (2; I am happy to see the Oriental expansion within the Argentine labor market…. I learned, for example, about the overcrowded conditions that these beings live in—it's wonderful, even as a learning method. They get out of bed, they have some Chinese noodle soup, and they start to sew…. They are an enviable example of arrogance [*sic*] in their work. They get by on soup or rice consommé, whereas the Argentine worker can't live without his barbeque.)

The speech essentializes both Asians and Argentines. It tacitly devises a binary relation of these labor forces, dichotomously framed according to the nature of the means of subsistence required to ensure each group's ability to work. The distinction lies in the resources necessary to ensure that variable capital, namely, the commodity of labor power, is available to capital for production. In particular, the differentiation of cultural-ethnic groups focuses on a specific means of subsistence: food. What the worker eats plays a substantial role in the construction of the limits between Argentine and Asian communities. The Asian fare ("soup or rice consommé") is light, mostly water with an ingredient rich in carbohydrates but negligible amounts of protein or fat. Conversely, Argentine barbeque is high in fat and protein but contains virtually no carbohydrates. The nutritional compositions of these foods

are radically different. Moreover, the soup seems weak, insipid.[178] The geisha asserts a hierarchy of the food's status. A soup is watery and bland, whereas barbeque is rich and appetizing. The implications of specific diets exceed their potential nutritional value.

Another case in point is when, upon her arrival, Zulma asks Alejo and Lucas, "¿Comieron arroz con los palitos?" (Did you eat rice using chopsticks?), to which Lucas replies, "No seas literal. No es eso sólo lo chino" (18; Don't be literal. That is not the only thing that is Chinese). Zulma's question suggests that the choice of certain foodstuffs and eating utensils consolidates an individual's ethnicity. It would appear that eating rice, a staple in Asian diets,[179] produces the in-corporation (ingestion and transformation into living matter) of an aggregate of complex historical, cultural, and social identities described—in shorthand—as Oriental. Diets and how they are perceived thus contribute to the construction of Orientalized subjects.

In addition to being a reductive construction of the Other, an amalgamation of cultures may be in fact a differentiation-based commercial strategy: "Lo nuestro," one of the geishas explains, "no es puramente japonés; es oriental. Lo quisimos hacer más abarcativo." (22; Our thing is not purely Japanese—it's Oriental. We wanted to make it more inclusive.) In enunciating and staging difference in skewed terms, the non-Oriental avers and legitimizes her class as well as her ethnicity in terms of geopolitical clusters. According to the geisha, Asian food subsumes an array of analogous cultural practices that are different from

[178] "Sopita" connotes a very light soup, lacking in substantial flavors.

[179] The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reports data supporting the assessment that China is the greatest rice producer and consumer. Moreover, it has created a scale of consumption whereby they describe the Asian model as an "average consumption higher than 80 kg/person per year." China (90 kilograms), Indonesia (150 kilograms), and Myanmar (more than 200 kilograms) are the major consumers of the crop. Conversely, data indicates that Argentine consumption is approximately 10 kilograms/per person per year. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Secretariat, "Infocomm, M@rket Inform@tion in the Commodities Area: Rice," United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, accessed July 28, 2009, http://www.unctad.org/infocomm/anglais/rice/market.htm; Guillermo Scarlatto, "Trayectoria y demandas tecnológicas de las cadenas agroindustriales en el MERCOSUR ampliado–Cereales: trigo, maíz y arroz" (working paper, Procisur and Inter-American Development Bank, Montevideo, 2000), 69.

"ours." In fact, regional cuisines are invented lifestyles constructed according to contestable and contested boundaries "where any here/us is constituted through its connections into the there/them."[180] Foodstuffs "make places as symbolic constructs, being deployed in the discursive construction of various imaginative geographies," and their differentiation by means of their geography "is an active intervention in their cultural geographies."[181] As Jonathan Friedman contends, "Cultures don't flow together and mix with each other. Rather, certain actors, often strategically positioned actors, identify the world in such terms as part of their own self-identification."[182] In difference, the subject can determine what she *is* and, most significantly, what she is *not.*

Power asymmetries grant food its symbolic value. The hegemonic class vests certain food with symbolic value, which it co-opts by restricting the consumption of these foodstuffs to exclusively ensure their epicurean satisfaction. Monica Chiu contends that "food's status as either disgusting or delectable has always pivoted in the space of the slash (/)," a tenuous and unsettled frame of a binary. [183] Status is "based on human classification by one (dominant) subset of people for their own finicky and fluctuating tastes in a manner that shapes its meanings for other groups of people."[184] Anton Ervynck et al. provide a more nuanced classification of food consumption, dismissing the binary established by Adam Smith between basic and sumptuary goods.[185] The authors identify differences among the

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[180] Ian Cook and Philip Crang, "The World on a Plate: Culinary Culture, Displacement and Geographical Knowledges," in *The Consumption Reader*, ed. David B. Clarke, Marcus A. Doel, and Kate M. L. Housiaux (New York: Routledge, 2003), 114.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Jonathan Friedman,"Global System, Globalization and the Parameters of Modernity," in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 83-84.

[183] Monica Chiu, *Filthy Fiction: Asian American Literature by Women* (New York: Altamira Press, 2004), 138.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Anton Ervynck et al., "Beyond Affluence: The Zooarchaeology of Luxury," *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (2003): 429.

array of foodstuffs consumed.[186] First, there are nutriments "necessary to survive, be active and grow," what in Marxian vocabulary would be the means of subsistence. Second, people consume foodstuffs that are deemed a basic need by a person or society yet in excess of the amount that would meet physiological demands. The Argentineans' socially constructed need for barbeque fits this description. "There are many people who would describe their daily portion of meat as a basic need," Ervynck et al. contend.[187] Since the pervasive assumption is that beef is a necessary staple of the Argentine diet, it must therefore be reasonably priced at all times.[188] Third, eating a particular array of foods indicates affluence, for these foodstuffs are consumed "beyond basic and considered needs."[189] The epitome of luxury is found in sumptuary foods that are "special, limited in supply, difficult to procure or very expensive for other reasons."[190] Food is also a status indicator: "Each society determines which foods are social necessities and which are luxuries, and this distinction reflects the 'social grammar' of a society, its moral and political make-up," argues Marijke van der Veen.[191]

As the show's title foreshadows, the play introduces an engagement with the production and consumption of sushi, and their socioeconomic connotations. The venue of the show and the setting for the performance inform a class negotiation taking place onstage

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[186] Ibid.

[187] Ibid.

[188] In the midst of a heated struggle between the federal government and the agrarian sector regarding export tariffs, head of the Entre Ríos Agrarian Federation Alfredo de Angelis defended agrarian exporters in advocating that whoever wants to eat filet mignon must pay eighty pesos per kilogram ("el que quiera comer lomo que pague 80 pesos el kilo"). His statements generated extensive outrage among parties endorsing government policy. A member of a consumer defense organization lambasted De Angelis, avowing that "Argentine consumers do not deserve to be inveigled into believing that there are first- and second-rate people; we all have the right to eat meat, our meat at reasonable prices and not like in Paris (los consumidores argentinos no merecemos que se nos quiera hacer creer que hay gente de primera y gente de segunda; todos tenemos derecho a comer carne, nuestra carne a precios razonables y no como en París). "Tildaron a De Angeli de 'irresponsable,'" *Crítica de la Argentina,* July 12, 2008, accessed April 24, 2009, http://200.82.82.211/index.php?secc=nota&nid=7336&pagina=10&order_by=Comentario&sentido=DESC.

[189] Ervynck et al, 429.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Marijke van der Veen, "When Is Food a Luxury?" *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (2003): 420.

as well as in the orchestra. Lucas wants to order food so he asks one of the geishas what is available. She retorts, "Sushi. Está muy bueno. Nos lo prepara una vietnamita, nuestra sushi-women [*sic*]" (6; Sushi. It is very good. A Vietnamese woman, our 'sushi woman,' makes it for us). After arguing about what sushi really is (raw fish or a fish-and-rice roll?) and Lucas's reticence at eating raw fish, the server offers a Buenos-Aires-style antipasto—*una picada a lo porteño* (6). Sushi, albeit all the rage, apparently does not appeal to the less-than-cosmopolitan palate. To entice Lucas, the geisha alludes to a TV commercial promoting premium-quality rice whose catchphrase became conspicuously popular in the eighties (6). The allegedly exotic fare seems too foreign to Lucas, thus the geisha must assuage the patron by offering him a dish he can acknowledge as commonplace. Germann Molz identifies an analogous negotiation in some Thai restaurants, where "authentic" dishes are somewhat adapted to Western tastes.[192] The experience of "exotic" foods is grounded on creating difference in relation to what the Other is different *from*.[193]

Whereas a cosmopolitan diner is willing to face the risks new foods pose, Lucas appears reluctant to engage the foreign. Although he has traveled to some extent—he has gone to Las Leñas and Camboriú (6)[194]—the geographical range of his trips is limited. He has only gone away to vacation resorts catering to mostly South American clients in need of hedonistic relaxation in isolation from local social culture. His rejection of a taste of different flavors provides a glimpse of Lucas's sense of identity, insofar as this behavior is in practice the assertion of difference. Bourdieu says, "It is no accident that, when they [tastes] have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes."[195] In light of Lucas's reluctance to eat Asian food, the audience may infer his belonging to a specific

[192] Jennie Germann Molz, "Tasting an Imagined Thailand: Authenticity and Culinary Tourism in Thai Restaurants," in *Culinary Tourism: Exploring the Other through Food*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2004), 57.

[193] Ibid., 78.

[194] Las Leñas is a ski resort in the Argentine Andes. Camboriú is a beach resort in southern Brazil.

[195] Bourdieu, 56.

socioeconomic class; it is not that of the "educated, metropolitan middle classes" who are drawn to foreign restaurants, seek novelty, and thus would enjoy fares made by the Vietnamese sushi-woman.[196]

Theodore C. Bestor attributes the inclusion of sushi in the Western diet to Japan's emergence in the world economic stage in the seventies together with the rise in demand for alternatives to red meat.[197] Undoubtedly, sushi is available in many markets outside Japan. Nonetheless, as Bestor points out, it still bears the hallmark of a Japanese cultural property.[198] "Globalization," the author claims, "doesn't necessarily homogenize cultural differences nor erase the salience of cultural labels. Quite the contrary, it grows the franchise."[199] Van der Veen supports this contention: "Exotic food items are possibly the category of luxury foods most easily identifiable.... The temporal and spatial patterning of their occurrence in any one region will almost certainly reveal luxury consumption, as well as status differences between sites or households."[200] But this marketable value is contingent on complex and complicated labor negotiations and ethnic identifications. "Culinary tourists in the West," according to Germann Molz, "are able to consume the Other through food without acknowledging the complex histories, power relationships, mobilities, or even the migrants themselves who make this 'foreign' food available in the first place."[201] Sushi boosts the stature of Japan and its cuisine in the global economy of consumption. *Shangay* brings the Vietnamese sushi-woman into play as a reasonable facsimile of a Japanese cook in order to validate the authenticity—and thus the cachet—of the product purveyed. The

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[196] Alan Warde, Lydia Martens, and Wendy Olsen, "Consumption and the Problem of Variety: Cultural Omnivorousness, Social Distinction and Dining Out," *Sociology* 33 (1999): 124.

[197] Theodore C. Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global," *Foreign Policy* 121 (2000): 56.

[198] Ibid., 61.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Van der Veen, 418.

[201] Jennie Germann Molz, "Eating Difference: The Cosmopolitan Mobilities of Culinary Tourism," *Space and Culture* 10, no. 1 (2007): 82.

organizers of the "Oriental night" at the play's restaurant exploit the pervasive homogenization of individuals of Asian origin, ascribing to them an ethnic identity based on their physiognomy.

Asia is articulated as a cluster of homologous nations, thus rendering a pliable geographical region devoid of historical specificity. Lucas unabashedly declines to acknowledge ethnic contrasts and nuances among Asian communities: "Bah, chinos, japoneses, de Taiwán me dan igual" (12; Ugh! Chinese, Japanese, from Taiwan—it's all the same to me). Similarly, one of the geishas claims to have been inspired by the film *Farewell My Concubine* to perform a nude scene.[202] She describes the Chinese women featured as powerful ("*potentozas*") in the purportedly Japanese film, when in fact it is a Chinese motion picture directed by Chen Kaige. As the performance progresses, the senselessly misapplied denominations reach farcical levels, foregrounding the ubiquitous Occidentalism eliciting dichotomous constructions of Self ("Argentine") and Other ("Ponja").[203]

The audience is complicitously witnessing an act of consumption of the Other, as well as participating in it expressly at the end of the performance. In early productions (not at the Chacarerean), the actor-waiters would serve sushi to the spectators, together with Japanese peanuts and green tea.[204] At the Chacarerean Teatre, sushi was no longer offered; however, actor-servers poured green tea and handed out small packages of Japanese peanuts to the audience. Like cosmopolitan eaters, the spectators "traveled" through the consumption of products of foreign origins—or at least those bearing commercially constructed foreignness. Muscari introduced the allegedly Japanese peanuts for the purpose of flagrantly exposing middle-class contradictions and delusions, and literally feeding them to the bourgeoisie. Brandishing peanuts, Muscari intrudes in the middle-class cosmopolitan

[202] It used to be Nuria, when the play featured three geishas. The line was probably assigned to either Atila or Mora in the staging at the Chacarerean Teatre. *Shangay* 16-17.

[203] Refer to chapter 1.

[204] "'*Shangay*' Escrita, Dirigida."

consumption of Otherness by stealthily introducing a concocted Other. He argues that these snacks are an Argentine invention that the middle class assumes is Asian.[205] Together with cheap sushi and green tea served in plastic cups, Japanese peanuts highlight its social construction by a bourgeois imaginary.

However, Muscari himself is not exempt from endorsing an Occidentalist position with regards to a homogenized East. Although he claims to challenge or disown political correctness, he nonetheless uncritically reproduces relationships of consumption with political implications.[206] Foods do not merely originate or come from places. Ian Cook and Philip Crang content that they "also make places of symbolic constructs, being deployed in the discursive construction of various imaginative geographies."[207] Food economies impinge on the construction of these world topographies. In materializing "authentic" and "constructed" food origins, albeit in an underhanded and mordant fashion, Muscari argues for the existence of a veritable regional edible product. *Shangay* is oftentimes sharply satirical in that sense. He mocks the commercialization of fake, constructed Japanese products, but he neglects—or is unable—to suggest that any regional cuisine is, in fact, an invented tradition. It is critical that instances of hybridization "be recognized as constructed geographical knowledges, locally produced as part of situationally specific identity projects."[208] Even when he perceives some clues of its deployment in bourgeois culture, Muscari does not seem to identify an Occidentalist force in his own work.

Like in any system of oppression, acts of Othering are crucial to the self-identification of a class and, consequently, to the (re)production of a neoliberal system of hierarchical social demarcations. A middle-class spectator gazes upon a body (of work) that it both

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[205] Baranchuk, 3. However, entrepreneurs in Mexico claim that the Japanese peanut is a Mexican creation. *El Universal*, "Cacahuate japonés, una dura historia," August 8, 2006, accessed April 24, 2009, http://www2.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/noticia.html?id_nota=33556 &tabla=articulos.

[206] Baranchuk, 3.

[207] Cook and Crang, 115.

[208] Ibid.

admires and exoticizes. As Stallybrass and White note, the "act … in which the middle classes excitedly discover their own pleasures and desires under the sign of the Other, in the realm of the Other, is constitutive of the very formation of middle-class identity."[209] The Other is also an object of desire. Thus, since the desire of the outsider unfolds dialectically connected to rejection, a repudiation of the Other "is not simply about exclusion, but also involves the inclusion of the Other into self-identity."[210]

In "Eating the Other," bell hooks identifies the commodification of the Other by the hegemonic power. She argues that the latter mobilizes an economy of grotesque devouring of the Other. She claims, "The commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, *via* exchange, by a *consumer cannibalism* that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization."[211] When deploying the trope of "cannibalism," hooks concentrates on "race and ethnicity… as resources for pleasure."[212] The ethnic Other satisfies the Self's appetites. Through difference, the Other (in hooks's case, blacks) adds some spice to the subject's (in other words, whites') experience, "seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream culture."[213]

"Developed" capitalism's current efforts of self-preservation toward the global dream of the millennium have entailed a culturally gradated structure of Otherness. Nowadays, globalization discourses dissolve those differences. However, a global neoliberalism still entails "the subjection of non-Western peoples" as well as "the subjection

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[209] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 201. Fernando Coronil observes a similar phenomenon along ethnic lines. He expounds on the term Occidentalism, whereby the dominant groups (re)produce and naturalize echelons of difference of the Other, thus constructing Selfhood, in order to anchor the embedded power asymmetry. Coronil, 54-57.

[210] Deborah Lupton, *Risk* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 172.

[211] bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, South End Press, 1992), 31 (emphasis mine).

[212] Ibid., 23.

[213] Ibid., 21.

of subordinate populations within the West," which purportedly appear as the result of market forces "rather than as a consequence of a Western political project."[214] Due to an alleged universality, local class struggles dissipate as the result of a "homogenizing" movement disavowing class inequity.

In *Shangay*, difference and Otherness appear within a matrix of economies shaped by capital; the performance experience juxtaposes an array of types of consumptions of "difference." Performers and spectators consume the Other's (cultural, social, economic, and biological) difference: the Other becomes a commodity—an object of total consumption. Yet the Other is no longer the Oriental as a cultural self. It is also her labor power that is consumed, as well as those of displaced Palermitanos and restaurant staff. The social imagination of difference establishes the foundation for the manner in which labor processes take place. Marx emphasized human consciousness as possibility of creative activity.

> What distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes [*verwirklicht*] his own purpose in those materials.[215]

For the existence of a middle class, there must be (an)Other class, a proletariat that the bourgeoisie endeavors to—and, unavoidably, must—mislead to ensure the continuity of its power.[216] Culture is inherently necessary for class identification since, as Marx argues,

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[214] Fernando Coronil, "Toward a Critique of Globalcentrism: Speculations on Capitalism's Nature," in *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 82.

