

BILINGUAL IDENTITY AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN PERFORMANCE

By

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Abstract

This work begins by providing working definitions of common identities such as Hispanic, Latino/Latina, Country of Origin, Chicano/Chicana, and Latinx/Latin@/Latine. This provides the background to begin to understand identity's role in theatre performance and the representation of identity onstage. After exploring the political origins of Latino theatre and *El Teatro Campesino* this document then looks at five different forms of code-switching common in bilingual plays. The next section covers three plays (*Heroes and Saints*, *Zoot Suit*, and *In the Heights*) and their common themes. This allows the reader to see both the playwright's and character's identities present in the stories and how they impact not only what story is told, but also how it is told. Finally, audience reaction is discussed from both a bilingual and monolingual position to investigate the relationship between connection and alienation of cast and audience due to language.

Introduction

This work intends to explore an area of theatre that has not been written about or researched to the extent that I believe it should. Bilingual identity is an idea that is so unique and its impact on the theatre that includes it provides an experience for bilingual and non-bilingual audiences alike. When a person speaks two languages, they often walk the line between “picking one” and staying informed on both. Often, bilingual children act as translators and interpreters for their parents from a very young age. This experience is one that can have an impact on how a bilingual individual navigates the world throughout their life.

Often, theatre does not write plays for people who English is their second language. Mainstream theatre has its target demographic, and unfortunately it does not include these individuals unless they are willing to put in the mental effort to improve their English to a certain level. Many Latino playwrights have been changing this. They are writing plays for the people that they want to see them. They want the Abuelos, the tias, and the primos to be able to enjoy a play alongside the traditional theatre audience. Rather than accept that theatre is “not for them” they are actively working towards making it for them.

While there is a significant amount of research about codeswitching and characters, there is very little, if any, that connects the ideas of identity and language onstage. I have decided to take on this challenge and begin to find a way to connect these ideas as well as provide a place for future research to branch off from. I intend to continue my study of this into my graduate school education so I can work towards closing this literature gap while providing a place for Latino identity and voices to be heard and honored.

The first section of this work intends to provide some loose definitions of different identities that will be discussed in this document. It is not my intention to state that these are the only definitions of these identities, because the fact of the matter is that identity is something that is an incredibly personal experience to both understand and determine. Rather, I intend to provide a starting point for people who are less familiar with common identifiers. When a playwright's chosen identity is not known, I will be using the word "Latino/Latina" to provide an identity that covers a large array of people without providing too much political weight to it.

Identity

Identity is a deeply personal experience.

To find a word that encompasses a part of a person's identity can be incredibly difficult. How is one meant to squeeze a whole idea of self-discovery and experience into one word? Below, I've been able to find more information on some of the most common words used to identify someone from the Spanish speaking world. This list is not comprehensive, but it is backed up by thorough research. Throughout this thesis, I plan on identifying playwrights and characters with the term that they have chosen for themselves, either in interviews or in their writing. If I am not able to find their preferred identity, I will be using the term Latino/Latina. They have chosen these terms for their identity because it is how they feel best describes who they are and how they relate to their own culture and heritage.

This idea translates to characters onstage. To write a character that is comfortable enough to say "I am Chicano" shows the author's ideas and intent much differently than a character that is Cuban. Also, the use of these terms onstage allows audience members who also identify as

them to see themselves represented on the stage. If a character in a play identifies the same way as an audience member watching it, there is an instant connection that can help that audience member feel more immersed in the story being told. These terms will continue to be used throughout the rest of this document, so it is important to have background and working knowledge of them. Some can be seen as completely interchangeable, while others are not. The definitions below are the result of careful research in an attempt to provide a toolbox for the reader to reference throughout the rest of this document.

