

My Role In
Purgatorio Wonderland

A play by Andrea Thome

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Artistic Aims

For my senior project, I will perform in the BA mainstage production of *Purgatorio Wonderland* by Andrea Thome. *Purgatorio Wonderland* centers the stories that go untold in the process of migration and isolation that many go through when they try to migrate to a better future. The story in the show revolves around a character Pilgrim who is left behind in the travel from one country to another. The main character of Pilgrim is a child who is never specified to be from any country. The only thing said about the character of the pilgrim is that they are 15 years old and no older. The actual setting of the play is at a detention center in the border of Tijuana and south California. Much like the reality many Latin American immigrants face in modern-day America, the characters must deal with the reality of being separated and placed in a prison-like location that makes it hard to face the reality. The reason for bringing up the detention center facet of the play (and the truth that many others live) is the director's note, saying that the audience is never clear on the reality of whether Pilgrim produces the character of Poet and their adventures in her mind to cope with the separation from her family, or if the fantasy is reality. Andrea Thome has only the first 30 pages of the play completed, which she says is on purpose. Her purpose, according to her, is that she wants the collaboration of the Latinx ensemble to create the rest of the story with their perspectives and experiences. This is where I come into play. I have been part of devised work in the past, but the devising projects I have worked on at SUNY Purchase have been Eurocentric in nature, devising movement based on Shakespeare's sonnets. My pasty experience centers on telling Shakespeare's story through physical motions, but *Purgatorio Wonderland's* case will be different—I will have to tell a story through words, and the story we are telling I have been

directly affected by. Growing up I heard a lot about the tales of my family crossing the border. My family is full of immigrants, including myself. Although I have no recollection of my migration story, I did grow up with my uncle's story, which resonated with me the most. He was 10 years old when he decided he wanted to come over to the United States, my aunts already decided to embark on their journey and told my young uncle that he was not to come with them, as he was not old enough for the journey. Despite my aunts disallowing him to come, he decided to sneak himself into the truck of the vehicle without the knowledge or permission of my aunts, and by the time they were aware of him coming over it was too late to turn around. The trip from Mexico to the United States was one that left lasting impressions on him. Even now, his experience, like many others', have left life-long psychological effects on him. I mention this aspect of his lasting psychological effects because as a Psychology and Theatre double major I recognize that a theme I desire to be a part of this play is the psychological aspect of constructing a truthful story, and the repercussions of those stories. I want to give a platform and life to the stories that go untold due to the lack of accessibility, but I also want to investigate the theme that Pilgrim's version of reality or lack thereof should strike the audience in their humanity because of these intense human experiences.

As a psychology major, we study the effect of traumatic life events on our psyches. One thing that I am determined to do as an actor and someone who has studied psychology, is dissect my characters and what drives them. More importantly, Pilgrim's future psychological scars from this event. One of these psychological aspects is the attachment style that Pilgrim could develop due to this, resulting in a detachment from reality. Psychology is recognized as the study of the mind and behavior, learning how to understand the character's

motives and response to circumstances can lead to having an even more connected performance. Pilgrim's experience is characterized through possibly imagined experiences with Poet, a figure that embodies the character that we Latin American children grew up with. Poet can be a way of coping with the harsh reality that Pilgrim is living. Pilgrim's creation of a character to guide them can be a way of living through and coping with these experiences.

As an actor I intend to bring forward my physical and vocal studies. I have spent time learning under my professors what kind of response can be elicited under certain circumstances. The ability to control the breath and being able to move naturally while delivering lines is something that I have been working on. Finding my circumstances and objectives in the scenes are tools that I would like to apply in this project, especially because I would be devising some of the play. I look forward to also bringing these realities to life is important to my own experience and the experiences my indigenous immigrant family have been through. I also recognize the importance in bringing the psychological aspects that I have learned here my time at purchase. *Purgatorio* is a tale unlike many, it speaks on the current political climate and humanizes those experiences instead of making them a general topic of conversation. These kinds of conversations can lead to shedding ourselves from the reality that these are humans lives and we cannot simply look at it from this perspective. In taking part in this show I want to bring a perspective we do not see which is the indigenous immigrant. The reason this perspective is underrepresented is due to the lack of accessibility and the language barrier. My family does not speak Spanish as their first language unlike many other Latinos. Their native tongue of Mixtec has made it so that a lot of their own stories cannot translate and taking part in this project has

given me the opportunity to bridge two different worlds and bring life to those stories that live amongst us the indigenous Mexican immigrants.