[215] Marx, *Capital*, 284.

[216] "[The] bourgeoisie's hegemony is exercised not merely by a minority but in the interest of that minority, so the need to deceive the other classes and to ensure that their class consciousness remains amorphous is inescapable for a bourgeois regime." Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 63.

individuals can only form a class when "they live under conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter."[217] The middle class's production of difference supports its very existence; the manner in which difference is formulated and systematized shapes the way the bourgeoisie discerns and experiences its selfhood. The objects or experiences of Othering "play a symbolic role in bourgeois culture out of all proportion to their actual social importance."[218] When critiquing the realm of difference, Marxist critics underscore its assumption of ahistorical, immutable essentialism, which the aforementioned deem almost Kantianly idealistic and heedless to the dialectical character of history and of capitalism.[219]

Shangay performs what are, according to Muscari, the audience's assumptions. Difference develops in the body. It is constructed through phenotypes and physiological processes. Orientals look "a certain way" and eat "certain foods." Therefore, they are different from "us." The performance introduces the body onstage as an object of consumption. Through the physiological in-corporation of resources, labor bears capital in her body. The bodies of the restaurant worker, of the lower classes, of the Oriental—ultimately, of the Other—are fodder for capitalist negotiations. In Bourdieu's theories, there is evidence of a biological animation in the accumulation of diverse types of capital. Even the performers' bodies are consumed, insofar as their work—performing—provides the audience's food for cultural capital accumulation. Marx argues that in the workers' bodies one finds the result of biological processes that ensure the reproduction of labor power. Both models link consumption to a corporeal activity rooted in bioscience, food to human flesh. Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli argue that "the food consumed becomes part of

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[217] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 170-71.

[218] Stallybrass and White, 20.

[219] Terry Eagleton, introduction (part I) to *Marxist Literary Theory*, ed. Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 6.

the body and transforms it.… More than a mere sign, food is the body itself."[220] Workers' bodies are a biological source of energy for the capitalist machinery. Insofar as workers expend energy and invest it in a thing to be consumed, their physical bodies participate in the thing's materiality. In addition, this live human material must be perpetually reproduced to fuel the wheels of the hegemonic system. Hence, this is an instance of unwitting, though not less real, cannibalism.

Marx writes, "[History] shows that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances."[221] In the play *Shangay*, the representation of an Occidentalizing bourgeoisie—Lucas, Alejo, Zulma, and the "absent" restaurant owner—reproduces (in other words, theatrically represents and socially energizes) social relations taking place in the playhouse and Palermo Hollywood among spectators, partners of Sin Contactos, actors, servers, and denizens. It is a vast social fabric of production and consumption animated in a neighborhood, a venue, and a performance where social affiliations and class struggle unfold in a system of capital reproduction. The aggregate of agents participating in *Shangay* exercise practices that, to great degree, may be identified in other exploitative relationships. Fundamentally, insofar as capitalism necessitates Othering to defer and disavow its anthropophagic impulse, it must articulate and naturalize difference between the consumer (capital) and the commodity (worker) to rationalize exploitation.

[220] Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli, "'Eat The World': Postcolonial Encounters in Quebec City's Ethnic Restaurants," *Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 456 (2002): 251.

[221] Marx and Engels, 813.

Chapter 3

Eat What You Love And Love What You Eat:

Cannibalistic Consumption in Newton Moreno's *A refeição*

> SHLINK. But my brain is all I have.
>
> GARDA. Let's cut it this way: you'll lose some of that brain. And after you've had your drink, you'll have love.[1]

In 2006, David Savran issued a provocative challenge: he called for the renewal of Marxist hermeneutics to analyze social class at the international level. As theatre scholars, Savran charged, our analysis of the operations and effects of neoliberalism can examine and elucidate the system's underlying reality, "a monstrous mise en scène, put on display so all the world can see (and shudder at) the spectacle of the Other's body in pain."[2] Savran's argument focused on the productions of Peter Morris's *Guardians* and Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*,[3] works of extreme theatricalized sadism, to underscore the material repercussions of imperialism. Whereas some intellectuals reduce the spectacle of violence to an innocuous trope, Savran offered a more politically engaged proposition: that, if a staging of bodies in pain is seen as a metaphor, "it be understood as a metaphor for the insistent

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[1] Bertold Brecht, *Jungle of Cities*, in *Jungle of Cities and Other Plays*, trans. Anselm Hollo (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 52.

[2] David Savran, "Whatever Happened to Karl Marx?" (plenary address, annual conference of the American Society of Theatre Research, Chicago, IL, November 17, 2006).

[3] "Peter Morris's *Guardian* was given an elaborate production at the medium-profile, politically progressive Off Broadway theatre, the Culture Project, after performances at the Edinburgh Fringe (in 2005) and in London. The second, Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* was given a much more modest production by East Coast Artists at La MaMa after productions in Greece (in 1997), India, the UK, and on BBC radio." Ibid.

dematerialization of those enslaved subjects whose invisibility is taken as the sign of their compliance with the imperatives of empire."[4]

Since, as Allen Feldman claims, "politicized aestheticization … takes on new valences and offers new things to see once these artifacts of visual culture are drawn into the reconfiguring maelstrom of chronic political aggression,"[5] the spectacle of theatre participates in a cultural activity based on a system of exploitation. That does not mean that theatre makers do not interrogate it. Sometimes, they use their craft and means to respond to the circumstances within which they operate. In this chapter, I interrogate the theatricalization of capitalist depredatory devouring in Brazilian playwright Newton Moreno's recent work *A refeição* (*The Repast*), which premiered at the 2007 Curitiba Theatre Festival under the direction of Denise Weinberg. The play—or a series of dramatic essays, as Newton[6] describes the work—explores abusive consumption at the most concrete of levels, since it displays arguably a most viscerally repellent act of violence: cannibalism.[7]

In "Primeiro Movimento/Prólogo" (First Movement/Prologue), "Na selva…" (In the Jungle...), and "… das cidades" (… of the Cities)—the three acts in sequential order—Newton locates the act of consumption on the human body, thus emphasizing the physiological aspects of eating. In addition, the title of his work also alludes to food ingestion by invoking the economies and cultural performance of having a meal. The economic aspect of eating includes expenditure of currency, of resources, and of energy, as

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Allen Feldman, "Violence and Vision: The Prosthetics and Aesthetics of Terror," in *States of Violence*, ed. Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006), 432-33.

[6] It is common practice in Brazil to refer to people by their first name—even dramatists. I will follow the Brazilian convention when referring to the Brazilian playwright and performers. However, this will not apply to my citation of scholars, since that may lead to confusion with regard to standard practices in the United States.

[7] Newton Moreno, *The Repast*, trans. Mark O'Thomas (unpublished manuscript, 2005), Microsoft Word file, 10; Newton Moreno, *A refeição*, directed by Marcos Frutig (São Paulo: 2007), DVD. Henceforth cited in text. Stage directions in the text are always included in quotations and cited as text. Other descriptions delineate actions in live and filmed performance, both directed by Denise.

well as a variety of transactions in the exchange market. The performance of eating is also culturally produced and reproduced by means of social praxis attributing meaning to its different components. The physiological and social dichotomy pervades the work to different degrees. Diverse and autonomous cases of devouring take place: consumption at times physical, at times cultural/economic. Now and then, both kinds occur simultaneously and dialectically, blurring the boundaries between "primitive" cannibalism and "civilized" contemporary appropriation.

Although all scenes feature explicit cannibalistic actions, the present chapter concentrates mostly on scene 2, "In the Jungle...," which takes place in São Paulo, Brazil's economic and financial hub. In this scene, economic exploitation is most flagrant; class struggle determines the entire plot and staging. This section best addresses the economic ravages of neoliberal imperialism. In this scene, a *paulistano*[8] capitalist seeks out a drunken beggar for whom he feels an irrepressible sexual and carnal appetite. The executive's hedonistic and coercive monologue describes the beggar as an object of sexual desire and domination. The scene ends with an act of aggressive exploitation: the cannibalistic consumption of the poor man's flesh.

This segment of the text does not exist by itself. Anthropophagic violence saturates the entire play. The "First Movement/Prologue" portrays a married couple in the hospital, trying to make sense of the husband's irrepressible and rapacious urge to take a bite of his wife's finger. In the last scene, "… of the Cities," the interaction between a dying Amerindian, the last survivor of his tribe, and the anthropologist who wants to study him for his/her[9] own research exposes different rationales and underlying interests in an intercultural exchange. The dying man would give the scholar his last words and a record of

[8] Paulistano is the person from city of São Paulo proper, not just the state. São Paulo is the richest city in Brazil as well as its financial and cultural center.

[9] In the original casting, the anthropologist was played by a man. In subsequent productions, the director decided to cast an actress to play the role.

the now extinct traditions; in return, the scholar would perform the tribal death ritual of eating the Amerindian's body. Thus, all three stories offer rich material to explore the violence and consequences of anthropophagy.

Whereas the Brazilian play stages cannibalism, its European antecedent merely suggests it. Bertold Brecht's pre-Marxist *Jungle of Cities*, to which the title and structure of *The Repast* clearly refer, is a play alluding to similar anthropophagic modes. This ten-scene play describes the confrontation between a young working-class man called George Garga and a Malay lumber dealer called Shlink in 1912 Chicago. The structure of the play, namely, the division of the action into ten scenes, tries to reproduce a boxing match. In this early drama, Brecht was more interested in portraying the metaphysical struggle of thought and material life. By using the layout of competitive sport, Brecht attempted to overtly represent struggle as the objective itself. Later in his life, he recognized that, while writing the play, he was inadvertently becoming aware of the real conflict: class struggle. Moreover, he observed that "under advanced capitalism fighting for fighting's sake is only a wild distortion of competition for competition's sake."[10]

Food appears as an element connected to class struggle. In *Jungle of Cities*, there are multiple references to eating, drinking, and foodstuffs. For example, characters refer to food as currency,[11] drink heavily to numb the mind in the face of abjection, and use alcohol to compensate (and subdue) the exploited worker.[12] The play makes a most explicit reference to bodily exploitation in terms of food consumption when Garga confronts Shlink, after he learns that the former lumberyard owner is supporting his family.

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[10] Bertold Brecht, "On Looking Through My First Plays (iii)," in *Collected Plays,* ed. Ralph Manheim and John Willet (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 1:422.

[11] Shlink says, "A man out to know what to choose: a pound of fish, or an opinion—or, on the other hand, two pounds of fish, or that opinion." Brecht, *Jungle of Cities*, 14.

[12] Jane, who becomes a prostitute, tells Garga, "These gentlemen are being nice to me. (*She has a drink from The Baboon's flask.*) They've been buying me cocktails and things." Ibid., 19.

> Garga. I only have two hands. What I see as a human being, you devour like a hunk of meat. You open my eyes to resources I didn't know I had; by appropriating them. You turn members of my family into resources, you live off my supply. And I am getting leaner and leaner…[13]

The appropriation of resources is part of this classed boxing match in which the passion for sport drives a person to fight another one for a better reason than those other, less noble motives—such as "the urge to own women or means of production or objects of exploitation," as Brecht writes.[14] In the play, Garga merges economic and body imagery, thus suggesting a possibly inextricable interrelation between the worker's body and economic accumulation. Moreover, in accusing Shlink of devouring human beings, Garga equates the appropriation of resources to anthropophagic consumption.

Like *Jungle of Cities, The Repast* speaks to an explicit mode of production reliant on the exploitation of the human body. It aims the lens of a ruthless social microscope at human relations under a capitalist mode of production. Karl Marx analyzes the peremptory enforcement of the working day on the worker; he also provides detailed accounts—statistics and individual examples—of the harmful effects of this mode of production on the workers' quality of life within working populations in England and Ireland during the Industrial Revolution.[15] Michel Foucault offers a complementary approach in his theorization of biopower, by arguing that "[capitalism] would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production … The investment of the body, its valorization, and the distribution management of its forces were

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[13] Ibid., 51.

[14] Bertold Brecht, "Program Note for the Heidelberg Production," in *Collected Plays*, ed. Ralph Manheim and John Willet (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 1:420.

[15] Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin Classics and *New Left Review*, 1990).

at the time indispensable."[16] Both argue that the human body is encased in the production system; its exploitation is the bedrock of capital accumulation.

Neoliberalism, "capitalism on steroids,"[17] has inculcated a dissociation of labor—and its bodies—from the mechanisms of capital reproduction. "Neoliberalism aspires, in its ideology and practice," Jean and John Comaroff argue, "to intensify the abstractions inherent in capitalism itself: to separate labor power from its human context, to replace society with the market, to build a universe out of aggregated transactions."[18] It is my contention that a neoliberal mode of production must feed off human flesh to propel its engines of production. In chapter 2, I discuss labor power as a commodity available for purchase by capital in the exchange market. Workers in fact sell their body energy—in other words, the energy stored in their body matter. Their bodies provide real fuel in the form of labor power (that is to say, energy)[19] unbound from their physical anatomy by means of anabolic and catabolic pathways. David Harvey's argument, that "a surplus of labor … can feed the expansion of production," is a lucid trope.[20] It hints at the underlying physiological exploitation in action within the workers' bodies required for capital accumulation. However, tropes only conceal the real consequences of savage neoliberal practices. In a spirit similar to Savran's, Dean MacCannell warns us against complacently reducing anthropophagy to a rhetorical exercise. "That cannibalism has transformed itself into a

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[16] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 1:141. Harvey states, "Capitalism will require some sort of disciplinary apparatus of surveillance, punishment and ideological control that Marx frequently alludes to." David Harvey, "The Body as an Accumulation Strategy," in *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 105.

[17] James W. Michaels, "Metacapitalism: An Economy on Steroids," *Forbes Magazine*, 17 July, 2000, accessed September 9, 2010, http://www.forbes.com/best/2000/0717/022.html; Dan Clawson, "Neo-Liberalism Guarantees Social Movement Unionism," *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 20 (2008): 208.

[18] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," in *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 14.

[19] "Labour-power itself is energy transferred to a human organism by means of nourishing matter." Marx, 215.

[20] Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 238.

metaphoric cannibalism should not be greeted as a positive development," he cautions. "[I]t is precisely its metaphoric character that protects it from having to admit its gruesome excesses."[21]

The advantages of staged performance are the foregrounding of physical and objective substance, eschewing the strictly literary aspects of drama in order to scrutinize its multisensorial materiality. *The Repast* turns physical and concrete what capitalist doxa either reduces to discourse or blatantly disavows, as it celebrates efficiency and naturalized "market forces." In his study of tourism, MacCannell describes the encounter of the tourist with the Other in theatrical terms, as "the scene of a shared Utopian vision of profit without exploitation, logically the final goal of a kind of cannibal economics shared by ex-primitives and postmoderns alike."[22] Capitalists advance the idea of profit without exploitation: a delusion, since in profitable endeavors, nature has been used up, and labor has been employed. The destruction of nature and alienation of work have been hidden from view—by means of new techniques of modern statecraft and stagecraft, according to MacCannell[23]—with the complicity of the media and communication monopolies that "lead to dumbing-down but also open up new means of political manipulation."[24] As a crucial part of the biosphere, the human body is subject to exploitative, uncompensated consumption. Neoliberal agents' balance sheets are extremely misleading, given that the genuine cost of production does not subsume the expense of consuming nature—both its organic and inorganic components.

Taking into consideration this mission of deception, I provide a detailed examination of a particular case of concealed exploitation. To do so, I start the chapter with a history of

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[21] Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 20.

[22] Ibid., 28.

[23] Ibid, 29.

[24] Samir Amin, *Obsolescent Capitalism* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 64.

The Repast's dramatic production. Next, I present a description of labor practices within a specific Brazilian industry, as a means of illustrating a case of oppressive labor economy. In analyzing the exploitation of sugar cane workers in Brazil—in fact, mostly those working in the state of São Paulo—I offer a concrete example of the exploitation of workers. I juxtapose this case in point to the dynamics of oppression and abuse that take place in the city of São Paulo—also the capital of the eponymous state—as they are staged in the production. My argument is that only by understanding working relations in Brazil can one contextualize the play and its performance, to develop an awareness of the dialectical social forces invested in labor struggle. Only then can capitalism be explained historically. I consider the working conditions of this particular population of workers as evidence of the material relevance of the cannibalistic relationships in performance. The objective is to demonstrate the homologies between social relations in performance and their real, offstage counterparts. This may contribute to Maria Aparecida de Moraes Silva's mission: "trazer ao palco do teatro do etanol os atores até então deixados atrás das cortinas: os trabalhadores rurais, os cortadores de cana dos canaviais paulistas" (to bring to the ethanol theatre's stage the actors until now left behind the curtains: rural workers, the sugar cane cutters of the state of São Paulo's plantations).[25]

Discerning the dynamics of deprivation from a Marxian standpoint illuminates the negotiations between the characters of the paulistano and the beggar in the context of the city and the state of São Paulo. For this purpose, besides expounding on Brazilian economic conditions under neoliberalism that have exacerbated an exploitative socioeconomic creed, I argue that charity is a crucial aspect of this relationship. In light of the exchange system deployed in the play, I give further details regarding the relevance of altruism as a serious factor in a capitalist mode of production. In particular, and due to its critical role in the

[25] Maria Aparecida de Moraes Silva, "Atrás das cortinas no teatro do etanol," *Folha de São Paulo,* October 2, 2007, A3.

propagation of neoliberalism, I elucidate the United States' animation of neoliberal depredation under the guise of "compassionate conservatism," which informs my analysis of philanthropy and the economies of empathy. Such a defense of altruism drapes a veil of respectability and good intentions over capital accumulation. Yet *The Repast* scratches the veneer of beneficence and lays bare capital's vested interests. The scrutiny of spectators' eyes watching brutality against a human being under the guise of "philanthropy" impugns the ostensible redistribution of wealth. Instead, a candid representation of charitable exploitation resists the endeavors of concealment and camouflage of violence actuated by neoliberal profiteers. In my mind, the performance prompts the question: who does philanthropy *truly* benefit?