Hispanic

This is the broadest term used to describe descendants from a Spanish-speaking country. This term was not chosen by the groups of people themselves, but rather came to be while Richard Nixon was president. This term originates from the term *hispano* which means “belonging or relating to Hispania, native, or Spain,” (Santana). Hispanic was chosen as “a universal term that could serve to include all Spanish-speaking groups in the United States,” (Hawkins). Because of its origin, many people from Spanish speaking countries dislike it because it was a label imposed on them by the United States government, rather than one chosen themselves. Identity is an incredibly personal thing and having one chosen for a group of people by an organization that is outside of that group is something that was seen as inappropriate and obviously did not resonate with a lot of people. While this often is not the first choice for people who were born in Spanish speaking countries and moved to the United States, it is more common to see people who are in their second or third generation of living in America. Whether it is because it is because they are more “connected to their European roots or they are US born and grew up with the use of the term as the official one,” makes little difference (Santana). As the generations continue, the percentage of people who are willing to self-identify as Hispanic grows

from 8% in first generation to 35% in second generation and increasing to 48% in third generation (Taylor et. al).

Sometimes this term is seen as a synonym for Latino/Latina and while that might be technically true, the two terms carry significantly different cultural weight that are not considered in their definitions. People might identify as Hispanic because they are more in touch with their European roots or because they were born in the United States and grew up with this term being used to describe them (Santana). Since identity is a difficult thing to nail down in just a word or two, there is a debate as to whether the term “Hispanic” and “Latino” are synonyms. One of the reasons I think this comes about is because the two are often used as interchangeable terms. One source might switch back and forth multiple times without realizing the cultural difference in the two. Hispanic is often seen as being reserved for people whose parents moved to the United States before they were born, and it can imply that these people are more out of touch with their roots and culture.

Latino/Latina

This term is remarkably similar to the previous one as it is defined as a person who is either from or descends from a Latin American country (Hawkins). This term includes people who are from Spain and Portugal but excludes people who are native of Brazil while the term Hispanic does not (Santana). It is easy to see why these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably and why, to some, they are synonyms. However, one big idea that people do not want an identity to be chosen for them and rather want one that shows their closeness with their culture and roots.

This term can also be traced from the words “Latin America” as well as “*Latin-American*” which, for some people, might make it easier to choose this as a label. In addition to this, the term Latino is a word that can be used while speaking Spanish, which means there is no translation necessary. When someone is forced to translate something, they run the risk of the word losing some of its meaning because of the limits of one language. When words are forced to exist in a different state, often they do not carry the same meaning or connotation.

While this identifier can be seen as fundamentally different from the term “Hispanic” it is a difference that only about half of the people who it can apply for have a strong opinion on. “When asked which term they prefer, “Hispanic” or “Latino,” half (51%) say they have no preference for either term, while 33% say they prefer Hispanic and 14% say they prefer Latino,” (Taylor et. al). This, again, most likely comes down to personal preference, as any parts of identity do.

Country of Origin

Among first-generation Hispanics, more than 62% say they most often refer to their family’s country of origin to describe themselves (Taylor et. al). This shows significantly more use than the previous two terms as well as a clear preference for one way of identifying. Identifying oneself by their country of origin means they would refer to themselves as Puerto Rican, Columbian, Mexican, etc. This allows them to express their identity in a more specific sense than the previous two terms provided. Rather than grouping all Latin American together, this identifier allows people to be much more specific with how they identify themselves.

In addition to its being much more specific, it also can allow for more connections to be made. If two people identify as Hispanic, it does not show their country of origin as much as if

two people identified as Argentinian or Guatemalan. However, the use of this term gradually decreases the more generations of people pass. In addition to this, people will begin to identify as “American” as they gradually stop identifying with their country of origin.

“An ethnic group, but not a race”

On the US Census and other government documents, race and ethnicity are broken up into two separate categories, which can be difficult for someone who identifies as Latino. The five major racial groups are “white, black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander” which can make it difficult for a Latino to know which race to select (Taylor et al.). This, “is based on people’s origins from a particular region of the world,” which sounds incredibly familiar to the “Country of Origin” definition of identity (Taylor et. al).