Growing up my family had similar obstacles like many immigrants, obstacles being language, culture, and assimilation to the society now the way in which they differ is exactly in those aspects. They already face a multitude of obstacle in their native country often being tossed aside and looked as other now coming to a country that will further ostracize them and will fail to connect to other immigrants on the same level because of their differences. I am honored to come from this background and be given the opportunity to bring these stories to life. My main goal in all of this is to humanize them, be able to tell their story in this project or at least some part of this. The characters of X and Y, college aged characters, who speak on growing up as a Latinos and what influence it has on what they have attached meaning to. My background music has carried weight much like other Latin American cultures and this is something I'd like to incorporate. I know *Purgatorio Wonderland* requires input from the cast and what their personal take is on certain plots, and I know my view on things stand from an incredibly unique background given my identity and the culture I grew up in compared to the society I tried to assimilate to. I am also looking to dissect it in a psychological aspect and bring the topics previously mentioned to the forefront of the conversation and creation of the story.

To have a body of work that can embody much of my time at Purchase College is an honor and clever way to begin what I would like to say is my interest in perusing a Master degree in sensorimotor psychotherapy. The idea that a lot of trauma and emotion is carried in the body even after the event has occurred has resonated with me in my personal life. Having the experience of being an actor can bring a certain perspective that is not seen

regularly in the field of psychology. Understanding a character and what drives them to do what they do, their life, circumstances, and or goals has helped breaking down the reasons for how a character would physically react. Recognizing that these physical reactions can still survive and thrive subconsciously has only enforced the idea that physical release with the help of a mental health professional has tied these two subjects as a viable career. Moving forward with this would be a goal of mine in completing what my education in a field that calls for an understanding of these themes. All these themes tied with my own firsthand experiences growing up and going through the acting training can help other Latinos. I understand my background can be of use in this field as I have history with how low-income, trauma and what kind of struggles come in being a person of color and the LGBTQ+ community.

Overall, the study of why people would do such things for the sake of betterment, or their past has brought me to want to participate in a project of this nature. Bringing my own voice tied with the stories that I grew up on in a divided period like this in America has brought a bigger drive to create a story that can resonate to those who watch it. This will be an experience I intend to carry over to my future studies and in this project will only bring some sort of closure to my studies here.

Research Essay

Telling a story of migration is important today as the current occurrence of families being separated in detention centers and migration journeys have caused a big concern within our society. The record-setting ‘[76,020 unaccompanied minors](#) at or near the U.S.-Mexico border during the 2019 fiscal year, an increase of [52 percent](#) over the 2018 year’ (Cheatham, 2020) has begun a discourse of what occurs to unaccompanied minors when going through this travel. In *Purgatorio Wonderland* this tale is highlighted in the characters chosen in the play as well as the settings as it uses applied theatre and inspiration from the epic form of storytelling to help spotlight nuanced experience tale that children endure in their journeys. The history of using children as the focus of this tale to bring across a message is not a new concept as Latinx theatrical *Pastorales* used “children represented as angelic-- untouchable, immaculate, and innocent” (Aragon, 2008), helping audiences understand that those most vulnerable can also be the ones taking this path. The production of *Purgatorio Wonderland* intended to bring forth the kind of psychological, emotional, social, and physical changes that occur when deciding to come over to a country that sells an illusion like the American Dream, as well as the kind of inspirations drawn to tell a story of migration, an experience that is all inclusive despite background.