The play belongs to a body of cultural material produced by a young generation of playwrights of the twenty-first century. It took Newton Moreno five years to develop his play. The text gradually took shape in workshops run by Royal Court Theatre in São Paulo (2004) and in London (2005). At the Centro Cultural São Paulo, Cibele Forjaz Simões directed a reading of the text within the 2004 *Ciclo de leituras dramáticas*, a play-reading series.[26] At the 2005 International Playwriting Residency in London, its final version was first staged.[27] As further evidence of the prestigious status of Newton's work in Brazil and abroad, the Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo (the state's official publishing house), the Alliance Française, and the French Consulate in Brazil released a volume in the Palco Sur Scène book collection featuring three of his plays in a French-Portuguese edition: *Agreste* (*Dry Lands*), *Body art*, and *The Repast*.[28]

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[26] *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico Database*, "Cibele Forjaz Simões," accessed September 2, 2009, http://lattes.cnpq.br/9242039824071917.

[27] Giovana Neiva, "Refeição crua e cruel," *Jornal Comunicação,* March 23, 2007, accessed September 2, 2009, http://www.jornalcomunicacao.ufpr.br/node/544.

[28] Lu Fernandes Escritório de Comunicação, "Coleção Palco Sur Scène publica três peças de Newton Moreno em português e em francês," news release, April 24, 2009.

The focus of this study is on the first Brazilian professional production. The play had its official premiere at the Curitiba Theatre Festival in March 2007 and soon after that had a modest run at the SESC Santana in São Paulo.[29] On October 5, 2007, the original production started a month-long run at the Espaço Parlapatões on São Paulo's Praça Franklin Roosevelt. The show was part of the 2008 São Paulo *Festival de Virada Cultural* (Festival of Cultural New Trends).[30] The production team remained unchanged; the original cast, consisting of Luah Guimarães, Marat Descartes (arguably one of the best actors of his generation),[31] and Plínio Soares, and director Denise Weinberg participated in all professional runs.[32] As part of the *O Aprendiz Encena* (The Apprentice Performs) project, within the frame of the 2009 *Festival Recife do Teatro Nacional* (National Theatre Festival in Recife), Auricêia Fraga, Pascoal Filizola, and Cleiton Cabral performed the play, directed by Alisson Castro, Rafael Barreiros, and Rodrigo Cunha.[33]

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[29] Bárbara Soares, "*A Refeição*—peça inédita do dramaturgo Newton Moreno," *Revista IN*, April 24, 2007, accessed September 3, 2009, http://www.revistainonline.com.br/ler_noticia_cultura.asp?secao =30&noticia=4667.

[30]"Programação," *Prefeitura da Cidade de São Paulo*, accessed September 3, 2009, www.prefeitura.sp .gov.br /portal/upload/virada_1176243889.doc.

[31] Dirceu Alves Jr., review of *A refeição*, by Newton Moreno, directed by Denise Weinberg, SESC Santana, São Paulo, *ISTOÉ Gente*, April 9, 2007, Diversão & Arte—Teatro section; João Nunes, review of *A refeição*, *Festival de Teatro de Curitiba* (blog), March 25, 2007, accessed March 22, 2010, http://festivaldecuritiba .blig.ig.com.br.

[32] "O teatro," *TUCA: Teatro da Universidade Católica*, accessed September 3, 2009, http://www .teatrotuca.com .br/programacao/03_07_09_aldeotas.html; "Luah Guimarães," *VGI Agentes*, accessed September 3, 2009, http://www.vgiagentes.com.br/atriz.cfm?produto=61;"Plínio Soares," *VGI Agentes*, accessed September 3, 2009, http://www.vgiagentes.com.br/ator_detalhes.cfm?produto=45; *Enciclopédia Itaú Cultural:Teatro*, s.v. "Denise Weinberg," accessed September 3, 2009, http://www.itaucultural .org.br/aplicExternas/enciclopedia_teatro/index.cfm?fuseaction=personalidades_biografia&cd_verbete=59 14; José Antônio Rosa, "O amor politicamente incorreto de Beckett," *Jornal Cruzeiro do Sul*, September 2, 2009, B5. Luah Guimarães is a graduate from the theatre program at Universidade Estadual de Campinas. In 1997, she worked with Anne Bogart and SITI Company. Marat Descartes and Plínio Soares graduated from the Escola de Arte Dramática of the Universidade de São Paulo. Marat won the prestigious 2007 Shell Award for Best Performance in the play *Primeiro Amor*. All three actors have worked in theatre, film, and television. Denise Weinberg is a prolific award-winning actress and one of the founders of the Grupo Tapa. Since 2005, she is an instructor at Escola Livre de Teatro in Santo André, São Paulo.

[33] "Festival Recife de Teatro Nacional continua lotando salas," *Prefeitura de Recife*, November 26, 2009, accessed March 22, 2010, http://www.recife.pe.gov.br/2009/11/25/festival_recife_de_teatro_nacional _continua_lotando_salas_169548.php.

Denise's staging was remarkably minimalist; a smattering of props and furniture suffices to set up the environment and situation. The prologue opens with a couple in a hospital, austerely represented with two metal chairs on an otherwise bare stage. The woman's hand and lower arm are heavily wrapped with gauze. They are waiting for the medical and legal authorities to carry on their investigation regarding the woman's injury. The man, played by Marat, has sunk his teeth on his wife's finger and bitten off a mouthful of flesh while they were having sex. It had not been a spontaneous, impetuous action. "I asked you if I could," the husband asks. His wife replies, "And I said yes… But I never believed you'd really do it" (3). Both are stunned at the force of the desire to consume a lover's flesh. Eating is seductive and sexually arousing; its description is poetic, carefully rendering the nuances of a cannibalistic action.

> MAN. You put your finger about two-thirds of the way into my mouth. I bit it slowly to mark out the cut, using just the weight of my jaw–it was heavy enough to break the skin. Slowly, a liquid flooded the taste. It was like something that was almost sweet. I sank my teeth down until they came into contact with the cushion of flesh and the teeth continued on their way to meet each other. The bone was stronger than I expected but I snapped through the softer meat and found myself. I can remember the taste, the texture, its softness, its sweetness–a delicacy as all became liquid… *(Pause.)* Did you like it? (6)

The language evokes erotic characteristics of intercourse: penetration, fluids, tastes of flesh, and satisfaction. His question ("Did you like it?") prompts an assessment of her pleasure, namely, if she enjoyed their intercourse or had an orgasm. Devouring is part of an erotic repertoire of sexual activity. At the same time, "eating" takes on a literal and physiological meaning: the ingestion of a nourishing substance such as meat (human flesh, in this case).

Thus, anthropophagy is purportedly another expression of sexual desire; its eroticism ties into violence as part of sensual pleasure. In Brazil, the word *comer* suggests two senses: to eat and to fuck. Brazilians use the verbs *comer* (to eat) and *dar* (to give) as metaphoric expressions for forms of sexual intercourse.[34] Other such verbs are *vencer* (to conquer) and *possuir* (to possess), which also convey types of domination. Power and desire participate synchronically and paradoxically in the cannibalistic act. The consumption of flesh results from a rapacious yearning to incorporate the object of desire into the devourer's body, derived from both lust and physical domination. Destructive violence is completely disavowed. The man recounts his exchange with the forensic physician. During the examination, the doctor asks him, "Haven't you ever considered that you might be committing an act of violence?," to which the man responds succinctly: "No" (5).

Such a cannibalistic consumption, entailing the conflation of eating and sex to satisfy human appetites, appears ostensibly devoid of any tensions between devourer and devoured. The woman recalls, "And I remember when you said: 'Can I bite you? Can I bite off a piece of you?'" (6). Following a pause, she asks the man the same question: "Can I bite you? Can I bite off a piece of you?" (6). Her husband extends his finger; she bites it, presumably evening the score. Insofar as the man asks for the woman's permission to bite her, there is a semblance of consent. The subjected body seems to offer itself willingly, intimating that domination is a bilateral—though not ipso facto symmetrical—arrangement into which oppressor and oppressed enter deliberately. The characters eat a portion of each other's flesh. The woman leans her head forward, opening her mouth to take a bite of her lover's finger. Her cannibalistic action looms; now, it seems she will exact reciprocity.

However, at this intense moment, the scene ends in a blackout. Can we take for granted that the action will render effects on the man similar to those it did on his wife? Such

[34] Richard Parker, "'Within Four Walls': Brazilian Sexual Culture and HIV/AIDS," in *Sexuality, Politics, and AIDS in Brazil: In Another World?*, ed. Herbert Daniel and Richard Parker (Washington, DC: The Falmer Press, 1993), 70.

a conjecture assumes that they have equal power, that their actions produce identical reactions. Throughout the scene, her wounds are visible—albeit wrapped with a thick layer of gauze. She even lifts her arm in a ninety-degree angle, bringing attention to the wound her lover inflicted on her. The conspicuous white mass of gauze produces a visually unavoidable spectacle. It denotes a bleeding wound. It also alludes to a force powerful enough to pierce and damage the skin. That white object evokes violence. There is no equivalent for the man's body, however. Allegedly, his lover will eat part of his finger. This is quite likely, but neither assured nor theatrically discernible, since the blackout interrupts the action. Therefore, the anthropophagic *coitus interruptus* elides material evidence of commensuration. So, questions linger at the end of prologue. Do they have equal power? Who instigates violence, and who retaliates; and is the reprisal a case of talionic retribution? How does power asymmetry shape their relationship?

Such is the setup for "In the Jungle…," the first formal act of *The Repast*. After the blackout indicating the conclusion of the prologue, the actors, barely discernible under faint, colored lights, clear the stage of all furniture and props, while loud, fast-paced music plays. A large rectangular canvas is progressively stretched from all corners, and beams of horizontal orange-hued light project against its paleness. In the midst of such energetic sound and visual effects, a man staggers in circles, extending his arm as if asking for a handout. Gradually, the lights become brighter; the music lowers and fades out. In turn, a soundtrack of urban traffic establishes the otherwise unidentifiable dramatic environment. A spotlight focuses on the man who previously wobbled around, now lying downstage dressed in tattered clothes. He covers his face from view with a rich orange fabric in the shape of a rudimentary cape. A man in a smart tan suit and tie enters stage right bearing a flower, looking for the drunken and dirty beggar. Marat plays the character of a businessman in a noisy, well-populated city. His demeanor expresses his excited

anticipation. He walks stealthily to avoid drawing attention. When he comes across the man in rags, he reacts with insuppressible joy and places the flower on the poor man's lap.

This act centers on this affluent man's monologue directed to the beggar, played by Plínio. In his lengthy speech, the paulistano describes his early sexual experiences and his abuse of destitute people's bodies. Subsequently, he reminisces about the time when he first met and lusted over the man, despite his characterizing it as the moment when he fell in love with the beggar. The businessman eroticizes the poor man's destitution. With sexually charged language, the paulistano conveys his desire to possess the man's body. Sexual satisfaction is no longer sufficient. In the end, the act of body consumption reaches paramount proportions.

He starts the monologue by tracing his first sexual experiences. Depicting his adolescence and his early carnal encounters, the man's account describes the exploitation of the lower classes to satisfy his devouring desire. In his youth, his friends and he used to seek out vulnerable people to find pleasure; their purpose was to use the defenseless individuals' bodies for sexual gratification. He says, "We fought over the asses of the destitute. We'd pick up tramps from the roadside.... We'd dump his head in a bucket of beer and devour his poor ass" (10). The paulistano's utterance connects eating and sexual intercourse: "I made a point of buggering him while he scoffed it down" (10).[35] Thus, both senses of the term comer once again operate concurrently, dialectically positing two different physiological functions, expressed in literal and metaphoric terms, in one scene. Since penetration with a *pau* (stick) or *faca* (knife)—both slang terms for penis—conveys actions of aggression, the vocabulary evokes ownership through conquest: a sexual partner's body is colonized by wielding a powerful *arma* (weapon).[36]

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[35] This is reminiscent of Jane's exploitation in Brecht's *Jungle of Cities*. See n. 12.

[36] James A. Inciardi, Hilary L. Surratt, and Paulo R. Telles, *Brasil and the Spectrum of HIV/AIDS* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 31. In O'Thomas's translation, the emphasis is on the ingestion and devouring, rather

The man goes on to recount his carnal experience with a Bolivian man who consented to the man's anal penetration in exchange for a hot dog—an object of phallic shape that would actually satiate the starving man's wretched hunger. "He was so hungry he didn't even scream, didn't even groan, didn't feel a thing," the man reminisces (10). The paulistano muses over the stench of the dirty, debased recipient of semen. His ejaculation was "the cleanest thing that [Bolivian] body knew," from a "circumcised, thrice-daily cleansed dick, [a] dick with symmetrically trimmed pubes. [A] shop-window dick, [an] aseptic dick" (10-11). He experienced an equally voracious encounter with a *nordestino* (a man from Northeastern Brazil), whom he met in the restrooms of the Tietê bus terminal in São Paulo. The nordestino was peddling his rectum to pay for his ticket back to Pernambuco (11).[37]

A reference to northeastern Brazilians and Bolivians calls to mind the situation of subaltern populations—those "heterogeneous social actors that share a common condition of subordination."[38] Within Brazil, the Northeast (the states of Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Paraíba, Piauí, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, and Sergipe) connotes specific socioeconomic and demographic traits. Both Bolivia and the Brazilian Northeast represent, in the social imaginary, archaic agriculture and rife poverty.[39] Without a doubt, the economies of those regions are distressed, leading many of its inhabitants to migrate in search of employment.

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than fucking; this is probably because the term comer does not bear the exact same cultural weight in English.

[37] Pernambuco is a northeastern state, whose capital is Recife. The region is known as *zona da mata* (forest area). The accent of pernambucanos is quite distinctive, and the paulistano refers to it with disdain. Newton Moreno is pernambucano; so is Brazilian President Luis Inácio "Lula" da Silva.

[38] Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 16.

[39] Archibald O. Haller, "A Socioeconomic Regionalization of Brazil," *Geographical Review* 72, no. 4 (1982): 450.

A large proportion of Bolivian immigrants in São Paulo are garment sweatshop workers and domestic staff.[40] Many are lured from their native country with promises of enticing salaries plus food and accommodation, but employers seldom keep to the agreement. Onstage, the paulistano's musings illustrate a similar exploitation, whereby capitalists avail themselves of food to subdue workers. The Bolivian man earns his food by providing a demeaning service to the capitalist, making his body available for unilateral sexual satiety. Such impulses bring the prologue to mind, since sexual satisfaction hinges on skewed power capabilities, too. In this case, however, aggression is closely linked to both bodily and economic exploitation. The fact that the starving man to whom the paulistano fed a hotdog was Bolivian has substantial socioeconomic implications. The theatrical acknowledgement of economic violence against a Bolivian man mirrors the concrete circumstances of many Bolivian immigrants in Brazil, who are all but bondservants in shackles. Simone Buechler reports that they frequently owe their employers the cost of their trip, which they must pay off little by little. "After they have paid off this debt," she asserts, "the provision of food and lodging continues the dependent relationship."[41]

Despite their supposedly unrestricted legal rights as Brazilian citizens, workers from the northeastern states also endure exploitative labor. Nordestinos are more visible in agricultural enterprises, such as sugar cane plantations. Sugar is a critical crop in the Brazilian economy; the country relies on the production of sugar to generate alcohol-based fuel. Brazil has the world's only comprehensive industry producing ethanol distilled from sugar cane. The country is arguably the most efficient producer of ethanol due to purportedly favorable comparative advantages: good soil, warm climate suitable for sugar

[40] Simone Buechler, "Sweating It in the Brazilian Garment Industry: Korean and Bolivian Immigrants and Global Economic Forces in Sao Paulo," *Latin American Perspectives* 31, no. 3 (2004): 109.

[41] Ibid., 112.

crops, technological competence, and cheap labor.[42] Currently, sixteen of the forty trillion liters of ethanol produced worldwide are provided by Brazilian factories.[43]

Sugar production in the Brazilian economy entails depredatory practices. The price of labor power is negligible because poor workers, many of them from northeastern states such as Piauí and Maranhão, are unabashedly exploited. Tom Phillips's account of the situation of sugar cane workers in Palmares Paulista (state of São Paulo) depicts a horrible picture of "ethanol slaves."[44] Brazilian agrarian workers endure appalling land-tenure and labor conditions. There are around two hundred thousand sugar cutters, mostly migrant workers, who sustain the ethanol industry. These economic refugees make four hundred *reais*[45] per month working twelve-hour shifts in sweltering heat. They earn barely over a dollar per ton of sugar cane cut, before returning to squalid, overcrowded "guest houses" rented to them at exorbitant prices by unscrupulous landlords, often former sugar cutters themselves.[46] The dwellings of constantly migrating workers surround urban areas, yet they evince the continuation of the rural space. The neighborhoods consist of palm-leaf thatched adobe houses devoid of a water system. Amid the dirt roads, there are small yards with fruit trees and patches of soil where maize, beans, and cassava are grown.[47]

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[42] Maria Aparecida de Moraes Silva and Lara Abrão de Moraes, "Cultura e tradição: Formas de resistência ao avanço da cultura," (paper, XIV Congresso Brasileiro de Sociologia, Rio de Janeiro, July 28-31, 2009), 1, accessed September 28, 2009, http://starline.dnsalias.com:8080/sbs/arquivos/15_6_2009_16_22_47.pdf. Brazil achieves an average production cost of twenty-two cents per liter, whereas the United States and the European Union estimate their costs to be around thirty and fifty-three cents respectively.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Tom Phillips, "Brazil's Ethanol Slaves: 200,000 Migrant Sugar Cutters who Prop Up Renewable Energy Boom," *RéporterBrasil*, March 9, 2007, accessed September 29, 2007, http://reporterbrasil.com.br/clipping.php?id=268.

[45] Approximately US$225 (October 2, 2009).

[46] Phillips.