The term Hispanic/Latino appears in the ethnicity section of the census. The term is defined as “A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race,” (Taylor et. al). This can make paperwork confusing as it may be clear that the person wants to check the Hispanic/Latino box for ethnicity, but they might not identify with any of the five major racial groups. This leads to many different combinations of answers that can be somewhat misleading about how a person truly identifies. This is already such a personal choice, and this paperwork seems to complicate it even more.

Chicano/Chicana

This term is similar to Latino/Latina but comes from the Chicano movement that lasted from 1960-1975 (Garcia). During this movement, people were expressing their political stance which was founded on pride in shared “cultural, ethnic, and community identity,” (Hawkins). The movement was started by Cesar Chavez and the strike that was organized of the field

workers. This group of people were proud of who they were and what they were fighting for, so they needed an identity that showed that pride. This term carries political ideology along with it and that is something that must be considered when either deciding to identify as this or when identifying someone else as this. This term is one that could be considered less interchangeable with “Latino/Latina” because of this political connotation that is carried along with the identity. Throughout this research, it seems like many playwrights decide that this is the term that they personally identify with, which shows both the knowledge and the pride that these playwrights decide to show by how they identify.

Latinx/Latin@/Latine

Spanish is a language that has gendered nouns, which means that it can be seen as somewhat exclusionary to people whose gender identity is outside of the binary. The term Latinx rose to popularity because it allowed people to express their closeness to their culture and language without having to “pick” whether they wanted to use the masculine “-o” ending or feminine “-a” ending. This term was originated in the United States and follows English grammar rules, as it would not make sense in Spanish. The “x” at the end of the word would be pronounced as an “h” in Spanish, which would mean that it goes unvoiced when speaking Spanish. This term was created to make a term that is “more inclusive and gender neutral, as English language is,” (Santana). This has not been well received in Spanish speaking countries as there is a feeling that the term is being “Americanized”. While this term has gained popularity, it has not necessarily made its way into the Spanish speaking world.

The term Latin@ is another version of a word that is attempting to break out of the gender binary. Since there are both the masculine and feminine endings in the word, some would be more willing to use this word when writing in order to keep from typing out both words. This

word only works when typing though as there is not really a grammatically correct way of saying it out loud. This is similar to the term Latinx in the fact that it is something that is popular among a small group of people, but it hasn't really made its way into the larger population. Finally, there is the term Latine. This is a completely gender-neutral ending that keeps from making the speaker choose the masculine or feminine endings. Also, this term follows Spanish grammar rules and can be used when speaking. Other languages have gender neutral words, and this is just that. This ending is something that can be used without fear of misgendering someone. This is a much newer term than Latinx or Latin@ and has not begun to be used as widely among Latinos.

Language

When it comes to Spanish, fully 95% of Latinos say it is either very important (75%) or somewhat important (20%) that future generations of Latinos living in the U.S. speak Spanish. Nearly all Latinos, regardless of generation, agree on this point (Taylor et. al). Language is an idea that not only ties a Latino to their culture, but also allows them to keep from losing their culture when being introduced to more of the American culture. Rather than lose their language when becoming accustomed to the culture of the United States, staying fluent in Spanish allows people to speak to their families and other members of their community in a language that might be more familiar to them.

When translating ideas into another language, sometimes there are not appropriate words to properly translate everything that is said. This means that some meaning is lost in translation. This can happen even if special care is taken to ensure the ideas make it from one language to another. Sometimes there simply are not good translations for phrases that faithfully translate ideas without sounding odd. One idea about this why use another language when the one the idea is originally in sounds just fine and clearly gets the point across? This is

one of the many reasons multiple languages can be used onstage and will be explored in further sections.