The story of *Purgatorio Wonderland* is a contemporary fantastical collaboration piece by Latinx and non-Latinx actors. The play draws from the inspiration of *Dante's Inferno*, a 14th-century epic Italian poem where a man, Dante, is awoken in the middle of the forest and a guide, the poet Virgil, takes him through the nine circles of the underworld, limbo, lust, gluttony, greed, wrath, heresy, violence, fraud, and treachery. Something that is highlighted in

our play is the limbo realm and the different stories and characters that Pilgrim and Poet, our main protagonist and guide, encounter on their journey out of this place. Unlike Dante's *Inferno* themes of lust, heresy, and gluttony are not touched upon in the journey of Pilgrim and Poet. Their journey touches upon the idea of greed, wrath, violence, fraud, and treachery. The idea of greed and violence is mentioned in the scene between smugglers as a reference to the current trend of people relying on "coyotes" to bring them across the U.S.A. and Mexico border. The need to highlight how the travel out of purgatory is much like the experience out of the unpromising travel from one land to another can help audience members sympathize with the protagonist and understand the kind of stakes that are at play. Illegal Migration is often seen as a conversation about law and not a moral one, and using these references can help remove these questions from the forefront and frame the issue from the singular perspective of pilgrim. Another literature reference that was used were Mohammed's Journey, better known as Isra and Mi'raj, the Koran tale about Mohammed going on a trip to heaven with the help of God. Mohammed's Journey offers parallels to Dante's Divine Comedy in the travel into the heavens in the same way Dante travels out of Purgatory, a place that is not seen a positive light. Mohammed's Journey is used to paint the travel as positive thing because at the end of the travel there is a reward in arriving to paradise. This kind of story telling is important as "the significance of story-sharing practices, then, resides not only in their potential to challenge state power but also more mundanely in their potential to cultivate social well-being for the people who share them." (Munoz, 2016) Having this kind of culture of story sharing is common in Latin American communities as it is tradition and can bring about the belief of migrating from their country of origin to a "better" place.

The use of these texts did play a big role in influencing the beginning of *Purgatorio Wonderland*, and we have also used different kinds of Latino theatre to further expand on the play. There are aspects of Latino theatre that can be broken down into different genres based on the era. There is the “El Teatro del Campesino” which was created to make for Mexican American farmers to be able to tell the struggles that were lived day to day life. Another form of theatre which we have used in our approach of making this play is applied theatre. It could be said that Teatro del Campesino is a form of applied theatre. Much like the creation of *Purgatorio Wonderland*, one of the inspirations I touched upon when creating dialogue for X was Lina de Guevara in her creation of Puente theatre, “We trained our performers and gave them tools to communicate with authenticity and feeling. They were sharing with dignity valid stories of their reality.” (Guevara, 2020). Drawing from our firsthand experiences growing up in immigrant communities or being immigrants, ourselves was something that we did in the rehearsals to add to the play. Alongside the inspired sources the applying of personal experiences to the play helps bring an array of a different perspective on the matter being aware of Mestizaje, “Western religions exist interweaved with ancient, indigenous cultures, in a constant and renewed processes that could be called transculturation” (Morana, 2007), something that can change how the story is told and ultimately digested. Being able to mix the “the alternate presence of tradition, indigenous cultures, various languages, and beliefs dwelling together with the wild impact of new technologies.” (Morana, 2007) was a task that proved to be one of balance. The incorporation of Ruben Dario’s poem book Margarita and the reoccurring texts from the poem can be seen as the text that ties different strands of tales into one great story, and it can be seen as

the attempt to draw from cultural reference and personalize it, drawing from personal life and creating a narrative from it:

Margarita, está linda la
 mar,y el viento
 lleva esencia sutil de
 azahar;yo siento
 en el alma una alondra
 cantar;tu acento.
 Margarita, te voy a
 contarun cuento.

Throughout the play this text is repeated by different characters and at different stages in their journey having this poem be the point of connection for the different characters. The poem also references a star much like *Mohammed's journey* as a form of a guide. The poem refers the following of the star as the guide to something better. The story being told here required those involved to bring in their own experiences with the text, from X to the children who look at this poem as motivation to want to make sense of what current events in their lives. Besides the use *Mohammed's Journey* the use of another Koran tales is used in the play with the text to highlight the importance of migrating to a better place and comparing it to paradise:

“This is what the Angel told the Prophet: The people of paradise are the size of Adam. Adam’s height was sixty cubits. They are the age of the prophet Jesus, and Jesus lived on earth to the age of thirty. They are beautiful like the prophet Joseph and their disposition is like that of peaceful Jacob. On their bodies are neither hair nor beard. Their eyes are lined with black. In

their hearts is neither jealousy nor hatred. They neither feel pain nor grow old. They do not squat, spit, or blow their noses. No matter how many robes they wear, every one of them is visible, one under the other. Their skin is visible under their robes, and their bones are visible under their skin, and their marrow is visible in their bones. They do not feel envy. Each believer has a tent, whose size is sixty leagues. That tent is made of gold.”