[47] Maria Aparecida de Moraes Silva, "Expropriación de la tierra, violencia y migración: campesinos del nordeste de Brasil en los cañaverales de São Paulo," (paper, V Seminário Memória, Ciência e Arte, UNICAMP, Campinas, São Paulo, October 17-19, 2007), 7, accessed September 28, 2009, http://www.preac.unicamp.br/memoria/textos/Maria%20Aparecida%20de%20Moraes%20Silva%20-%20completo.pdf.

Human rights and labor organizations estimate that between twenty thousand and forty thousand people could be working in conditions analogous to slavery in Brazil.[48] Many farmers in the Amazon region, where many sugar plantations are located, are forced to work virtually for free in order to repay their debts. There is little to no leisure time, for workdays are extremely long. Oftentimes, employers impose the five-to-one system: five workdays and one day off work.[49] The demands on the workers' bodies are daunting: in order to harvest 11.5 tons per day, a worker must deliver 3,792 blows with his *podão* (a machete used to cut cane) and to bend his back 3,994 times.[50] In recent years, several laborers have died as a result of excessive work. Moraes de Silva estimates that, since 2000, cutters have a twelve-year "service life." Thus, their active life is approximately the same as that of slaves until 1850 (the year slave trade was abolished), according to Jacob Gorender's figures.[51] Ultimately, in Marx's words, such a worker has "more or less completely lived himself out when he is only half-way through his life."[52]

This situation manifests the importance of working time in the mode of production. According to Marx, working time is a crucial factor in how capitalists maximize absolute surplus value extraction. The "stagnant population," as he calls it, "is characterized by a maximum of working time and a minimum of wages."[53] Laborers' compensation is kept at the subsistence level, only to ensure the reproduction of labor power. This is clearly established in the case of the Bolivian man, whom the paulistano provides with a food sorely lacking in nutritional value. The hotdog contains the bare minimum of nutrients to keep the

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[48] "'Slave' labourers freed in Brazil," *BBC News*, July 3, 2007, accessed September 15, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6266712.stm.

[49] Moraes Silva, "Expropriación de la tierra," 10.

[50] "Os anti-heróis: o submundo da cana," *Folha de São Paulo*, August 24, 2008, Caderno Mais.

[51] Mauro Zafalon, "Cortadores de cana têm vida útil de escravo em SP," *Folha de São Paulo*, April 29, 2007; Jacob Gorender, *Brasil em preto & branco: o passado escravista que não passou* (São Paulo: Editora SENAC, 2001), 38.

[52] Marx, 795.

[53] Ibid., 796.

man alive for the purpose of generating a service of greater value. Labor is productive to the extent that it produces more than it needs to maintain itself alive: the worker materializes more labor time in the goods he makes than he does in the products that sustain him (for instance, food, rent, and clothing). Marx states:

> The capitalist has his own views of this point of no return, the necessary limit of the working day…. Capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself, to create surplus-value, to make its constant part, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus labour.… The time during which the worker works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought for him.[54]

Capital relies on this kind of productive wage labor for capital accumulation generated through the extraction of surplus value. Eloquently, this is expressed in terms of "rate of exploitation": the ratio of surplus value to the value of labor power. In other words, it is the value added per wage-dollar.[55]

In a site of exchange, the paulistano and the Bolivian trade objects of consumption, which may be understood in terms of ingestion—that is, the intake of foodstuffs as well as the metaphorical "eating" of the Bolivian's anus. The play introduces in these terms the notion of trading goods or services—namely, commodities—to meet the needs of each party in the economic negotiation. Whereas one agent offers food, a crucial object for survival, the Bolivian must bring his own body to the market. Clearly, this swap shows a shocking imbalance. The paulistano provides the means of subsistence that will enable the Bolivian to offer his live anus and rectum for consumption. When the paulistano compensates the

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[54] Ibid., 342.

[55] Eric Sheppard and Trevor Barnes, *The Capitalist Space Economy: Geographical Analysis After Ricardo, Marx, and Sraffa* (Cambridge, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 41-42. Marx calls it the "degree" of exploitation: surplus value/necessary labor. Marx, 418.

Bolivian for the use of his body with food of minor nutritional value, he is merely ensuring the continuous supply of erogenous orifices for his sexual satisfaction.

Plantation owners and sugar cane workers (nicknamed *bóias frias*), engage in an analogous relation. A bóia fria, whose energy depletion fuels the sugar cane industry, feeds capital. Interestingly, bóia fria means, quite literally, "cold grub" or "cold lunch." The pejorative term derives from the fact that these workers eat their meals in the field; thus, the fare is cold.[56] Workers are described as food—and of inferior quality, at that. Although their name refers to their own lifestyle, or to the way they consume nutriment themselves, the appellation characterizes them as foodstuffs. Surely the designation is intended as a metonym. However, characterizing workers as food is not as farfetched as may seem on the surface. The term bóia fria is quite appropriate in describing the economic function these workers perform in the chain of production. If Marx's assessment is right, that "capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour and lives the more, the more labour it sucks,"[57] then the bóias frias in fact proffer their embodied labor capacity for ingestion. Their flesh is food.

When their bodies are consumed, the system will replenish the capitalist engine of production. Because of its continuous consumption of labor power built in the workers' bodies, capital must secure surplus labor capabilities in the bodies of supernumerary workers. Thus, it demands a mass of potential workers on the side, ready to take over the job of workers depleted of labor power. Capitalist accumulation constantly produces a rather abundant population that is superfluous to capital's average requirements for its own reproduction. This surplus population is the *industrial reserve army*, "which belongs to capital

[56] Joseph L. Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 293.

[57] Marx, 342; cf. Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 18-22.

just as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost," as Marx claims.[58] The reserve army is both the result and the sine qua non of capitalist accumulation.[59] In short, the mode of production engenders a mass of human flesh available for capitalist exploitation. Besides, because an increase of productivity yields greater surplus value vis-à-vis necessary labor, the relation of surplus labor to necessary labor increases.

Capital pauperizes the "excess" population—the unemployed who must be readily available to take over the responsibilities of worn-out workers. The result is that employed workers must increase their productivity, thus subjecting themselves to further exploitation, to ensure that potentials workers in stock in the labor reserve do not replace them.[60] This is the reason why the exploitation of actual bóias frias and the representations of domination onstage are closely related. There is an explicit suggestion of this type of worker: the description of the Bolivian man and the nordestino selling their bodies for the paulistano's consumption points to a certain community of workers linked to modes of labor exploitation. These workers are essential for capital accrual because they bear labor capacity. Furthermore, many bóias frias (barely) make enough to obtain their means of subsistence, whereas other individuals are unable to earn enough to satisfy the most basic needs.[61] The play's exploited characters, like sugar cane workers, are victims of the depredation produced

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[58] Marx, 782-84.

[59] Ibid., 784.

[60] "The industrial reserve army, during the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active army of workers; during the periods of over-production and feverish activity, it puts a curb on their pretensions." Ibid., 792.

[61] The exploitation of bóias frias is oftentimes lethal. There are reports of a sugar cane cutter who worked for seventy days without rest, still cutting more sugar cane than the daily average. "The conclusions of the ministry and the occupational health doctor confirm the observations made by a researcher at the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) that 'there is a direct relation between the deaths and the increase in productivity.' The Institute of Agricultural Economy (IEA), linked to the Secretary of State for Agriculture, revealed that the daily productivity of workers in the cane fields of the state of São Paulo has risen 7.89 percent in the last three years. During this period, exhaustion caused by excessive levels of work has led to the deaths of 15 rural workers in the state's interior.… With the advance of mechanization, those jobs that remain are being filled by the bóias-frias (rural workers) judged to be the strongest.… As a result, the worker has no choice: it is either pick up the pace of a crushing work tempo, or you lose your job and go hungry." V. Hugo, "Brazilian Cane Cutter Died from Working 70 Days Without Break," *World Socialist Web Site,* June 2, 2007, accessed October 8, 2009, http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/jun2007/cane-j02.shtml.

by capitalist labor consumption. Their bodies keep the core of capital accumulation alive and aroused.

A significant difference between the plight of sugar cane workers and the destitute depicted or referred to in the performance is the site of the struggle. The exploitation of bóias occurs in the countryside. Conversely, the actions described took place in an urban location. Onstage, there is evidence that the play is firmly grounded in a dense urban site. In their artfulness, these subtle indications pack remarkable specificity. Despite the barren stage, the paulistano's costume and the initial soundscape situate the action in an urban environment. Given that the city of São Paulo is by far Brazil's most populous city, one would first think of it in this context. References to the Tietê bus terminal, which denotes a very specific location in São Paulo, corroborate the conjecture. Accordingly, the city and its landscape participate in the play, as part of a narration of events prior to the action onstage and as a locus of engagement.

This is a determining factor in the relationship between the paulistano and the pauper. The businessman's recollection also fulfils the purpose of dramatic exposition, whereby the audience gains an understanding of the onstage interaction between the paulistano and the beggar. According to the former's account, he had met the pauper in front of a building owned by the businessman's father (*prédio de escritórios do meu pai*).

> MAN. I can remember the first time we met exactly: you were punching the walls of a building. A tall building, office, in the city centre. You hit it hard, swearing loudly, scratching off the paint, throwing everything you found on the ground. It went on for hours until finally you fell down, exhausted. And the building stood tall and firm; it looked even taller after that. And you shone out over that dark monstrosity, in the gigantic shadow of my father's office building, your hair wet by the sludge of the river flowing out of the gutter. (11)

The pauper's actions had taken place in a specific location in the city. The recollection describes how the beggar experiences neoliberal material and symbolic practices in the cityscape. The building is a concrete thing, posits a metonymy, and presents the material outcome of socioeconomic relationships: these significations interact dialectically. First, the imposing construction presents a tangible urban object; it is a structure of concrete and cement in São Paulo. Second, the building connotes a mode of production inasmuch as it is an office building (a site where white-collar and blue-collar workers undertake an assortment of tasks contributing to a specific pattern of commodity production). Finally, it is a commodity itself (the product of architects, engineers, and real estate and construction industries). It implicitly corresponds to a precise relationship between capital and labor.

The construction of buildings can bolster social demarcations. As I showed in my study of urban dynamics in Palermo Hollywood, Buenos Aires, a city produces and is produced by social relations involved in the processes of capital accumulation.[62] The commodification of space results in different arrangements of access to space and, consequently, in particular urban configurations.[63] São Paulo is a city divided by walls.[64] Wealthy denizens have moved into walled communities, veritable fortified enclaves separating affluent residential areas from lower-income zones or *favelas* (shanty towns). These retreats invite a homogeneous population: self-selected communities seeking to erect social, economic, and material boundaries to shirk undesired interaction with purportedly dangerous elements.[65] Walled-off high-rise buildings (*condomínios exclusivos*) materially divide the population according to their class and income. Many of these closed

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[62] See chapter 2.

[63] Ali Madanipour, "Social Exclusion and Space," in *Social Exclusion in European Cities: Processes, Experiences and Responses*, ed. Ali Madanipour, Göran Cars, and Judith Allen (London: Routledge, 2003), 84.

[64] Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 232.

[65] Ibid., 258.

condominiums were built in the periphery rather than the city center, given that the middle and upper-middle-class were moving away from the state capital to its outskirts.[66]

These spaces are historical spaces featuring a number of characteristics. According to Henri Lefebvre, the beginnings of historical space produced more diverse and individual places, based on dichotomical categories: open/closed and within/without, for instance. City walls marked a material and violent compartmentalization. "This separation had more than one signification—and indeed implied more than any mere signification," for fortified towns bore administrative influence over the surrounding countryside, both protecting and exploiting at the same time—"*a common enough phenomenon, after all*."[67] Thus, architectural structures like high rises establish the parameters of exclusion. These spaces were dominated (or dominant) spaces. In other words, these are "spaces transformed—and mediated—by technology, by practice."[68] The domination of space necessitates the introduction of technologies into pre-existent spaces. They are constructed, through walls, fortifications, and works of engineering, as part of a master plan. Thus, gated communities or condomínios exclusivos are spaces displaying an encroachment of power. These technologies sever spaces in terms of dominance, for "dominated space is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out."[69] The composition and construction of enclosed spaces in São Paulo aim at dividing the community and isolating the bourgeoisie that, fearing violence, seeks a pristine refuge from the glaring evidence of class difference. Behind the walls, a homogeneous community attempts to elude any confrontation with the potentially dangerous working class—including the colossal reserve army of under- or unemployed Brazilians.

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[66] Ibid., 232.

[67] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 163 (emphasis mine).

[68] Ibid., 164.

[69] Ibid., 165.

In addition to heavily guarded walls of residential spheres, there are also new enclaves for multiple uses: residential, work, and consumption of the middle and upper classes.[70] From 1985 to 2000, office floor space increased sixfold in São Paulo, making it the largest rate of growth among all building types.[71] Enormous, recently built office and service centers proliferated, particularly in the western and southern zones of the metropolitan area.[72] Between 2004 and 2007, demand for office real estate grew considerably. Due to a weak supply of realty, prices have risen.[73] Clusters of high-rise construction currently interrupt the otherwise rather low-profile skyline. Two new development zones, the historic center and the southern region of the Rio Pinheiros, add to the conspicuous architectural boom of commercial real estate development on Avenida Paulista, the epicenter of the financial district. One of the most successful real estate developments is Faria Lima, which takes advantage of the eponymous avenue and other urban infrastructure. In 1985-91 the price per square meter in the Urban Faria Lima Operation Consortium was 20 percent higher than the price in metropolitan São Paulo. In 1996-2001, it was 80 percent higher.[74] The construction of a new metro station at Faria Lima began in 2005, thus securing an enticing value added to the investments.[75] Residential decentralization begot commercial decentralization.

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[70] Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira, "Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation," in *Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader*, ed. Setha M. Low (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 87.

[71] Csaba Déak and Sueli Schiffer, "The Metropolis of an Elite Society," in *The Making of Global Regions: Johannesburg, Mumbai/Bombay, São Paulo, and Shanghai*, ed. Klaus Segbers (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 107.

[72] Pires do Rio Caldeira, "Fortified Enclaves," 86.

[73] "The Property Market and Economy of Brazil," (Bologna: Nomisma—Società di Studi Economici p. A, 2008), 20, accessed October 20, 2009, http://www.pure-net.org/files/REMarket/Nomisma_Brazil.pdf.

[74] Paulo Sandroni and Ciro Biderman, "Evaluation of some Impacts of Large-Scale Urban Interventions on Construction Density, Population, Gentrification, Real Estate Prices and Taxes: The Case of the Faria Lima Urban Operation in São Paulo," *Urban Research Network*, 3, accessed June 2, 2010, http://urbanres.net/docs /Sandroni.pdf.

[75] Zeuler R. Lima and Vera M. Pallamin, "Reinventing the Void: São Paulo's Museum of Art and Public Life along Avenida Paulista," in *Ordinary Places, Extraordinary Events: Citizenship, Democracy and Public Events*, ed. Clara Irazábal (New York: Routledge, 2008), 76; George E. Peterson, *Unlocking Land Values to Finance Urban Infrastructure* (Washington, DC: IBRD/World Bank, 2009), 76.

From 1960 to 1980, when the greatest territorial expansion took place, the inequalities between center and periphery peaked. Interestingly, urban processes in São Paulo differ from the evolution of suburbanization in the United States. Poorer inhabitants are centrifugally "expelled" from the city center. Under these circumstances, as conditions improved in the inner rings around the center, the more destitute were forced to settle further out, producing a constant change in the population composition of peripheral circular corridors.[76] James Holston's assessment conveys the dichotomous anxieties of the urban poor in São Paulo. The periphery signifies for residents a drama of extraordinary change, whose themes of inequality and struggle, segregation and inclusion, poverty and improvement, denigration and assertion are both intensely personal and political. It is a drama where the experiences of shacks, dirt roads, raw sewage, flooding, eviction, violence, faulty urban services, packed buses, and interminable commutes to work are read through the future of house building, neighborhood improvements, community organization, and modern consumption, constituting the dream of someday having a "house-and-a-destiny-of-one's-own."[77]

In peripheral areas, traditionally inhabited by the working poor and destitute communities, urban infrastructure investment took off at the same time as commercial real estate development flourished. However, during the economic crisis in the eighties, salaries plunged. Consequently, the improvement of built environments in outlying areas of São Paulo did not benefit the lower classes; rather, they were denied of the dream of owning their homes and were impelled to move farther out to *favelas* (shanty towns), *ocupações*

[76] James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 155-56; Pires do Rio Caldeira, *City of Walls,* 235.

[77] Holston, 156.

(squats), and *cortiços* (slum tenements), relying on *autoconstrução* ("autoconstruction"—the building of one's precarious dwelling) and illegality.[78]

Therefore, walls permeate the city of São Paulo—walls that cleave the city, severing social interactions in all realms of community activity. In the play, the beggar's scratching an office building wall, according to the capitalist's reminiscence, underscores the material self-imposed segregation of the bourgeoisie and the development of a reserve army of workers in the Brazilian capitalist economy. The businessman recalls that, at the time when he first met the pauper, the poor man struggled against the building. "Finally [the poor man] fell down, exhausted" (11). His passion and anger notwithstanding, he collapsed at the feet of a building. His objective could have been an attempt at "diversion" to reappropriate and put the space to a different use, in order to resist oppression. "Diversion [*détournement*]," Lefebvre claims, "is in itself merely appropriation, not creation—a reappropriation which can call but a temporary halt to domination."[79] If that was the beggar's objective, he failed to achieve his goal. There is still a purpose to that office building: it is a site for a mode of production and capital accumulation. The beggar's action evinces an isolated attempt to stand up to capitalism. Scratching a building's wall, what could have been a powerful (yet unstaged) spectacle of contestation, is destined to come to nothing as a purported revolutionary practice, as it is performed by a single individual who fails to comprehend and solve the challenges history presents to him.[80] A Don Quixote against the windmills, the beggar "fights" the building in an angry and unequal battle.

Regardless of the thrilling illustration of contestation, scratching the wall results in the man's collapse on the ground because individual action *on its own*—that is to say,

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[78] Pires do Rio Caldeira, *City of Walls*, 235.