Latino Theatre: Political Roots

Theatre often has ties to politics and Latino theatre is no different. One of the most important political ties that Latino theatre has is to Cesar Chavez and the creation of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). “Cesar Chavez was born in Yuma, Arizona in 1927,” and began working in the fields picking fruits and vegetables to be sold (Garcia). The conditions in the field were horrible and the workers would often be sprayed by pesticides while working, get injured, and not be paid a living wage while working roughly 12-hour days (Garcia). Chavez and the workers decided that enough was enough and they would not stand to be treated so poorly and paid so little. They decided that one of the ways to get their bosses to listen was to host a strike of all the field workers. This was not their first choice, but they knew that it was something that had to be done. To spread the word, they decided to put together small, politically charged plays to present to the other workers. This would allow them to get their ideas and message out without relying on people’s literacy, as many workers could not read (Garcia). The workers, who were largely made up of Filipinos and Latinos, decided to strike until they were promised better working conditions and fair wages. “The audacity of the movement captured the attention of United Auto Worker’s union president, Walter Reuther, who chose to join Chavez,” and was willing to commit \$10,000 a month to the workers so they did not have to go without wages while fighting for what they believed in (Garcia).

The imagery used by Chavez while striking was filled with Christian themes including the Virgin de Guadalupe, which resonated with the workers as many of them were Christians

(Garcia). In addition to this imagery, the workers sang protest songs in Spanish and carried religious symbols while Chavez marched barefoot (Garcia). This imagery allowed many workers to join the march and be able to use their faith to get behind a cause that they supported.

The plays that were presented to the workers were called “actos” and were short skits intended to show what the workers endured on a day-to-day basis (*El Teatro Campesino*). Luis Valdez then stepped in to continue the idea of the “actos” and eventually helped found El Teatro Campesino, which is a Latino theatre company focused on presenting works of theatre from Latino and Chicano playwrights. This theatre company started in 1965, performed wherever it could, and “in 1981 acquired a warehouse and converted it into its new playhouse,” (*El Teatro Campesino*). The big idea that the company began exploring is the connection between music, dance, and theatre in addition to the connection to the Latino roots that were present. “The subsequent musical theatre production of “Corridos” (based on Mexican folk ballads) played to sold-out houses in San Juan Bautista and eventually moved to the Marines Memorial Theater in San Francisco,” (*El Teatro Campesino*). Chicano theatre can be thought of, “it as ‘theater of resistance’ and ‘anti mainstream’ theater.” (Jonsson, 1297).

The style of storytelling at El Teatro Campesino evolved from off the back of trucks in the grape fields to the big stage in front of large audiences. Initially, the style was focused on using minimal props and set while telling stories. The actors would establish specific props and set pieces by simply telling the audience what it was. For example, a bucket on stage could be a backpack just by the actor telling the audience that that’s what it was. This was much different than the extravagant theatre that was gracing the stages on Broadway and in Chicago. The plays still retained the ideas of the “actos” and were only focused on the story that they had to tell rather than the materials with which they had to tell it.

As the theatre's popularity continues rising, so did Luis Valdes's. He went on to write a film titled "La Bamba" as well as many plays throughout his years with the company (*El Teatro Campesino*). To this day, El Teatro Campesino continuously produces theatre from Latino playwrights to tell the stories of the people from their community. They teach classes for youth, perform large shows, and even offer outreach classes for schools to participate in. This theatre started in the fields and continued to grow far past the strike was done. While politics and theatre are often entangled, each allowed the other to achieve their respective goals in this experience. The farmworkers were able to spread the word through actos, and from that, a theatre made by Latinos for Latinos was born to continue to tell stories for years after.

Code-switching

Code-switching is when a multilingual speaker will change between two or more languages or formalities of language during a single conversation. This can be done for any number of reasons and allows multilingual speakers to either blend in with their surroundings or completely alienate themselves if that is what they wish. The research in this section is going to be closely aligned with the article "Functions of code-switching in bilingual theatre: An analysis of three Chicano plays" by Carla Jonsson. In this article, Jonsson defines "five loci in which code-switching is frequent," and they are titled "quotations, interjections, reiterations, gaps, and word/language play," (Jonsson, 1296). Using multiple languages onstage allows the playwright to have full expression of their main ideas without fear of having to lose thoughts in translation or worry about having to lost part of their identity as they are writing.