The text also physicalizes what being in a place of paradise would be like and this engrosses the children and their dream of what a better life could be like. These references culminate to tell of those who believed in a cause and migration to a ‘better place’ but also characterizing this place as otherworldly and rich in whatever the children desired not considering that what could be sold as a fairytale could very well be untrue and grossly minimized for their consumption. These kinds of stories are perpetuated throughout the play to encourage the difficult circumstances the children often find themselves in. In the beginning of the play, the Children's' journey, they begin to compare the travel as the kind that bees do when collecting pollen. Children using their imaginations to create a reality that can help them process this experience is only fueled when the sentiments that where they are going, they will find more “pollen” and loved ones. To be able to find a better future in the place that they are headed to is often sold as the American dream to those who choose to migrate.

We recognize that this country - the United States - is seen as a land of opportunity, and the ideal of the American dream is used to entice people into coming and enduring the travel into this country as something that is worth it. The American Dream “implies that ethnic and racial equality has already been realized in the United States where people are free to choose their ethnic identities.”(Ahokas, 2013) when social and economic latter relies heavily on the

person's identity and how they fit within that society. This American dream can be a detriment to one's emotional and mental health as it ultimately proves to be an illusion. In communities of migrants this rhetoric is the reason for why they flee their native country, but when they come over, not being able to fit into the White Anglo-Saxon mold can give a sense of isolation when they find themselves so far removed. Being able to feed off these beliefs of betterment enables the children in *Purgatorio Wonderland* draw on the stories told to them by others to drive them to come through the multiple levels of danger. Later, they speak of their own experiences, something that "survivors do need to tell their stories as part of their psychological recovery" (Mcbrian, 2004). Being able to transcend the physical boundaries is only half of the battle of having to process what has occurred. When arriving at the land that they were promised they are unaware of how "a variety of terms or labels can be applied to ethnic or racial groups in the United States of America. These terms and labels have specific connotations and inevitably fail to capture the complexity and fluidity of social categories. At the same time, lay people use these terms to make sense of their environment and to define themselves." (Devos, 2010) These concepts could bring a cultural shock to these protagonists and end up being the reason for some psychological distress. The desire to assimilate to a country unknown to them can lead to some "exploring the relationship between ethnic and national identities has produced mixed evidence for the social dominance framework" (Devos, 2010) an experience that is recognized as part of the immigrant experience. The ability to realize and "as immigrants accept and incorporate the behaviors, values, and beliefs of the dominant host society while leaving their native country's culture behind, immigrants' social, economic, and educational mobility will increase as immigrants advance through the assimilation process." (Peguero, 2009) This can lead to an erasure of the person's identity. This

exchange of identity for acceptance from a society and a 'dream' proves the point that the American Dream is an illusion and causes some disassociation from even one's identity and morals as well. The smugglers introduced in the play display a form dissonance with themselves in being part of the smuggling of these children as they recognize the kind of psychological turmoil the traffickers and travel can leave. The process of these children being able to digest a traumatic experience can lead to some interesting narratives and understanding of human attachment and development.

A child's development and attachment are greatly affected by their interactions interpersonally or impersonally. Attachment theory "refers to the infant's or young child's emotional connection to an adult caregiver – an attachment figure – as inferred from the child's tendency to turn selectively to that adult to increase proximity when needing comfort, support, nurturance, or protection" (Zeneah, 2011). Children that have no real adult figure to turn to when in moments of emotional or psychological distress can lead to a loss of reality. The use of animals in the play can be seen as a disconnect from reality and the children trying to make sense of the people outside them, who they deem morally good or bad based on the animals they choose. Using a fox to personify humans who they deem scary and rabbits for figures who they see as safe to follow. Secure attachment can help a "child feel secure in the presence of an attachment figure, the child's motivation to venture out and explore intensifies" (Zeneah, 2011). Being able to make sense of the world and explore is vital for the development of a child. In *Purgatorio Wonderland* Pilgrim has their own figure, Poet, of which it seems they have become attached to push through and want to continue to explore. The children seem to engage in other behaviors that can let the audience in on how their psyche is handling the reality of their situation.