[79] Lefebvre, 168.

[80] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 53.

without class consciousness—only precludes the progress of history.[81] Due to the extraction of value from the worker, Marx writes, "Men are… related to each other in their social process of production in a purely atomistic way. Their own relations of production… assume a material shape which is independent of their control and their conscious individual action."[82] Scholars like Alex Callinicos assert the crucial necessity for a truly collective proletariat action against capitalism, because "any struggles that begin to build towards self-organization are pointing the way towards the way a future non-capitalist, socialist society can be organized."[83] A single individual's rebellion in fact belittles a cohesive class-based struggle.[84]

I argue in my analysis of Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco* that there is a hint of possible radical action in Hue's aiding his mother.[85] There is a difference between this dramatic moment in Gambaro's play and what we see onstage in Newton's work. On the one hand, Hue and his mother recognize the possibility of allegiance (a possible seed of proletariat consciousness) in hope of reaching out to each other, despite—or due to—the violence endured by the Chinese character in France. The promise of social change lies in an organized collective action. This is a challenge anti-capitalist movements seem eager to face. For instance, Susan George rallied the opponents of depredatory capitalism at the 2001 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, arguing that the term globalization ought to be redefined: "Disons clairement que nous sommes 'pro-mondialisation' car nous sommes favorables au partage de l'amitié, la culture, la cuisine, la solidarité, la richesse et les

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[81] "The real motor forces of history are independent of man's (psychological) consciousness of them," Lukács argues. Ibid., 47.

[82] Marx, 187.

[83] John Holloway and Alex Callinicos, "A Debate between John Holloway and Alex Callinicos: 'Can We Change the World Without Taking Power?'" in *Change the World Without Taking Power… or… Take Power to Change the World*? (Amsterdam: International Institute for Research and Education, n.d.), 65.

[84] Leon Trotsky, "Why Marxists Oppose Individual Terrorism," *Der Kampf*, November, 1911, accessed May 6, 2010, http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1911/11/tia09.htm.

[85] See chapter 1.

resources." (Let us say clearly that we are "pro-globalization," for we are in favor of sharing friendship, culture, cuisine, solidarity, wealth, and resources.)[86] In contrast, the beggar in the play ends up onstage absolutely demolished. His body is a heap of flesh and bones under a large piece of fabric; the visual effect suggests it is a shrouded corpse. The individual act of resistance ends up in failure because the beggar misunderstands the nature of exploitation. His actions reflect an ingrained anger toward the status quo impinging on his interests. The commotion decries oppression, but on an individual level: it lacks a critical appreciation of the complex network of social relations at stake. The beggar does not necessarily represent all of the workers yet. They speak to his experience of homelessness in the Brazilian megalopolis.

Moreover, the building the beggar faces is a thing, an immediate object beguiling him into focusing on the present and disregarding historical social interactions. He is unable to ascertain that "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity,'" as Georg Lukács states.[87] The beggar (Lukács's "reified mind") views the building as the substance where the social relationships take place, engaging it as if the object itself were the culprit of exploitation. He sees the commodity (in this case, the building) as the "true representatives of his societal existence..., as the form in which its own authentic immediacy becomes manifest."[88] The fetishistic qualities of the building disguise the complex relation between social agents, since so long as men and women work for each other, their work acquires the shape of a social structure.[89]

Notwithstanding its geohistorical specificity, the scene illustrates distinguishing dynamics of capitalism. Destitution among workers or the reserve army manifests the

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[86] Susan George, "Que faire à present?" (speech at the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 15, 2001), accessed December 29, 2009, http://www.tni.org/archives/archives_george_alegre-fr (translation mine).

[87] Lukács, 83.

[88] Ibid., 93.

[89] Marx, 164-65.

accumulation of labor's surplus value. Indigence suggests the most absolute expropriation of surplus value insofar as a worker is unable to produce a sellable commodity. If he cannot offer his labor power in the market, then he is completely bereft, since his labor capacity is his only commodity for sale.[90] The relegation of workers to a reserve army of workers translates into an externality. Leon Trotsky alleges that this "new sub-class … is forced to live at the expense of society."[91] Society must support these individuals, inasmuch as they are unable to sell their labor power to afford supplies for their survival. Society, in this case, can mean nothing more than capital, since employed labor only earns enough money—the currency for exchange in the free market—to make ends meet.

Supporting the under- or unemployed, in the form of charity work or sociopolitically constructed "justice," dictates the need for a benefactor whose contributions, hailed as generous altruism, are nothing but repackaged surplus value extracted from the working class: only capitalists can provide the destitute some hand-me-downs derived from extracted surplus value. Altruism is a sort of deception; "a common form of altruism," Timothy Fogarty claims, "is ultimately based on the half-truth that it is good to share one's surplus, without asking whence it came."[92] Capitalists may opt to hand back to their victims a portion of what they squeeze from them. In Marx's words, "The expenditure of the capitalist never possesses the *bona fide* character of the dashing feudal lord's prodigality, but, on the contrary, is always restrained by the sordid avarice and anxious calculation lurking in the background."[93] The relationship is exploitative, as Allen Wood writes, "since the victim's

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[90] See Marx, 272-73.

[91] Leon Trotsky, *Marxism in the United States* (New York: Workers Party Publication, 1947), 20.

[92] Timothy G. Fogarty, "Searching for Solidarity in Nicaragua," in *Bridging the Gaps: Faith-Based Organizations, Neoliberalism, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. Tara Hefferan, Julie Adkins, and Laurie Acchipinti (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 92.

[93] Marx, 741.

contributions to the exploiter are forced, but the exploiter's charity is voluntary."[94] Through altruism, the dominating class supports the industrial reserve army; charity entails ipso facto capitalist exploitation and, thus, "forced labor."[95]

These dynamics take center stage in "In the Jungle…": the crude examples of exploitation the paulistano exhibits onstage reveal the darker side of capitalist altruism. These narrated and staged episodes patently illustrate the exploitative relations of capital and labor (and, implicitly, the industrial reserve army) whereby domination takes place on the prey's body. This is unabashedly established in the description of how the onstage characters first met. The paulistano fell in love with the pauper when the latter was begging for money. "I loved you the very first time you asked me for some spare change," the businessman purrs (10). On his knees, he looks at the body on the floor, lying on his back and covered by the fine orange cloth. "Just before that," the paulistano recalls, "you'd gone up to the bank's security van and asked for some money to buy bread. And the driver said he didn't have any change" (12). The possibilities for charitable gestures depend on asymmetrical overabundance: in this case, on a person having a small amount of change vis-à-vis another who doesn't have any money. The security guard, like the paulistano, seemed willing to help the beggar as long as the altruistic move did not entail forbearance on his part. Handing out a hefty amount was out of the question.

There are organizations that can afford to disburse substantial monies to fund project philanthropic projects. Charitable foundations such as the Robert W. Wilson Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill and Melissa Gates Foundation, and the Open Society Institute were endowed, at least initially, by prominent capitalists in assorted

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[94] Allen Wood, *Karl Marx,* The Arguments of the Philosophers (New York: Routledge, 1981), 267; Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 211-17. Wood describes this as "coercion," whereas Jon Elster makes an argument for using the term "force" rather than "coercion."

[95] "If the worker needs only half a working day in order to live a whole day, then, in order to keep alive as a worker, he needs to work only half a day. The second half of the labour day is *forced* labour; *surplus* labour." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1973), 324 (emphasis mine).

industries: Robert W. Wilson (hedge funds), Andrew Carnegie (steel), Bill and Melissa Gates (computer technology), and George Soros (hedge funds). These organizations have different missions, spending criteria, and management styles. But they share one trait: the funds they manage or allocate to projects were generated through capitalist enterprises. In fact, except for Carnegie, the quintessential success story of the Industrial Revolution, all the aforementioned tycoons reaped the benefits of neoliberal policies. The connection between givers and receivers is neither completely transparent nor entirely disingenuous. As Marx and Friedrich Engels contend, "A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society."[96] As a result of social networks deployed under capitalism, whose objective is to ensure a system of capital accumulation (and thus, a system of exploitation), a conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital offers a new mode of capital accumulation, "with all the forms of legitimizing redistribution, public ('social' policies) and private (endowments to 'disinterested' foundations, donations to hospitals, academic and cultural institutions, etc.)."[97]

In this manner, the dominant groups accrue "a capital of 'credit'" that, on the face of it, ensues from the logic of exploitation. Philanthropists not only amass symbolic capital through their charitable contributions; they also reproduce the rationale of exploitation and accumulation of capitalism. Charitable activity ostensibly acquits altruists from the atrocities of exploitation. "The less equitable the distribution of resources, the more virtuous appears the altruist who could share his or her surplus with those less 'fortunate,'" Fogarty says.[98] Hedge-fund manager Robert W. Wilson eloquently substantiates the underlying workings of his own philanthropy: "People who are bright enough to make bright [*sic*] fortunes usually

[96] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Teddington, UK: Echo Library, 2009), 37.

[97] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 133.

[98] Fogarty, 92.

have bright ideas when they're young. Up until they're about 50, then, they should be making money."[99] You must "make" money before you can give it away. Slajov Žižek writes, "The catch, of course, is that, in order to give [money] to the community, first you have to take it (or, as they put it, create it)."[100] Philanthropy can only exist in an economy of dispossession. Similarly, Wood argues that "generosity" has become a model of socially inefficacious "private charitable systems" rather than genuine revolutionary remedies for poverty in society; "loyalty" means the allegiance to the free-enterprise system.[101]

The paulistano's "altruism" baldly portrays the concrete implications of capitalist tenets. The pauper represents (both symbolizes and exemplifies) the incidental operating expenses of capital. In this case, unlike a bóia fria, the beggar fails to meet his needs for subsistence. His labor capacity is unused and disposable to capital, which owns it "just as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its cost."[102] Over and beyond the narrative exposition of the episode where the two men meet for the first time, the performance proffers a material animation of the chilling process by which capital produces and preserves an industrial reserve army. The businessman tells the beggar that he brought him some food (11). He entices him by clicking his tongue, snapping his fingers, and banging a bottle against a metal dog's bowl.[103]

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[99] Duff McDonald, "Robert Wilson's Chore," *Portfolio.com*, December 17, 2007, accessed May 13, 2010, http://www.portfolio.com/executives/features/2007/12/17/Robert-Wilson-Q-and-A/.

[100] Slajov Žižek, "The Liberal Communists of Porto Davos," *In These Times,* April, 2006, accessed May 5, 2010, http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/2574/the_liberal_communists_of_porto_davos. See also Patricia Mooney Nickel and Angela M. Eikenberry, "The Discourse of Marketized Philanthropy in Fast Capitalism," *American Behavioral Scientist* 52, no. 7 (2009): 974-89.

[101] Wood, 154.

[102] Marx, *Capital*, 784 (see n. 15).

[103] Argentine playwright Osvaldo Dragún's play *Historia del hombre que se convirtió en perro* (*Story of the Man Who Turned Into a Dog*) portrays a man who is forced to imitate and become a dog to qualify for a job. Dragún called this animalization. In his introduction to the collection of plays *Historias para ser contadas* (Stories to Be Told) featuring *Historia del hombre que se convirtió en perro*, Dragún states, "Si alguna vez el mono se convirtió en hombre para poder comerse a los demás animales, es posible que el único camino sea ahora convertirse en perro para salvarse de los mordiscones de los hombres." (If at one time the monkey became a man in order to eat the other animals, it is possible that the only path may be to become a dog to save oneself from being gnawed on by mankind.) Osvaldo Dragún, "Historias de las *Historias*," in *Historias*

The mix of the paulistano's rather seductive voice and the racket creates a blaring cacophony. The pauper crawls toward the source of the noise, making unintelligible sounds. The paulistano places the bowl on the floor and pours liquor. Hunched over the bowl under the orange makeshift blanket, the poor man guzzles the alcohol, only taking a breath to groan and whimper. From a standing position, the businessman both gloats and looks down adoringly, while sensuously stroking his groin through his business pants. His gaze is focused on the man's ass while he masturbates. The hedonic rhythm of his fondling implies a bit stronger engagement with the poor man than straightforward sexual appetite. The beggar's erotic allure (which in this case points to the possibilities for exploitation) appears to be his indigence.

The complex emotions recall the dyadic relationship of gift exchange, according to Lewis Hyde: "an 'erotic' commerce, opposing *eros* (the principle of attraction, union, involvement which binds together) to *logos* (reason and logic in general, the principle of differentiation in particular)."[104] Actor Marat Descartes conveys the dichotomous feelings with extraordinary ease. During his speech, the actor expresses his character's sexual pleasure at the beggar's foul odor. The paulistano welcomes it because he finds it sexually arousing; indeed, he masturbates regularly to the stench and filth of the beggar. He feels irrepressible sexual desire for a barely responsive, destitute man. His sexual demeanor cannot altogether conceal the underlying attempts at domination, yet the efforts do not altogether negate the purported love and the desire he feels: they coexist dialectically. Thus, the performer effectively portrays the subject's disavowed exploitation of lower class, by underscoring the dialectical love-domination relationship intrinsic to philanthropy. The

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para ser contadas (Ottawa, Canada: Girol Books, 1982), 5. Becoming a dog in "In the Jungle…" suggests that animalization does not necessarily protect an individual from another person's bite.

[104] Lewis Hyde, introduction to *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), xx.

ongoing masturbation, the ogling, and the feeding of the beggar demonstrate that multiple and dialectical variables mobilize charitable impulses.

The relations depict world social dynamics between exploiters and exploited; that is to say, the play stages the symptoms of rampant neoliberal appetites that are not exclusive to Brazil. Bearing in mind the theatrical representation of altruism in "In the Jungle…," with the understanding that the actions onstage speak to the globalized workings of neoliberalism, I want to draw attention to the international implementation of practices animating the fraught spirit of "good will." The powerful thrust of morality invested in the survival of capitalism in its contemporary poisonous neoliberal strain seeks to explicate and rationalize a system inherently overwhelming and unsustainable. For that reason, President George W. Bush's rhetoric became most notorious.[105] Undoubtedly, the presence and language of the "leader of the free world" (the abettor and serf of free-market predators) affect local and international politics and economic circulation of capital. When imbued with a purported virtuous imperative, these activities redefine social relations in terms of a religiously saturated morality. Given that there are Christian metaphors in "In the Jungle…," I shed light on the deployment of these practices.

Christian ideology informs much of neoliberal exploitation. Numerous politicians have invoked (and still do) a Christian moral system to exalt the wonders of neoliberal capitalism. It is not a prerogative of the political right. If truth be told, David Harvey believes Clinton is the "quintessential neoliberal."[106] However, I concentrate on President Bush's actions for two reasons. First, the invocation of compassion became the cornerstone of his

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[105] Jim Rutenberg and Larry Rohter, "Answering Latin Left, Bush Pledges to Help Poor," *New York Times*, March 14, 2007. Bush made similar remarks in reference to other Latin American countries: Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico.

[106] Harvey says, "I could never understand why the right was so apoplectic about Clinton when he was doing all the right neoliberal things. He came in promising universal healthcare and he gave us NAFTA, the WTO, and welfare 'reform.' He did all the things we would expect a good neoliberal to do. But the right loathed him still, and I think it is because their utopian vision of the world is order, morality, and then the crazy market can do what it wants." Stephen Pender, "Interview with David Harvey," *Studies in Social Justice* 1, no. 1 (2007): 17.

public policy plan. Other US politicians have avowed their religious background. In fact, they are almost compelled to do so, given the importance religion can play in US politics.[107] Bush's administration was remarkably successful in mobilizing a re-energized Christian faction demanding the return of "values." Furthermore, Bush brought that sort of rhetoric with him on his official trips to Latin America. The second reason is a question of historical context. President Bush was in office when the play was written and produced, and had been for several years. Prior presidents had been advocates of neoliberalism in word and practice. In the early twenty-first century, it became George W. Bush's duty to preserve the United States' neoliberal interests.

As part of his domestic course of action, Bush espoused both traditional conservative policies (tax cuts and anti-LGBT policies), as well as plans to test the achievement of children in the nation's schools in order to provide underprivileged children with adequate reading and mathematical skills in underperforming educational institutions (No Child Left Behind).[108] In deploying these programs, he intimated that he held to his convictions strongly, but that he was not callous. In his "Duty of Hope" speech in 1999, Bush expressed his dogma: "We found that government can spend money, but it can't put hope in our hearts or a sense of purpose in our lives. This is done by churches and synagogues and mosques and charities that warm the cold of life. A quiet river of goodness and kindness that cuts

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[107] The results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life indicate that 18 percent of the population believe President Barack Obama is a Muslim, a view that is most prevailing among his political opponents. "Beliefs about Obama's religion are closely linked to political judgments about him. Those who say he is a Muslim overwhelmingly disapprove of his job performance, while a majority of those who think he is a Christian approve of the job Obama is doing." The lawmakers' religion is important to the electorate. "Though the public expresses reservations about churches' involvement in politics," the report states, "there is widespread agreement that politicians should be religious.… Majorities across all major religious groups—with the exception of the religiously unaffiliated—agree it is important for members of Congress to have strong religious beliefs." Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Growing Number of Americans Say Obama is a Muslim: Results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2010), 1, 2, 12.

[108] Fred I. Greenstein, "The Person of the President, Leadership, and Greatness," in *The Executive Branch*, ed. Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 229.

through stone."[109] Bush's "compassionate" stance relied on the philanthropic drive of Christian organizations.[110] He gave momentum to measures allowing private faith-based charitable organizations to have a greater participation in the provision of services to the underprivileged.[111] He linked laissez-faire economic policy and the humanistic spirituality of the country's citizens, "led by an invisible hand," he stated, alluding to Adam Smith's (misinterpreted) description of free-market forces.[112] The presumption was that the government would make a huge impact in sustaining moral values. "Compassionate conservatism" pledged to overcome the alleged excessive intrusion of government in private lives. As Bush said to Congress in his first State of the Union address, compassionate conservatism entailed an ideology whereby "government should be active, but limited; engaged but not overbearing."[113]

George W. Bush's rhetoric of compassion made reference to a government agenda that is not exclusive either to his administration, to the Republican Party, or to any US

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[109] George W. Bush, "The Duty of Hope—Speech," *Center for Public Justice*, accessed December 17, 2009, http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyreader$383.