Quotations

The idea of this type of code-switching is that the original interaction that the character is speaking about happened in Spanish, so even if they are speaking English while telling the story, they are going to switch to Spanish at certain parts to preserve the event as much as possible. An example from *In the Heights* can be found when Nina is telling her father that she has dropped out of Stanford. Kevin says, “The you pick up the phone and say ‘*Papi* I need more money” (Manuel-Miranda, Quiara, 34). Nina would call her father *Papi* rather than “dad” so to keep the emotion of this title, it is kept in Spanish. This shows the audience the relationship that Nina and her father have in the story and allows the text to “Capture the atmosphere of the situation” as truthfully as possible (Jonsson, 1299). Members of the audience will be able to relate to this name if they address their father the same way. This code switch shows closeness between the characters and their culture (Jonsson, 1299).

Interjections

This switch is meant when an interjection from another language is meant to be used, such as “*ay*” or “*oye*” which technically have English translations, but the translations (much like any translation) does not capture the full essence of the initial word. This is similar to quotations in the fact that using these interjections when telling stories means that the original interjection was most likely in Spanish, even if the character is speaking about it in English. These switches are often a “marked choice” made by the character to switch into Spanish either because they are more comfortable, to prevent translation, or to preserve the integrity of the memory. The term “*ay*” is an interesting example of this as there is not a single English counterpart to it. It can be used to express negative emotions (such a grief), it can be used when scared, and it can also be used when very excited (Jonsson, 1300). Since this single word can

translate to many different English counterparts, often it will be kept in Spanish rather than risk it's meaning getting lost in translation.

Reiterations

There are two different forms of this code switch. The first is reiterations for emphasis where the phrase is repeated once in English and once in Spanish. This is not done to give the meaning to an audience who does not understand it, it is rather done to make an idea more important by repeating it. This can be done in a way that allows the audience to understand that while they don't have to understand Spanish to enjoy the show, the people who do know it will benefit much more from these reiterations. Often in this code switch, "the language use supports and strengthens the plot," (Jonson, 1301).

In reiterations for added meaning, this is where knowing Spanish allows the audience to understand more of the story if they are bilingual. One example of this comes from *In the Heights* in the song "Breathe" where the neighborhood is singing to Nina in Spanish and she is repeating what they said in English. Rather than repeating it for the audience, she is repeating it to herself because they are telling her that they are proud of her for going to school and that they aren't worried about her:

W4

Mira Nina,

NINA

Hey...

ENSEMBLE

No me preocupo por ella.

NINA

They're not worried about me...

ENSEMBLE

Mira, allí esta nuestra Estrella!

NINA

They are all counting on me to succeed.

ENSEMBLE

Ella si da la talla!

(Manuel-Miranda, Quiera, 35)

The line “*Mira, allí esta nuestra Estrella!*” does not translate to Nina’s next line of “they are all counting on me to succeed. Rather, it translates to “Look, there is our star!” This is something that a bilingual audience would be able to see and, because of this, would enjoy added meaning to this scene that non bilingual audiences would not.

Gaps

This section is not focused on gaps in language. Rather, this is focusing on when a word is “highly specific, [and] it cannot be replaced by something else that is even more specific, except when it is paraphrased,” (Jonsson, 1304). This is to say that there are words that characters prefer to use in Spanish because they are the most specific version of the word that they can think of. While there might be similar words in English, that does not mean that they are

the same. There are simply nuances to each language that can be used to fulfill a specific purpose rather than trying to find another way to say something. One example of this, from *Heroes and Saints* is when Don Gilberto says, “My compadre... Bueno, it’s hard to even call him that now after leaving his family like he did,” (Jonsson, 1305). Rather than looking for a word to stand in for the words “compadre” and “bueno” the author decided to leave these words in to allow the full weight of them do the talking rather than wasting more words in English explaining what they meant.