The children behaving as though they were bees or seeing their mother and seeking to connect with them in the play can be seen as a “child’s healthy imagination”. The engagement of tales in such fantastical way can lead one to believe that they are collectively daydreaming in a maladaptive way. Maladaptive daydream is “a condition in which individuals feel a strong compulsion to engage in daydreaming so often and intensively that it interferes with functioning and/or causes distress” (Greene et al., 2002) The maladaptive daydream can be seen as the telling of the interactions that these children have through a lens of fantasy. The inability to know what is going to occur next can ignite these feelings of uncertainty and could lead for a need to want to daydream. Maladaptive daydream has “associations with emotional relation difficulties, specifically with engagement in impulsive behaviors when distressed, and low levels of emotional clarity” (Somer, 2019) Something that we see in *Purgatorio Wonderland* is the fixation on the star and the confusion when it comes to the telling of the poem of Dario Ruben. The interactions with Poet also become unclear as Pilgrim can no longer recognize whether Poet resembles their mother or someone who once brought them great security and warmth. The constant cutting of scenes can be seen as the unclear nature of how the characters have perceived time and place, a phenomenon tied to the low levels of emotional clarity. All these dynamics come to display the emotional distress that these children in the play can be going through. The topic of intimate relationships is explored throughout the play not just limiting to familial or parent-child but also romantic and how their previous life experiences play in their interactions with others.

The different dynamics of interpersonal relations are explored through the relationship between X and Y. Two characters that seem to want a close relationship but due to their own personal upbringing cannot seem to fall into a common understanding. X wanting to share a

piece of literature that is near and dear to them due to their emotional tie can be interpreted as an attempt of connection, with the character of Y not attempting to connect due to fear of being ridiculed for being perceived as less Hispanic due to language barrier. The inability to speak Spanish can lead to the feelings of isolation and embarrassment. X, a Spanish speaking person, can understand how important it is to be able to do “*code-switching*—or the combination of elements of two different languages within a single conversation or utterance.” (Martinez et al., 2017). This allows X to have a completely different understanding of the literature that is shared. X’s use of this poem is tied to their identity as the language that is used can allow for the building of sense of self as it’s understood “that linguistic resources that are recruited in the process of identity construction” (Martinez et al., 2017). When someone cannot understand what is being said it could be said that they are losing a piece of identity building and can lead to feelings of being outcasted. In the attempt to fit into their society there can be abandonment of their native language or limitation in their use of it, a experience immigrants have when coming over.

When telling the tale of migration, it is of importance to keep the character’s dignity intact. This rings true even more so when incorporating the stories of those who are usually not in the forefront of the discourse. Applying life experiences allows for the humanity to shine through and be recognized as the reality of the world. We live in a period of this country where the narrative is that whatever falls as ‘other’ is to be feared especially when it does not adhere to the standards of your average American. When people of other social, economic, and culture backgrounds decide to come to a place that has been deemed as the haven of progress for themselves and their loved ones it can lead for those to be vulnerable to the dangers of migrating.

The telling of this journey was to display the kind of alteration that occurs when having to make that journey. The kind of changes one takes on when wanting to adhere to the common way of life after coming over is also something that in the telling of *Purgatorio Wonderland* attempts to capture. This fantastical play applies the tradition of story sharing as well as the religious themes many Latin Americans grow up in their experience growing up. The incorporation of the belief that many are sold, that things can be better and be worth in the name of sacrificing the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing. Ultimately displaying that these beliefs are falsehoods and don't hold true to everyone who comes over or attempts to. Although *Purgatorio Wonderland* highlights very concerning issues within our society and the immigrants that interact with it, it also celebrates the human spirit and strength. The human experience is much more than just pain and suffering but adaptive, unapologetic, and deserving of recognition despite the background.