[110] For a description of the fusion of religion and politics among Christian organizations in the US, see Ann W. Duncan, "Religion, Rhetoric, and Ritual in the U.S. Government," in *Church-State Issues in America Today: Religion and Government*, ed. Ann W. Duncan and Steven L. Jones (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 63-101. For a study of Bush's faith-based initiatives, see Amy E. Black, Douglas L. Koopman, and David K. Ryden, *Of Little Faith: The Politics of George W. Bush's Faith-Based Initiatives* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), especially Douglas L. Koopman, "The Status of Faith-Based Initiatives in the Later Bush Administration," 167-93.

[111] Sydney M. Milkis, "Executive Power and Political Parties: The Dilemmas of Scale in American Democracy," in *The Executive Branch*, ed. Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 399.

[112] Smith argues that self-interest is the most effective generator of public welfare. "He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention…. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good." Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776; rep., New York: Penguin, 1999), 4-5:32.

[113] George W. Bush "The First State of the Union Address," in *The Quotable George W. Bush*, ed. Bill Adler (Kansas City, MO: Andrew McMeel Publishing, 2004), 25.

political organization.[114] Bush followed the steps of prior presidents. For example, his father, President George H. W. Bush, advocated for a "kinder and gentler nation" whose power would only serve as "a force of good."[115] In his acceptance speech for the presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in 1988, the first president Bush asserted, "We [the citizens of the United States] must remember if we are to be responsible—and compassionate—is that economic growth is the key to our endeavors."[116] Yet, in the second Presidential debate with candidates Ross Perot and Bill Clinton, then-President Bush displayed a degree of detachment from the daily experience of struggling citizens, somewhat disproving his compassionate approach to the electorate. When a young African American woman, dissatisfied with his vague statements, asked him for specific details on how the "national debt" [117] affected him, he retorted, with ill-concealed irritation, "Are you suggesting that if somebody has means that the national debt doesn't affect them? I'm not sure I get—help me with the question and I'll try to answer it." After dodging the question by recounting his visits to Black churches in the outskirts of the District of Columbia and his acquaintance with the problems the congregation faced, Bush adduced, "You've got to care. Everybody cares if people aren't doing well."[118] He objected to the claim that one had to

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[114] There is a plethora of literature on the subject of compassion. For instance, see Martha Nussbaum, "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13 (1996): 27–58; Nancy E. Snow, "Compassion," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (1991): 195-205; Annalise Acorn, *Compulsory Compassion: A Critique of Restorative Justice* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004). For an incisive critique of Nussbaum and other scholars, see Kathleen Woodward, "Calculating Compassion," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Gail Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 59-86. For an analysis of the tragic aspects of and an Aristotelian view on compassion, see Martha Nussbaum, "Part II: Compassion," in *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 295-444.

[115] "Biography of George H. W. Bush," The White House, accessed September 6, 2009, http://www .whitehouse .gov/about/presidents/GeorgeHWBush/.

[116] John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, "George Bush: Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in New Orleans," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed September 6, 2009, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25955.

[117] As the moderator suggested, the woman was probably referring to the recession.

[118] George H. W. Bush, "The Second Clinton-Bush-Perot Presidential Debate (Second Half of Debate)," *Commission on Presidential Debates* (presidential debate, Richmond, VA, October 15, 1992), accessed

experience pain with the other as a "fellow feeling." He protested, "I don't think it's fair to say, 'you haven't had cancer. Therefore, you don't know what it is like.'"

Empathy also became a leitmotiv for candidate and president-to-be Bill Clinton. In the aforementioned presidential debate, he mentioned the middle class in the state of Arkansas, whose daily suffering he acknowledged. On another occasion, he said to Bob Rafsky, an AIDS activist of ACT UP, "I know how it hurts... I feel your pain, I feel your pain," the latter of which became a catchphrase lampooned among comedians.[119] The trope of compassion was at the forefront of the 2008 presidential election as well. On April 13, Democratic Presidential candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton participated in the "Compassion Forum" held at Messiah College, moderated by Campbell Brown and Jon Meacham.[120] Senator and Republican presidential candidate John McCain declined to participate. The forum's mission was to bring to the table (or to the pulpit) candidates for the purpose of "discussing pressing moral issues that bridge ideological divides within our nation."[121] Both Democratic candidates made efforts to demonstrate their conviction in the importance of spiritual faith.[122]

President George H. W. Bush's exploitation of the discourse of compassion was not especially profitable in political terms. However, in his unanticipated political heir, President George W. Bush, the rhetoric of compassion acquired great relevance in policy-making. The

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November 16, 2009, http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-15-1992-second-half-debate-transcript.

[119] "Heckler Stirs Clinton Anger," *New York Times*, March 28, 1992.

[120] "Hillary Clinton at the Compassion Forum," *RealClearPolitics.com,* April 13, 2008, accessed November 19, 2009, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/hillary_clinton_at_the_compass.html.

[121] "The Compassion Forum at Messiah College: About the Forum," *Messiah College*, accessed November 21, 2009, http://www.messiah.edu/compassion_forum/about/.

[122] Although both candidates attested to their Christian faith, Clinton made more overt references to compassion, deeming it an inherent American trait. For example, she said, "Maybe, you know, the lord is just waiting for us to respond to his call, because this despair, this impoverishment of body and soul is what we are expected to be spending our time responding to, and so few of us do.… Let's see what we will do realistically to rebuild America's moral authority and demonstrate our commitment to compassionate humanitarianism." "The Compassion Forum" (transcript, Grantham, PA, April 13, 2008), accessed September 9, 2010, http://www.messiah.edu/compassion_forum/pdf/transcript.pdf.

younger Bush's neoconservative cohorts deployed another kind of moral vocabulary drenched with Christian allusions. Founded on the principle of American exceptionalism and neoliberal ideology, the message became a promise—and a threat: to avow and bolster a global benevolent hegemony. William Kristol and Robert Kagan promote this ideology when they state, "The aspiration to benevolent hegemony might strike some as either hubristic or morally suspect. But a hegemon is nothing more or less than a leader with preponderant influence and authority over all others in its domain."[123] Bush deployed Christian political language in his international dealings with developing nations. According to Hugh Urban, there has not been another US president who has made such a blatant display of religiosity or who has defined his office in such vehemently spiritual terms.[124] In his 2001 inaugural address, Bush attributed to the United States the role of global good Samaritan. He said, "Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers. They are citizens. Not problems, but priorities. And all of us are diminished when they are hopeless.… I pledge our nation to a goal. When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side."[125]

In reality, the aforementioned biblical reference actually undermined his message. Marjorie Garber claims, "The implication of the adjective *good* when attached to 'Samaritan' is oxymoronic (like 'compassionate conservative'), and must once have been stressed ('the *good* Samaritan') to emphasize the surprising fact that generosity in this case came from an outsider, from whom little was expected."[126] In the New International Version, the parable

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[123] William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (1996): 20.

[124] Hugh B. Urban, "The Secrets of the Kingdom: Spiritual Discourse and Material Interests in the Bush Administration," *Discourse* 27, no. 1 (2005): 144.

[125] Avalon Project at Yale Law School, "Inaugural Address of George W. Bush; January 20, 2001," *Lillian Goldman Law Library (Yale Law School)*, accessed November 2, 2009, http://avalon.law.yale.edu /21st_century/gbush1.asp.

[126] Marjorie Garber, "Compassion," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Gail Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 22.

bears the title "The Parable of the Good Samaritan," but the text itself does not ascribe any trait to the Samaritan ("A Samaritan") in Luke 10:33. The King James Version, which does not give a title to the parable, depicts him as "a certain Samaritan." Analogously, the term "compassionate" attached to "conservative" may underscore the belief that "conservative" is inherently *not* compassionate inasmuch as the modifier introduces an anomaly. Bush's rhetoric of "compassionate conservatism," an ideological stance based on the traditionalist belief that charitable and religious organizations ought to play an increasing role in the allocation of welfare,[127] intimates an unsettling option. "What would the alternative be, one was left to wonder: A *dis*passionate conservative? An *unfeeling* conservative? A *cruel* conservative?," Garber writes.[128] The phrase "compassionate conservative" subsumes an innate contradiction. Even so, common usage of the phrase attempts to naturalize compassion in the conservative movement, positing that the adjective "compassionate" is merely redundant, thus disavowing its original intent—to act as a mark of inconsistency and exception.[129]

Though more subtle than Bush's relentless exploitation and manipulation of Christian language, there is also a biblical suggestion in the "In the Jungle…," presented in the paulistano's reaction to the beggar. The businessman requests, "Let me kiss your feet. Wash your body with my tongue" (11), thus alluding to an episode featured in the New Testament. In this biblical story, a woman comes to see Jesus, who was dining at a Pharisee's home: "As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them."[130] The businessman's words have a greater sexual implication, since the "perfume" is his tongue.

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[127] Daniel Béland and Alex Waddan, "Conservative Ideas and Social Policy in the United States," *Social Policy & Administration* 41, no. 7 (2007): 772.

[128] Garber, 18.

[129] Ibid., 22.

[130] Luke 7:38 (NIV).

In Christian mythology, the woman's actions express absolute humility and critical soul-searching: because she loves much, the woman's sins are forgiven.[131] In "In the Jungle…," the paulistano does not demonstrate such contemplative nature. Rather, his "love" engenders unbridled energies focused on predatory self-gratification. He envisages expelling semen and dousing the poor man's body. With the discharge, he would anoint the beggar—"That immaculate perfume of my heart, which … always evaporates" (10)—in a way similar to the penitent woman. He imagines himself masturbating to the pauper's stench. In his fantasies, his ejaculation is an imprint on the beggar: "On the milky crust, I draw a heart with my finger, and it evaporates" (9). He leaves a mark, and professes deep love manifested in his ejaculating and rubbing his semen on the pauper's body. His ejaculate works as the sort of anointment oil profusely mentioned in the bible.[132] His passion is an outward expression of narcissistic sexual cravings, and his pleasure is totally solipsistic. The receivers of ejaculate—in other words, the men who offered "the arses of the destitute" (10)—participate in an exchange. They are workers who provide their bodies to the paulistano for the sake of subsistence (a hot dog, a bus ticket to return to Pernambuco, or cash, in the case of prostitutes). Labor power—namely, their sold activity—is the basic commodity for exchange endowed with unquestionable Christian attributes.

The political economy of emotions—compassion, equity, caring—is a tool of the economy of commodities. As Kathleen Woodward claims, "The slogan 'compassionate

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[131] Luke 7:47.

[132] References are numerous: Exodus 40:13, Leviticus 10:7, 1 Samuel 16:13, Psalm 23:5, Hebrews 10:9, and James 5:12, to name a few. The Messiah derives from the Hebrew term למשוח ("to anoint"), and the Greek word for Christ is its translation. In the Ancient Near East, anointing with oil served cosmetic and hygienic purposes, as well as in legal religious rituals. In the Hebrew Bible, anointment was mainly a religious practice. In some cases, it could also be a custom meaning the appointment or the official recognition of kingship, such as Saul's, David's, and Solomon's. The term also derives from the word "to spread" since they would spread oil on someone's head when crowning him king of Israel. Thus, an anointment with oil has both religious and political connotations in the Hebrew bible. Richard S. Hess, "The Image of the Messiah in the Old Testament," in *Images of Christ*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 22-33.

conservatism' *trades* on the rhetoric of feeling even as it is curiously empty of it."[133] It is an instrument for the pushing and promotion of economic conservatism.[134] Bush argued that free trade and open flows of imports-exports are essential conditions for compassionate world politics—that is, in theory. "Ours is a very compassionate nation," he reassured the world. "We deeply care about the human condition around the world. And I firmly believe that the best way to alleviate world poverty is through trade.… If you're generally [*sic*] interested in eliminating poverty—and I am—commerce, trade, opportunity and hope will all flourish with the completion of the Doha Round."[135] He presented the argument that neoliberal economic exchange, which was strongly advocated at this international-trade negotiation meeting, is the foundation for equitable and collective welfare, just like hope is—but only a Christian version of hope.

During the 2007 "We Care a Lot" tour in Latin America, Bush, in his role as the publicist for US capital, disparaged critics of the United States' alleged indifference toward peoples of poorer developing nations. "I don't think America gets enough credit for trying to help improve people's lives," Bush said at a joint news conference during his stay in Brazil, averring that the purpose of his trip was to convey his nation's generosity and compassion.[136] Throughout the same Latin American tour, he endeavored to emphasize said capitalist compassion. "It's very important for the people of South America and Central

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[133] Woodward, 61 (emphasis mine).

[134] Ibid., 74.

[135] "Bush Concludes Latin America Trip, Speaks About Poverty and Social Justice," *Foreign Policy Bulletin: The Documentary Record of United States Foreign Policy* 17, no. 3 (2007): 260. The Doha Development Round or Doha Development Agenda (DDA) is a multilateral trade negotiation round of the World Trade Organization that commenced in November 2001, with the objective of lowering trade barriers worldwide and promoting global trade. The most important issues concerned agricultural trade liberalization and nonagricultural market access. See Faizel Ismail, "An Assessment of the WTO Doha Round July–December 2008 Collapse," *World Trade Review* 8, no. 2 (2009): 579-605; Kent Jones, *The Doha Blues: Institutional Crisis and Reform in the WTO* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[136] Associated Press, "Bush to Latin America: We Care About You," *MSNBC*, March 10, 2007, accessed September 20, 2007, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17534327/.

America[137] to know that the United States cares deeply about the human condition, and that much of our aid is aimed at helping people realize their God-given potential," Bush declared in Bogotá.[138] However, the ostensible foreign aid may come in bizarre shapes and forms, to which his keynote speech at the White House Summit on International Development in October 2008 attests:

> True social justice requires compassion. And some of the greatest work of compassion in Latin America is being done by the United States military.… These men and women are showing that the nations of Latin America have a strong partner in the United States of America. They're a part of our efforts to show that the institutions of freedom and capitalism and democracy are not threats to be feared, but the surest path to social justice there is.[139]

In terms of conveying benevolence and integrity, dispatching members of the armed forces as envoys of good will appears to be a poor choice. Spectacles of fatigue- or uniform-wearing men and women bearing gifts of goods and services to deprived populations, notwithstanding the troops' best intentions and self-sacrifice, suggest more than kindheartedness. Lauren Berlant provides a cogent description of the dichotomy:

> We do not like to hear that our good intentions can sometimes be said to be aggressive, although anyone versed in, say, the history of love or imperialism knows volumes about the ways in which genuinely good intentions have

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[137] Apparently, NAFTA took care of Mexico.

[138] In addition, given Bush's stress on South and Central America, one cannot help but wonder if Mexico either does not deserve the United States' compassion or its treatment is somewhat singular or privileged. Maybe the construction of a wall between both countries aims at restricting the fulfillment of the individuals' "God-given potential" to their respective, carefully circumscribed nations. George W. Bush, "President Bush and President Uribe of Colombia Participate in a Joint Press Availability," The White House, June 14, 2008, accessed September 2, 2009, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases /2007/03/20070311-1.html.

[139] Office of the Press Secretary, "White House Summit on International Development," The White House, October 21, 2008, accessed November 4, 2009, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news /releases/2008/10/20081021-5.html. The speech is a grandiloquent eulogy to "America's" generosity and compassion.

> involved forms of ordinary terror (think about missionary education) and control (think of state military, carceral, and police practices).[140]

This type of imagery intimates the latent asymmetrical nature of the imperialist-subject relationship. The same individuals who may provide humanitarian aid one day may be the aggressors in the future; as is the case in Iraq and Afghanistan, members of the armed forces may play those roles simultaneously.[141]

In many instances, the spectacular composition of humanitarian aid calls for military uniforms and weapons. They are theatre-of-war properties intrinsic to the crafting of symbolic representations. Props also carry laden signification in the play. When the paulistano first comes onstage, he bears a flower, whose orange hue is in color harmony with the lighting. The object alludes to an array of the businessman's traits: he is financially comfortable (he can afford a flower), he appreciates beauty, and he comprehends the etiquette of courtship. As a materially and symbolically loaded prop, it is what Andrew Sofer calls a "visual shorthand" for the identification of context and milieu, and for characterization.[142] The manipulation of the flower onstage serves a concrete, dramatically relevant purpose; thus, the thing performs as a prop.[143] Moreover, the object is in motion when the businessman brushes the beggar's cheek with the flower petals, which is another important feature of a theatrical prop.

The object conveys other meanings, as well, sometimes even contradictory or at odds.[144] Moments after caressing the beggar with the flower in a gesture of seductive

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[140] Lauren Gail Berlant, introduction to *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion,* ed. Lauren Gail Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

[141] For an analysis of the political implications of assigning both combat and humanitarian work to the Department of Defense, see John Donnelly, "Military Deep into Civilian Duties," *Boston Globe*, December 3, 2007.

[142] Andrew Sofer, *The Secret Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 20-21. Also see Frances N. Teague, *Shakespeare's Speaking Properties* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1991), 17.

[143] Sofer, 12.

[144] Teague, 16-17.

entreaty, the paulistano expresses his contempt for him. When the prostrate character cowers away from him, the businessman leers at him disdainfully. He follows the beggar; once again he attempts to elicit a sign of encouragement from the poor man, who remains crouched under his makeshift cloak. In disgust, the businessman flings the flower to the ground, close to the poor man's head. With the same prop, manipulated in contrary fashions, the character exteriorizes dichotomous emotions: "love" (desire) and domination.[145] The beautiful object can be a weapon. Likewise, a military uniform may convey altruism. A generous grant from an international organization may come with strings attached, whether these are explicit or not. This sort of indeterminacy is at the core of capitalist compassion and altruism.

The depiction of largesse echoes a political picture of remitted compassion. In addition to a flower charged with multiple implications, there are two other crucial props onstage: the alcohol the paulistano offers the beggar and the bowl into which he pours it. He says, "But falling in love, that's something I could only with you, of course…. I brought food" (11). Materially, alcohol is a source of energy whose nutritional value is negligible,[146] much like that of the hotdog the businessman gave the Bolivian. These items of food may enable short-term activity, yet they do not provide the imbiber with the dietary nutrients for long-term activity. It is food, but of the worst kind. The purpose of offering liquor to the beggar is deceitful: alcohol will enhance the vagrant's stupor and guarantee his compliance. As a result, the paulistano's actions aim at ensuring the pauper's use value for his exclusive enjoyment. Inasmuch as liquor is some form of food that as a property also connotes an

[145] Sofer centers his attention on the manipulation—as opposed to portability—of stage properties: "The prop must physically move or alter in some way as a result of the actor's physical intervention." Sofer, 12.

[146] Vishwanath M. Sardesai, *Introduction to Clinical Nutrition* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 2003), 403; Harold Kalant, "Alcohol Use and Nutrition," in *Diet, Nutrition, and Health*, ed. Kenneth Kitchener Carroll (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 177-78.

interested generosity, alcohol is a fraught object onstage. It absorbs a complex assortment of meaning, or "semiotic subjectivity."[147]

One of many implications of liquor is its conspicuous representation of exploitation. It acts as a thing wherein a social relationship is metaphorically embodied. In this sense, alcohol is a fetish, which Sofer defines as "one endowed by the actor, character, or playwright with a special power and/or significance that thereafter seems to emanate from the object itself."[148] Sofer reads this as a Freudian fetish, as an uncanny object.[149] I prefer to see this prop strictly from a Marxian perspective, in light of the socioeconomic relations onstage.[150] "In the Jungle…" shows that the fetishization of a commodity is no longer strictly an allusion. Whereas the building the beggar kicked is only mentioned, a fetish-commodity is now visible onstage: the "objective appearance of the social characteristics of labour" in the shape of the prop takes center stage.[151] The offer and drinking of liquor, especially the manner in which both actions are executed in performance, physically bring to the stage a conglomerate of relationships in the shape of a thing.

As theatrical objects, props are inherently representational—a stand-in for something else. However, liquor, whether onstage or offstage, is a produced object resulting from commodity fetishization. I believe that this is why this dramatic performance, inasmuch as it stages a relationship of capitalist exploitation, cannot be interpreted merely metaphorically. In doing so, the fetish remains in place, construed and analyzed from a disengaged distance, and aestheticized. This will only galvanize the (Marxian) fetish as such. As Walter Benjamin contends, the human being has become self-alienated to the extent that "it can experience its

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[147] Sofer, 24.

[148] Ibid., 26.

[149] Ibid., 27.

[150] Sofer wants to establish "the peculiarly *theatrical* form" of the fetish, acknowledging the notion used in anthropology, psychoanalysis, and Marxism. Ibid., 212.

[151] Marx, *Capital,* 176.

own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order."[152] If the spectator remains mesmerized by the metaphorical weight of the prop, the veritable social dynamics at stake remain concealed behind the veil of bourgeois theatre.

Nothing is entirely free: behind philanthropy lie ulterior motives. Self-ascriptions of compassion and love now obfuscate the asymmetries of economic power and its corollaries. The paulistano demands something in exchange for the alms he had offered him ["You asked me for change and I gave you some" (12)], as well as for the alcohol he brought for the beggar. Sweetly and earnestly he inquires, "Can I ask something of you now?" (12). True to capitalist form, the exchange rate is astronomic. The paulistano demands a high price for his "good will." He asks for a hunk of flesh. The paulistano's request is enveloped in a poetic and erotic exaltation of destitution. I quote the characters' lines and stage actions at length in order to show the perturbing and rapacious nature of the exchange.

> MAN. You asked me for change and I gave you some. Can I ask something of you now? *(Pause.)* The thing I want most... I think I know you well enough to ask. *(He holds his hand.)* A piece of you. Just a piece. You can choose which bit. In fact, you have to choose, otherwise it wouldn't be love. But I want a very dirty piece. The feet. The legs. The flesh on your chest. Your nipple. The ventricule. The eyes! Give me your world-contaminated eyes. *(On his knees.)* This is how I imagined it: you divide yourself in parts and prepare meals for every day we have together. Breakfast, lunch, dinner. Little by little, you offer me pieces and particles. Fatty meat and cartilage. Crushed bones, juices from your glands, stews of pure pleasure. Please! *(Silence.)* Who is it who comes to take care of you at night? To nourish

[152] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 242.

you? Who kept you seasoned you all this time? To eat a piece of your rotten human flesh.

(Staring deep into his eyes.) And you are still human flesh. This is the only way I appease the yearning I feel in my body. If I only I could bite your flesh. I could almost go mad with this hunger. It roars in my stomach and echoes in everything. Inside, I never sleep. A piece of you is missing. This kiss is definitive. This fuck is definitive. Each kiss I have given you has been a rehearsal for this bite. I have mapped my hunger out on your skin. The first meal.

(The beggar offers his finger.) Your little finger! Trust me. *(He prepares for the bite.)* (12)

Flagrantly, the relationship is stripped of all euphemism or metaphoric frills, revealing the true dimensions of this connection. Human tissue becomes a commodity for exchange.

Tthe implication is now even more alarming. The Bolivian's and pernambucano's anuses were abused—though not exhausted—for pleasure: they are luxury services. The pauper's body, instead, is depleted when consumed. In this particular case, moreover, simple cellular reproduction will not engender a new finger: it is not a case of vampirism but rather of genuine cannibalism. The worker's energy is incorporated into capital's production processes; his finger is a true "appendage of capital."[153] Ultimately, the current of capitalist production renders all products commodities and all labor, wage labor.[154] Thus, previously belonging to the industrial reserve army, the pauper enters the flexible labor market when he is needed. The businessman expects a vital product from the beggar, namely, his body, as food to quench his anthropophagic appetites, whether they are physiological, sexual, or emotional. In fact, who but he keeps the pauper "seasoned" for consumption? Like the witch

[153] Marx, *Capital*, 719.

[154] Ibid., 1041.

in the Grimm Brothers' *Hansel and Gretel*, the capitalist plumps up the beggar with foodstuffs providing temporary satiety. Undoubtedly, the witch hopes to eat Gretel once she has wolfed down Hansel.

Thus, *The Repast* shows how, in Brecht's words, "everyday things [such as eating] are … raised above the level of the obvious and automatic."[155] Exploitation becomes unabashedly visible, on a bare stage where capital accumulation through surplus value appropriation is foregrounded. In unveiling the social relations in the capitalist mode of production, the performance evinces strategies of epic theatre. Epic theatre aims at denying the spectator the ability to commiserate with the characters. The play challenges the audience's tendency toward an empathetic response. To what extent can the spectators, in all earnestness, believe *that* is the way they would act?[156] The asymmetrical power dynamics between the characters are familiar enough for the audience to understand the sort of relationship established. "The A-effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware … from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected," according to Brecht.[157] Given its "not quite" features, the play shows evidence of defamiliarization. Despite the almost naked stage, there are enough clues to situate the play within a context. The soundscapes, the costumes, and the specific references to geographical regions speak to a certain environment, yet they defy naturalistic or realistic theatrical conventions. The sight of urban bourgeois men in suits is commonplace; so, unfortunately, is the presence of homeless beggars in rags in the city. What is alien to the audience is their bond, that is to say, an ostensible one-sided love relation between them. To a spectator, this kind of attachment may seem strange, but not unintelligible: one's love relationship can seem bizarre in another person's eyes.

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[155] Bertold Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 92.

[156] Ibid., 190.

[157] Ibid., 143.

The most effective Brechtian device, the *Gestus,* irrupts in the final moments. In response to the paulistano's categorical entreaty, the beggar freely offers his finger. "You can choose which bit. In fact, you have to choose, otherwise it wouldn't be love," the businessman adjures (12). The paulistano swiftly reacts to the sight of the poor man's finger standing vertically, in sharp contrast to the prostrate body. The stage directions indicate, "He bites the beggar's finger, who groans in pain. The Man chews the piece he has bitten off, his mouth dirty with blood. He is ecstatic" (13). There is nothing dainty or romantic in the action. In performance, Marat grabs the beggar's hands and violently sinks his teeth into the finger. He masturbates while he chews the flesh. There are several previous indications of the exploitative relationship between the paulistano and the pauper. Yet the heinous oppression of the beggar is brutally condensed in this single action. Brecht's description of Gestus is eerily appropriate to the play. "The 'look of hunter man' can become a social gest," Brecht writes, "if it is shown that particular manoeuvres by men can degrade the individual man to the level of a beast; the social gest is the gest relevant to society, the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances."[158] The devouring of the finger is, as Walter Benjamin writes, "the dialectic at a standing."[159] The first scene's allusion to eating a finger through the stark white gauze in the woman's hand now is enacted. Anthropophagic consumption is not a fait accompli that the actor narrates as a past action that is not performed. In this instance, the paulistano executes the action, producing the spectacle of horror. In that gestic moment, when the businessman bites into flesh and the beggar howls, the anthropophagic exploitation of neoliberalism is unerringly in evidence. The spectator now confronts the pain and abjection of cannibalistic capitalism. The mask of compassion and altruism falls, and the stage lights shine on the material implications of capital accumulation.

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[158] Ibid., 104-5.

[159] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (New York: Verso, 2003), 13.

"In the Jungle…" exudes the implacable aggression of neoliberal exploitation. The sexualized relationship between the businessman and the beggar is at all times immersed in cruelty. Conversely, the last segment of the play touches upon anthropophagy differently from "In the Jungle…." For instance, the relationships are neither sexual nor particularly intimate, and the performance of flesh-eating is part of a ritual. The last act, "…of the Cities," depicts two characters.[160] Poru, a male Brazilian Indian, is the last member of his tribe and is about to die. Plínio, who played the beggar in "In the Jungle…," plays the character.[161] A nameless female scientist—most probably an anthropologist—brandishes a tape recorder, wanting to document the last traces of the tribe's oral cultures: she wants to ensure that the ancestral language does not die with Poru.[162] In return, he requests that she perform indigenous tribal death rituals, namely to open his mouth, kiss his tongue, and chew it: one tongue in exchange for another. The play ends with this cannibalistic barter. The scientist eats her research subject's human flesh, establishing an exchange "market" (inasmuch as she accrues symbolic capital from the transaction), and thus accumulating capital from her incorporation of Poru's body.[163]

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[160] Due to the changes made to the text in performance and the limitations of O'Thomas's translation, the quotations are based on my own reconfiguration of the original Portuguese text and its English translation, based on videorecorded evidence. Thus, pagination is impossible.

[161] Born in 1954, Plínio is the eldest performer. Given the limited use of make-up onstage, he was able to portray the last member of a dying tribe most verisimilarly among the cast members. Marat and Luah seemed to be in their thirties.

[162] The role was originally written for a man, and in its early performances was performed by Marat. The original casting revolved around on Marat's remarkable talent and craft. However, the director assigned the role to Luah in ensuing performances. The purpose of the new casting may have been to establish a more balanced role distribution among the three actors' roles. This possibility notwithstanding, the effect of this gender difference underscores the sociocultural differences between these characters, concentrating on ethnicity and economic class as the basis of exploitation. The inversion of patriarchy suggests that ethnic and class difference is also a crucial factor in the implementation and preservation of systems of oppression.

[163] For a discussion on the biological accumulation of symbolic capital, see my analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's theory in chapter 2.

Rather than endeavoring to leave an aural record of his language, Poru[164] is more interested in recollecting his life, especially the changes his tribe underwent when it encountered the white man. When the latter spoke, the Indian thought, "It was the sound of the end." Thus, he mourns his tribe's demise: "I came back to find my people and all that is left is my memory. So I will obey my memory." All that is left to do is remember. Since his death is looming, Poru asks the scientist to eat his tongue when he dies, thus performing a ritual of his tribe. Since he is the last member of his nation, he must rely on a white person to perform the ritual. He has to work hard at persuading the scientist to do so. The woman is ambivalent, obviously wanting to honor the customs of Poru's people, but finding it hard to acquiesce to the anthropophagic ritual. Poru coaxes her to follow through with her promise. In exchange, he will provide the scientist with his "words."

> PORU. These words will be yours when I die.… Remember, your blood carries with it a promise you made to me. Your promise flows through my veins and for that reason alone I can find peace. Calm yourself and help me die with dignity.

The juxtaposition of cultures, oftentimes underscored by Poru's singing in his indigenous language, points to a socioeconomic clash between them. There are some references to the Indian's reluctance and difficulty in moving to the white man's society. "I crossed the river and became another man, a Brazilian, with a work permit and no job. Nobody believes a man of my color," Poru says. Despite his attempts to belong in a society that has imposed its values on the Amazonian populations, "progress" makes no room for him. Nonetheless, the white man has recruited him as a worker by granting him a work permit.

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[164] Poru literally means "to eat human flesh" in tupi *awa a'wa*. Tarsila do Amaral, an important artist of the 1920s *movimento antropofágico* (anthropophagic movement) made an oil painting titled *Abaporu*, where she merged nativist subjects to a Cubist aesthetic. Her husband Oswald de Andrade named the piece. Rita Márcia Magalhães Furtado, "Comi o *Abaporu* com os olhos: um mergulho antropofágico nas cores de Tarsila," in *Museu, educação e cultura: encontros de crianças e professores com a arte*, ed. Maria Isabel Leite and Luciana E. Ostetto (Campinas, Brazil: Papirus, 2005), 170.

The *carteira de Trabalho e Previdência Social* (Work and Social Security identification document) is proof of a person's rights to work in Brazil. Instituted in 1931-32 during Getúlio Vargas's administration, the carteira guarantees access to certain workers' rights, such as unemployment benefits, Social Security, and compulsory severance pay. Thus, if a worker has a carteira, he has nominal recourses against acute exploitation. For example, in December 2007, the government proposed a provisionary measure to eliminate the requirement among sugar cane workers to hold a carteira. Adriano Espínola claims President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva betrayed workers by denying them hard-earned labor rights, accusing him of turning a blind eye to the illegal practices related to labor regulation.

> Por mais este ato de traição de Lula, aquele produtor rural que contrata sem assinar carteira como forma de obter mais lucro, ao se deparar com uma fiscalização do Ministério do Trabalho, poderá alegar que seus trabalhadores são temporários e que os contratos escritos da nova lei de Lula estão em seu contador, ainda que estes não existam ou vão ser ainda providenciados. (Through this additional treasonous act by Lula, the rural producer who hires workers without signing the carteira in order to obtain further profits and who is aware of the Department of Labor's policies on oversight can allege that his workers are temporary and that the contracts written according to Lula's new law are in his possession, even if these do not exist or are yet to be furnished.)[165]

The new measure deprived rural workers of any recourse to legal and judicial aegis. But the permit really did not guarantee the citizens' welfare. Even when having the right to work, Poru remains unemployed—further proof of the formation and preservation of the industrial reserve army.

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[165] Adriano Espínola, "O agronegócio agradece: Lula ataca direito do trabalhador rural à carteira assinada," *Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificad*o, January 18, 2008, accessed October 5, 2009, http://www .pstu.org.br/nacional_materia.asp?id=7858&ida=41.

Poru and the beggar in "In the Jungle…" share an experience of abjection. Not surprisingly, the titles of the scenes establish homologies of city and jungle: "In the Jungle…" takes place in São Paulo, whereas "… of the Cities" unfolds in the Amazonian rainforest.[166] Both regions are major sources of Brazil's wealth, but the former is an industrial and financial focal point whereas the Amazon is immensely rich in natural resources. Both locations are sites of class struggle and capital accumulation. Disputes over the protection versus economic exploitation of Amazônia are an international concern, given the primacy of the rainforest to the world's environmental protection. Land can be a veritable motor for capital accumulation, particularly in a country where primary and secondary industries are closely linked.

In Brazil, agribusiness companies became true powerhouses in land ownership. Furthermore, multinational agribusiness corporations have successfully portrayed themselves as a source of national production of wealth. In Lula, they found an advocate. Former Minister of Agriculture Roberto Rodrigues said it plainly: "Don't let's get mixed about this. Agribusiness is the most important business in this country. It represents 34 percent of GNP, it generates 27 percent of employment, and it is responsible for 42 percent of Brazilian exports. It is the biggest surplus heading in the balance of payments, which guarantees the national surplus as a whole."[167] As Bernardo Mançano Fernandes claims, "O processo de exploração e dominação mudou e permaneceu." (The process of exploitation and domination changed, and remained in place.)[168] The great concentration of land has led to the destitution of agrarian workers. Through increased productivity—the lethal weapon

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[166] The *selva amazônica* (Amazonian jungle) or Amazônia is the Amazon rainforest.

[167] Interview with Roberto Rodrigues, "Ministro da Agricultura quer manter competitividade do Agronegócio e melhorar a distribuição da renda no campo," *Revista Resenha BM&F* 153 (2003): 7, quoted in Richard Bourne, *Lula of Brazil: The Story So Far* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 140.

[168] Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, "Os desafios da geografia agrária para explicar as políticas de reforma agrária nos governos Cardoso e Lula," in *Panorama da Geografia Brasileira I,* ed. José Borzacchiello da Silva, Luiz Cruz Lima, and Denise Elias (São Paulo: Annablume, 2006), 200.

of capital for maximization of surplus value accumulation—peasants are continually subject to exploitation.[169]

In his virulent condemnation of Lula's policies, James Petras elucidates the neoliberal programs in Brazil. He criticizes the continuation of the economic model of Lula's predecessor President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003); Petras accuses Lula of betraying the Workers' Party and aligning his policies to those of the Bretton Woods organizations, as well as participating in negotiations in defense of Brazilian capital and the mighty agribusiness cartel.[170] Since a substantial number of agribusiness firms established in Brazil are US companies, it is thus not surprising that during Bush's official trip to Brazil in 2007, crowds took to the streets to protest, showing collective social engagement and remonstration. In São Paulo, thousands of rural members of the international Via Campesina social movement and the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (the Landless Workers Movement) coordinated massive, non-violent occupations of multinational agribusiness corporations throughout the country.[171]

Poru recognizes the financial interests behind the policies to absorb indigenous populations into the Brazilian neoliberal economy. His experience while living in Brazil's "white" society showed him that entering the industrial complex yields him nothing, except alienation from his own native ecosystemic and social environment. To a modern society, the appropriation of land is a primary objective; therefore, the indigenous population must be tamed. The objective of missionary work was to discipline the Indians. Thus, as Poru says, "the end began with the arrival of the crosses." The Christianization of the indigenous populations entailed the introduction of "new fears" and the use of disciplinary measures.