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Technical Essay

Purgatorio Wonderland was a semi devised piece in which the cast and author had the opportunity to do table work and improvise a lot of the scenes that were included or excluded in the finalization of the process. It is important to note that the play was not finalized until the week before the week of opening week. As an actor, my four years at Purchase have entailed the development of voice, script breakdown, and physicality of a character. These abilities came into play when developing the scenes between my character, X, and Y. The beginning of the work began through zoom as the pandemic restricted a lot of the physical interaction, we had with each other. The playwright, Andrea Thome, and director, Alex Correia, would give the cast exercises where we would draw back from our childhoods and our experiences growing up.

The playwright had begun the writing of the play, thirty pages, before the first meeting with the cast. The first thirty pages of the play detail the meeting of a child and a character much like the one seen on Latin American screens, *el Chapulin Colorado*, this character is known to be a figment of imagination to others but the person who interacts with it. Chapulin also gets themselves in some mischief trying to help those who call on it something that is explored later in the play. In the development of the script, the references to the common Latin American characters were essential in giving the cast an idea of what the playwright was aiming for in terms of the qualities these characters embodied. The cast recalled the comedies we were familiar watching and how much of it contained slapstick comedy. Most of the Zoom meetings with the cast consisted of drawing back on our firsthand experiences growing up, this consisted of the songs and stories told to us. One of the themes that were clear to us is the amount of religion that some of these nursery rhymes, one of the rhymes we talked about was

the story of a mule that carried Mary and Jesus from their original home. Some of the talks did consist of the differences in each culture, something to note was the differences in the race and how people were affected individually due to it. To acknowledge the differences in culture was to recognize that although the telling of this migration story is something that is commonly spread and there are still differences that each person faced or faces in their assimilation to American culture and growing in the culture overall. Andrea Thome sent out a question individually for each cast member to answer and it was up to us to answer via video or worded response. The questions sent out were centered on the experiences growing up. I had the liberty of answering on what made me feel secure, loved, and gave me hope as a child. I was extremely excited about the prospect of being able to voice the experience of growing up in an indigenous household. The otherness that is spoken about in the play is something that resonates with my development in the world, my mother was considered an 'other' to the mainstream population in Mexico something that usually looked over in the discourse of the immigrant experience. My mother's need to assimilate to the original country that she was from by learning the Spanish language and her looks being not celebrated but looked down upon was a rough upbringing but coming over to America only highlighted this. All this was something I was able to voice in the Zoom meetings with the cast and playwright as well as the video submission sent when answering the questions given by the playwright.

The character of X was a character that resonated with me, a human being who uses literature to help other people understand their perspective and how they visualize the world. The use of language is something that was highlighted to me as a bilingual child with a third language at home that which I did not speak or write in but could understand with the help of

context. X goes through much of the play trying to get the person they desire to get close to understand them through a poem moreover a poem that carries such sentimental value from someone they once were close to. When developing this connection to the character I made sure to make a playlist of my childhood songs that brought me to a point in my life where I felt connected to my aunts, cousins, mother, and father much like the character X and their mother. This task of listening to and building the playlist reminded me of my strong connection to music and how much of it played a part in my emotional world-building. Something that also helped personalize the character of X was the response video I gave to the playwright about my answers to questions regarding my family, childhood, and the stories that were told growing up. The playwright decided to add to the play about my personal struggle of being a descendant of an indigenous woman and being raised in a culture that is not mainstream while being part of white institutions. The sensation of alienation and wanting to assimilate was the narrative that we decided to tie into the story between X and Y as a form of connection after their rupture in their timeline.

The development of the relationship between X and Y was cultivated through a series of improvisation with my scene partner, Anya Febus, Andrea, and myself. These circumstances were given to us by the playwright, we were given the first few lines of written scenes and build off what we believe our characters would do in said circumstances. A lot of my choices were based on the format that relationships go through ruptures and repairs. We recognized that when people in relationships go through these circumstances a lot of the making up depends on how intense the fight was in the moment and to remain on track without blowing the issue to a place out of reach for hemostasis, we needed a form of tension that was within

reach. We were one part of a larger piece of the story and the glue to the story was the poem. The poem didn't begin as the focal point of the play, it began as an anthology. The common thread was the telling of the different migration stories but as the meetings progressed with the playwright, we became familiar with the poem and that being the tie to everyone's story. Ruben Dario speaks of the venture a young girl sets to find a star despite others' wishes. The poem was created for a young girl and thus follows the format of a fairytale, whimsical and full of descriptive words, a story for a departure from a girl. This all was tied into the story of X; I had the privilege to incorporate the voice of my mother reading this poem in both Spanish and Mixtec.

During our time in the physical space, the director and technical crew made it a point to remind everyone that the six feet distance was needed to move forward in the production of the play, because of Covid19 restrictions. This made the blocking an interesting task for the nature in which X and Y had to perform such intimate moments, how do possible love interests display the desire for closeness? This is where we tried to explore how each line could be said. Having to play intonation and motive in each line was a task that I revered, as we had much of a say in the creation of the lines. Having to play with the active breath and placement of the voice was a huge challenge in the ensemble parts of the play as there were a lot of sound effects included during the dialogue, the masks didn't make it any easier. A big part of acting is the ability to convey emotions through subtle facial and body cues but having the mask covering forced myself and others to have to emphasize our body cues.

The props and scenic designs were also something we had to play around with as to tell the story. The props used were second-hand and ultimately a collaboration between technicians,

actors, and the director. Much of the inspiration of the design was based on certain cultural designs and real-life locations, the design being Mexican papier mache for the angel wings and the gates being a reference to the detention center and their containment of those who decided to cross over. The use of everyday objects to form settings like the boat, the fox snout, and the boat location was a stylistic choice as keeping the story improvisational much like telling a story to a child. The lighting design was also at play to highlight what scenes were in real-time and what kind of scenes were a bit of a telling of a story. The lighting was also used to tie different characters together as somewhat sharing the same narrative, it was done when Pilgrim couldn't tell the difference between Poet and X. The use of the lighting was used to highlight the star that is mentioned and followed throughout the play. The star that was used to be referenced was placed in and out of reach, and the star that is was finally touched by Pilgrim was put on a rig to be lowered onto the protagonist's hands.

The whole development of this story was a collaboration from set design to the writing of the story. It wasn't finalized until the night of opening night. Having to edit some of the show a night before the opening night was a bit nerve wrecking, but everyone on the team tried to uphold a realistic expectation of what the run of the show would be like. Ultimately the show ran without any crazy diversion and was great. It was an honor to close my time here at Purchase with such a show.

Actor's Notebook



The full cast of *Purgatorio Wonderland*



The scene of water cleanse among Pilgrim and the children.



Character X



The children are climbing the wall.



The characters X and Y in midst of a disagreement.

Response #1

Cielo of nowhere at all,

Mar de allá y más del aquel tiempo de una

Nina **bella** y su amor.

Maybe she was filled with

Estrella de alla.

North far from where she laid.

Suspirar.

The thought of her was enough for her to set off far from where she came.

Maybe if she learned Spanish better.

To understand why beyond the moon my letters fly.

She had gone,
The next day.
Sideways and down my forehead followed
Without permission of my own head
But only the heart.

Response #2

My heart's desire? It's coming.
Like does the rain.
Ever so often.
Sometimes in April and sometimes in October.
I wonder if the leaves change with the rain that comes on that day.
I wished it rained today.

This is a fairytale they told me,
Everything.
It filled me up and drained me out.
In the end I checked in.

You don't even know the meaning.
What makes the sea blue and storm.
My way of understanding is with time.
I need times to make mistakes
I need time to be redeemed?
Maybe this isn't something that even exists?

I'm lost with nothing

Sometimes it feels like jewels i carry and

Other rocks.

6 Steps Exercise

1) Who am I? What is my present state of being?

I am a college aged student who is trying to connect with a friend and possible love interest. I am trying to share a poem that is very important to me due to my connection with it and my past. I want to connect with Y without triggering her, but I feel like there is no other way of making this happen as speaking Spanish is a large part of this poem and the main reason she wants to disengage. I have crossed the border and my mother was someone who would bring comfort through music and this poem. I am currently in a state of reconnection.