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[169] Ibid.

[170] James Petras, "Brazil and Lula: Year Cero," *James Petras Website*, accessed December 28, 2009, http://petras.lahaine.org/b2-img/040129petras_brasil.pdf.

[171] Isabella Kenfield, and Roger Burbach, "Militant Brazilian Opposition to Bush-Lula Ethanol Accords," *Znet*, March 27, 2007, accessed September 16, 2007, http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm ?ItemID=12445.

"The evangelicals want to catechize me without crosses, but with bibles made of crocodile [*jacaré*] leather and Jacaranda[172] paper; they seek money and some sort of faith," Poru vociferates. He observes a double-edged function of compassion and religiosity. He has seen the way Christian missionary work has monetized faith, as well as pillaged the native natural resources on which the indigenous nations rely for survival.

Capitalism feeds cannibalistically on disenfranchised, exploited populations. Indeed, the cannibal-capitalist consumes, devours, metabolizes, transforms into feces, and eliminates the commodified body of the other.[173] This cannibalistic drive springs from the idea of a survival-of-the-fittest mentality where those who do not eat risk being devoured—an axiom of neoliberal economics. The cannibal invokes his compassionate actions in feeding, in nurturing this body for his ultimate consumption. MacCannell contends that "this is the reason why 'kinder, gentler' capitalism and growing ecological awareness has been accompanied by increasingly vicious exploitation," a "frightened-aggressive reaction" to the increasingly irrefutable material evidence that the human population jeopardizes its very future unless it undertakes a radical change in environmental and sustainable growth policies.[174]

"Cannibal solidarity" implies mutual complicity. Consumers in capitalist societies may be aware of their unnecessary consumptive practices, yet they believe that the entire system on which their livelihood depends relies on (most often than not redundant) consumption.[175] A materialist analysis of theatrical practices reveals the alarming repercussions of the rampant wave of neoliberal policies, for whose endorsement and preservation a complex and dominant international network is in place. As Samir Amin

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[172] Jacaranda is an American tropical tree: *jacarandá*, from Tupi, means "having a hard core, hard branch."

[173] MacCannell, 66 (see n. 22).

[174] Ibid., 57.

[175] Ibid., 67.

argues, imperialism is a parasitic system that "brings to the fore the 'North-South' contradiction between centres and peripheries."[176] Bush argued for the compassion of the richer nations vis-à-vis their poorer counterparts at the same time as his administration hindered Brazilian exports to the US by upholding high tariffs for Brazilian ethanol and farm subsidies to domestic workers. Lula calls for the development of an industry that will entrench the exploitation of thousands of agricultural workers for the sake of fuels with "a seal of assurance for their social, labor and environmental quality."[177] Capital seeks to preserve the current distribution of income, and the "parasitic" (Amin's term) or "cannibalistic" (my term) dynamics of the world economic system.

Without incisive critique, the system remains unchallenged and social justice is nothing but a pleasing catchphrase. "The Revolutionary Theatre must EXPOSE!," Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka wrote, thus positing the relevance of theatre in a revolutionary project.[178] In her study of "coercive performance" in Latin America, Amalia Gladhart asserts that the theatricalization of violence presents some ethical problems for both the producers and the audience of a performance. Invoking Diana Taylor's theories of percepticide,[179] Gladhart contends, "Simply making violence visible is not sufficient to eliminate it and may in fact exacerbate the problem."[180] In producing an aestheticized rendering of cruelty, there is a risk of effacing the oppressive power disparity between victimizers and victims. Such veiling of the actual social relations produces a legitimation of violence if audience members relish their roles as spectators. In addition, it may also produce a numbing effect. Audiences

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[176] Samir Amin, 94 (see n. 25).

[177] Walter Brandimarte and Marcelo Teixeira, "Lula defende na ONU idéia do etanol sustentável," *Reuters Brasil*, September 26, 2007, accessed September 30, 2007, http://br.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=businessnews&storyID =2007-09-25T161910Z_1_N25374665_rtridst_0_negocios-brasil-lula-etanolzoneamento-pol.xml.

[178] Leroi Jones, "In Search of the Revolutionary Theatre," *Negro Digest*, April, 1966, 21.

[179] See Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

[180] Amalia Gladhart, *The Leper in Blue: Coercive Performance and the Contemporary Latin American Theater* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 186.

may easily assimilate and naturalize beautiful or excessive brutality, Gladhart argues. This is what Brecht so strongly condemns. Gladhart believes that a way to sidestep this issue is to suggest or evoke violence rather than theatricalize it. "If the violence occurs offstage," she suggests, "the audience is spared the discomfort of 'seeing the weapons.'"[181] At the same time, she argues that steering clear of presenting violence onstage eschews the possibility that audiences may easily intellectualize and internalize the portrayals of aggressions.[182]

However, I think that neoliberal hegemonic agents are much more insidious and much more successful in effacing and denying oppression than the military dictatorships were in their erasure of political dissent.[183] Although they successfully deployed early neoliberal policies, Latin American military regimes have collapsed; neoliberalism is growing strong. The apparatus that sustains neoliberal processes is an entrenched system that adapts, mutates, and metastasizes into all crevices of society. Thus, the staging of neoliberal violence may in fact one of the few ways of drawing attention to a stealthy machine. What Savran calls a "Prozac-laced idealism"[184] actually ignores the nature of labor reification. Theatre can provide a corrective, for it has the power to pierce discursive, literary, and visual propaganda of the system (imperialist triumphalism, religious invocations, and philanthropic coercion) by producing its own body of proof.

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[181] Ibid., 190.

[182] For discussions on the spectacles of torture in authoritarian regimes—to which Gladhart refers profusely—see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Taylor, *Disappearing Acts.*

[183] Early neoliberal programs were implemented under military regimes. Augusto Pinochet's administration piloted the most extreme system of SAPs sponsored by the IMF in the 1970s. It eliminated barriers to foreign imports, privatized public assets, and installed "free market" principles by force. This process is what David Harvey calls "creative destruction." Richard L. Harris, "The Effects of Globalization and Neoliberalism in Latin America at the Beginning of the Millennium," in *Critical Perspectices on Globalization and Neoliberalism in Developing Countries*, ed. Richard L. Harris and Melinda J. Seid (Boston: Brill, 2000), 142; David Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 2 (2006): 145-58.

[184] Savran (see n. 1).

The Repast represents a metaphor if it is restricted to a figure of speech.[185] As I argue throughout my dissertation, to the extent that actors are workers, their bodies are food and are feeding the neoliberal apparatus. Workers' bodies are at all times fodder for consumption. Thus, in that sense, the play describes more than a metaphor. Director Denise Weinberg describes her production as "antropofagia sem a poesia" (anthropophagy without poetry).[186] In addition, the play denies a decontextualization of the act of aggression and strongly highlights the geohistorical coordinates of economic exploitation. *The Repast* supersedes the purpose of an aesthetic metaphor. Its Brechtian elements inhibit such an inclination, because they reveal the more profound social dynamic of corporeal exploitation in processes of production.

In his reading of *Harvest* ("a play that offers perhaps the most graphic demonstration imaginable of imperialist violence"), Savran speaks loudly against the dematerialization of violence by criticizing the perilous tendency to innocuously metaphorize brutality.[187] He refers to the play's depiction of the trade in organs, calling attention to the concrete nature of the business: "It is a very real, multi-billion dollar industry and key instance of the pillage of resources and labor reserves on the periphery." Like *Harvest*, *The Repast* (and most specifically "In the Jungle…") also proposes an examination of the commodification of lower classes, by locating neoliberal surplus appropriation in the human body. In both plays, the anatomical structure of the body is a commodity. In my mind, Newton's play illustrates a continuous, invisible, and legalized neoliberal "trade in organs," animated by means of disingenuous economies of emotions. The examples of anthropophagic consumption onstage

[185] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a metaphor is "a figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable."

[186] Neiva (see n. 27).

[187] Savran.

show the way workers must offer their bodies to the service of capital reproduction, in order to procure the means for their subsistence.

In shedding light on the cannibalistic nature of capitalist economies of commodity production and emotion, *The Repast* theatricalizes—that is, makes visible and material—systems of oppression, forcing audiences to confront the violence behind capitalist accumulation and class struggle of our time. Thus, in highlighting the avaricious cannibalism of capital, the play intervenes in a greater project of social radical transformation, because the material implications of capitalism make exploitation increasingly hard to stomach.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to highlight different aspects of capital accumulation in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-centuries Latin American theatre. Furthermore, my goal was to link processes of capital accumulation and consumption. I believe that the separation of culture and economics, and culture and sociopolitics, misrepresents the social processes involved in creative and artistic work. Products exist within a network of social relations. In the study of specific performances, contextualization is crucial. Thus, the historical, geographical, and economic circumstances in which performances take place are as important as the analysis of the plays themselves. Otherwise, the dramatic analysis becomes a decontextualized project, or a scholar's solipsistic rumination, completely and artificially detached from all empirical reality. A performance is a mode of communication, a social activity that, like other social processes, entails a human being's engagement with her environment.

Consequently, my dissertation has concentrated on the study of performances staged at a particular time in history: a time when neoliberalism informed, surreptitiously or not, all modes of engagement. Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco* provides a theatrical representation, ornamented with literary metaphors and images, of a distressing moment in recent Argentine history. More concretely, the play alludes to the exploitation of the least powerful strata of the population. In the final years of the Menemist administration, when the mirage of neoliberal splendor dissipated and the true consequences—pauperization, income redistribution, and increasing exploitation of workers—became clear, a great number of Argentineans sought a scapegoat. The powerful encouraged these animations and supported systems of Othering along ethnic lines to deflect criticism and to cement class division. The play's main character Hue, the Chinese man in a foreign land, reminds us of the many victims of neoliberal rhetorical and material violence, whose plight materializes in

their increasingly dehumanized bodies. Hue's exploitation in the asylum represents the physical consequences of capitalist greed. Despite the horrifying portrayal of violent abasement, however, the playwright introduces a glimmer of hope. At the very last moment, the final gesture—Hue's stretching his hand to help his mother rise—opens the door to communal cooperation. "Los desdichados no se reconocen" (the unfortunate do not recognize each other), Hue often says throughout the play. At the end of the play, there is a promising chance that the unfortunate may acknowledge each other and come together against voracious violence. The promise of class coalescence proposes a rather hopeful future.

In the second chapter, I analyzed apparatus of capital accumulation that "take place" in arenas within and surrounding the production of José María Muscari's *Shangay té verde y sushi en 8 escenas*. The field of study was broad, extending beyond the text to include the material facets of cultural production as well as the staged performance itself. By drawing parallels between aspects of Karl Marx's labor theory of value and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus, I posited that capital accumulation takes place concretely in the human body. Moreover, when we study capital flows within *Shangay*, I contended, these forms of capital accrual become quite evident.

There must be consumption of matter and energy for the production of capital. Thus, because food is a fundamental source of energy, I centered the argument on systems of food consumption. Starting with the history of Palermo Hollywood, an urban space appropriated through and constructed for consumption, I elucidated the commercial and artistic deployments of food in the theatrical venue, thus underscoring representations of food in different social arenas. The overarching idea was that food (in its manifold versions) is crucial to capital accumulation. The animation of food consumption in material, metaphorical, and suggestive ways pervade in *Shangay*. In presenting diverse approaches to a particular production through the examination of food consumption in a socially produced

event, I argued that a close examination of the assorted social relations invested in *Shangay* uncovers the ways in which capital accumulation occurs in the body. Studying these modes of accumulation shows how production, reproduction, and representation of bodies are inextricably intertwined in a neoliberal system of exploitation.

In the third chapter I examined *A refeição*, which I argue is a compelling theatrical representation of mechanisms of capital accumulation. These three scenes show three diverse cases of anthropophagy in the play. In the first scene, a couple negotiates power and self-assertion in terms of flesh-eating passions. In the Brazilian jungle of São Paulo evoked in the second scene, neoliberal capital accumulation reveals itself as the veritable anthropophagic force it is. Under the guise of love and compassion, a capitalist eats a beggar's finger. This gestic action makes manifest the ravaging effects of a neoliberal system where the possibility of class recognition and self-assertion is violently quashed. I introduced two real cases of these dynamics: the exploitation of sugar cane workers in Brazil and the discourses of empathy animated by a "compassionate conservatism." These geographical and historical contexts ground the theatrical representations within a concrete system of neoliberal oppression in Brazil. Thus, the production puts metaphors to the test. Is cannibalism really a mere metaphor? I argued that it is more than that because the capitalist engine feeds on the corporeal energy and matter of the workers. Anthropophagy describes the manner in which neoliberal agents accumulate and reproduce capital at the workers' (bodies') expense.

The chapters of the dissertation presented three different case studies of Latin American performances focusing on the body as a site of capital exchange. The methodology, however, is not only applicable to *certain* types of performances in *certain* places. Rather, the questions I propose apply to the study of all types of embodied entities participating in the field of theatre. The most important thing, I believe, is to consider the ways bodies produce, reproduce, and are produced in circuits of capital exchange. The

commodification of the human body is evident in many arenas. In medicine, for instance, the economies of corporeality are subject of ethical debate: consider global traffic in organs, stem cell research, surgical enhancement, and testing on human subjects.[1] Another field of body fetishization is advertising. Robert Goldman argues that advertising animates the notion of woman as capital. "Crudely put," he claims, "the principle works like this: the individual has a right to all that is accrued by virtue of her ownership (her proprietary relationship) of her body. Her appearance is her value, and her avenue to accumulating capital."[2] Correspondingly, conflicts over the ownership of the body also engender class struggle.

Among theatre performers, a similar idea pervades. One often hears that a performer's voice or body is an "instrument." In *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavsky suggests that an actor's body must operate precisely, with mechanical accuracy and efficacy.

> *In order to express a most delicate and large subconscious life it is necessary to have control of an unusually responsive, excellently prepared vocal and physical apparatus.… An actor of our type is obliged to work so much more than others*, both on his inner equipment, which creates the life of the part, and also on his outer physical apparatus, which should reproduce the results of the creative work of his emotions with precision.[3]

Training and experience are embodied capital, "manners, habits, physical skills, and styles," that become institutionalized cultural capital whose value may be determined in the labor

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[1] See Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Loïs Wacquant, eds., *Commodifying Bodies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002); Stephen W. Smith and Ronan Deazley, eds., *The Legal, Medical and Cultural Regulation of the Body: Transformation and Transgression*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009); David B. Resnik, *Owning the Genome: A Moral Analysis of DNA Patenting* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004). Lesley A. Sharp discusses a literature of body commodification in the health sciences in Lesley A. Sharp, "Body Commodities: The Medical Value of the Human Body and Its Parts," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000): 287-328.

[2] Robert Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 123.

[3] Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth R. Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 1989), 17. For a review of mechanistic language applied to actors' bodies, see Nathan Stucky and Jessica Tomell-Presto, "Acting and Movement Training as a Pedagogy of the Body," in *Teaching Theatre Today: Pedagogical Views of Theatre in Higher Education*, ed. Anne L. Fliotsos and Gail S. Medford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 103-24.

market, once they are legitimized (through industry awards and recognitions, for example).[4] Thus, the making of theatre implies certain positionalities in the field of production, with regard to participants' relation to capital accumulation and circulation. Theatre workers invest themselves in theatrical projects as bodies informed by their habitus. They also take part in the capitalist division of labor, according to which they work using their most developed skill. This can be, in Bourdieu's sense, an individual's activation of cultural capital accrued in particular fields. In the case of actors, the importance of the actor's body as a means of accessing particular, possibly more enticing roles is rather ubiquitously acknowledged. Otherwise, why have headshots at all?

A Marxist examination of bodies does not deny the animation of difference. As David Harvey claims, "It is undeniable that much of the recent discourse about the body has been constructed as an antidote to discourses about class and has played an important role in generating a massive discursive shift away from interest in Marx."[5] It is unfortunate. Given that we live in a world whose paradigm is capital accumulation and circulation, we should consider these processes whenever we theorize on the body.[6] In this dissertation, I argued that there is no incompatibility between Marxism and the notion that the body is produced socially. Moreover, the studies of division of labor, Fordism, work-related injuries (consider carpal tunnel syndrome or black lung disease), and the transformation of bodies through and for work (athletes, dancers, acrobats, and actors, for instance) evince an inextricable connection between material bodies and modes of production.

I aimed to demonstrate that academics in the field of theatre studies, as scholars invested in the study of social culture, can engage the body from a Marxist perspective; we

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[4] Gina Pazzaglia and Eric Margolis, "Cultural Capital," *Encyclopedia of Social Problem*, vol. 2, ed. Vincent N. Parrillo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 185.

[5] David Harvey, "The Body as Referent," *Hedgehog Review* 1 (1999): 99.

[6] David Harvey, "The Body as an Accumulation Strategy," in *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 102.

can regard it in terms of positionality with respect to capital. We can examine the dialectical nature of the body as the work-in-progress of personal experience and as a relational entity in specific modes of production. We can broaden the methodological apparatus to the field of theatrical production to contemplate the material manifestations, production, and consumption of the human body in this cultural field.

In the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, the interactions among performers, directors, producers, writers, technicians, critics, and audiences have generated a web of social relations immersed in neoliberal ideology unfolding in the human body. So why not start our work there?

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