2) What are the circumstances? What time is it?

We are currently in a room hanging out and it is late at night. We have had certain circumstances where I have felt like there has been some sort of connection that went deeper than just being friends between us two but have never perused it any further. Currently I am sharing this poem to be open and vulnerable with them hoping they will understand that this poem is my way of letting her into my world.

3) What are my relationships?

My relationship is with Y. We are friends possibly more than that. I had a mother, but she is no longer in the picture.

4) What do I want?

I want to connect with Y despite the uncomfortable memories that are bought up in this attempt to connect. I try to accomplish this by playfully teasing them and then encouraging them to disregard the words being said and focus on the way the words are being said. The emotion

behind the words is far more important to character X. Once Y disrespects the poem it becomes clear to me how much this poem means to me besides its original intent in using the poem.

5) What is my obstacle?

My current obstacle is Y and their unwillingness to want to listen or understand the poem. Later, it becomes my own uncomfortable memories that resurface after revealing the origin of this poem and how it connects to me. In the blocking of the show the masks and distance amongst actors became an obstacle in allowing for some synergy between us.

6) What do I do to get what I want?

I begin by playfully teasing Y and then move on to encouraging them to disregard the meaning of the words but on the emotion of the poem. I then decide to disengage once the Y becomes rude and dismissive as it becomes painful for me to hear that they do not care for the poem in the way that I do. Afterwards Y apologizes and I try to reconnect by allowing them to understand why the poem holds an important place in my life. Revealing that my mother shared this with me moves the scene forward into sharing a similar feeling of isolation due to my identity to try to help Y feel at ease with me. Allowing them to know that my intention in sharing this poem is not to ridicule but to connect with them.

Appendix

The wolves by Sarah Delappe

Friday, October 18, 2019 7:30pm

Saturday, October 19, 2019 7:30pm

Wednesday, October 23, 2019 7:30pm

Thursday, October 24, 2019 7:30

Friday, October 24, 2019 7:30pm

Saturday, October 26, 2019 1:30pm & 7:30 pm



The cast of the wolves

I played the role of 00

The wolves a tale of a friend group who go through the loss of their fellow teammate and friend number 14. Despite their differences they come together to win their final game.

Questions for the actors

Think of someone who cared for you when you were little, someone who had the ability to comfort you and make you feel safe (could be parent, grandparent, other family member, babysitter, etc.). What did they do to comfort you? Did they sing a song, tell you particular stories, make you feel safe in another way?

Are there any stories that are almost like myths that your family tells about your family? (Like how you got to wherever you are, or something an ancestor did, or a story your family tells a lot about anything, etc.)

How connected do you feel to where you are from? Where parents are from? What are your languages? How connected do you feel to them?

What is your migration journey? From one place/state of being to another? Where are you now along that journey?

Are there people left behind? Are there others who already got there?

How connected do you feel to the version of yourself you want to be?

How connected do you feel to who you think you are supposed to be? (to your own expectations of yourself, to others' expectations)

Where have been the obstacles for you on your journey towards figuring out who you are?

Which have you placed yourself? Which have others' placed?

Society?

What are some childhood influences that meant a lot to you?

(characters, stories, authors, songs, poems, movies, shows, imaginary friends, etc.) Why were they important to you? How did they make you feel?

What do you believe happens after we die?

How do you imagine paradise/heaven/a joyous afterlife (if you do)? What are words you associate with that place or feeling? Who or what would give you joy to see or experience after you die? What do you think creates heaven (in the afterlife or here on earth)?

How do you imagine hell/a scary afterlife (if you do)? What are words you associate with that place or feeling? What do you think creates hell (in the afterlife or here on earth)?

How do you imagine purgatory, or the place in between our living life and the afterlife? What are words you associate with that place or feeling?

Do you believe there is evil on this earth (or after)? What do you think creates evil in people?

How do you think a person can vanquish evil or make it lose power?

Do you think people have the ability to change, even those who have done bad things? What do you feel helps you or has helped you change your life or way of being?

What makes you feel the most

free? What gives you hope?