Word/language play

“Just as monolinguals are likely to play with words and phrases in their language, bilinguals are prone to do the same with two or more languages/varieties,” (Jonsson, 1308). This allows for idioms from both languages to be used as well as opening up many more descriptive words that can be used to describe the look, smell, or taste of something. This can deepen the sensory descriptions of scenes as well as allow for idioms to create jokes or serve to emphasize an idea or experience. For example, in the play *Giving Up the Ghost* by Cherrie Moraga, one of the characters says, “She wasn’t old enough yet to be a pain in the cola,” (Jonsson, 1309). This expression translates to “pain in the tail,” but a bilingual audience will know that that is not what is meant by it. These code-switches can typically be understood by monolingual audiences who are able to use context clues to figure out what was meant, even if they cannot understand exactly what was said.

Bilingual Identity

“Bilingualism as a stable feature of Latino identity, rather than a step along the way to English monolingualism,” (“In the Heights”)

To be bilingual is to be part of a culture that walks a tightrope of which language do I speak here, which one should I speak there, and thinking about what will be taught to my children. Many Latino playwrights write for people who live in their multilingual world. Moraga said that, “she does not write in translation, since she does not wish to insult her bilingual audience by making them hear everything twice,” (Jonsson, 1305). This is a good point that I am sure many bilingual and multilingual playwrights would agree with. If a play is being written by a bilingual playwright for a bilingual audience, why bother including translations? This would show that it is not meant for a bilingual audience, because if it were those wouldn't be necessary.

Not only do bilingual playwrights often write for audiences of people who share similar languages, they can also share their experience with monolingual audience members. If a playwright has learned English as a second language, they might have struggled to understand things at one point. Now imagine if they were introduced to Shakespeare and expected to understand every word of it in a language that is not native to them. This sounds like quite the daunting task. In return, playwrights tell monolingual audiences that either you must put some work in to understand the bilingual parts of a play, or that they are not meant for you and you have to understand that. “On an ideological level this is an important standpoint since this resistance against adapting and assimilating completely to the Anglo-American society indicates that there is a value in preserving the Chicano and Mexican culture,” (Jonsson, 1308). Rather than accepting the idea that they must change to fit in, the playwrights decide to stay true to themselves and their culture.

The quote at the beginning of this section is from an interview with Lin Manuel-Miranda about his musical *In the Heights*. This quote strikes a particular chord because sometimes it seems like in the process of learning English, Latinos are expected to forget their native

language. Rather, this quote and many playwrights agree that you can and should retain your native language while learning another. This way, the person does not lose connection to their culture and family because they are learning a new way to communicate. This allows a person to stay whole rather than giving up a part of themselves.

Something that must be touched on in this section is the idea of Spanglish. This is a mix of the languages English and Spanish in day-to-day life. Many people who grow up in Spanish/English bilingual households end up using Spanglish at one point in their lifetimes. In my household, I use Spanglish both in a serious way and in a playful way to make words sound funny or to make your significant other laugh. Spanglish is a fact of daily life and allows for a farther range of expression as well as preventing someone from losing touch with their native language's roots.

Our identity is shaped by the media that we consume. If someone spends all day on Instagram looking at seemingly perfect people all day, that is what they are quickly going to try and be. This is the same for Spanish and English. If someone focuses on using both their native and target languages in a day, then both will be strengthened which will allow them to remain in touch with both their culture and their reality if they are surrounded by people who speak English.

Lin Manuel-Miranda talks about his experience with Spanglish and the joys of writing in two languages in an interview titled "In the Heights: A Conversation with Lin Manuel-Miranda." He says that he was told that "Spanglish is fun, but it's a mongrel thing between two things, ("In the Heights"). This encourages the idea that one language must be chosen, and one has to be left behind rather than reinforcing the fact that both can exist, and both can exist simultaneously. Manuel-Miranda also talks about how fun it is to write in two languages and rhyme Spanish

words with English words (“In the Heights”). He was able to use his artistry and bilingualism to write a play that combines two languages and shows pride in that. When a bilingual audience hears the way, the characters speak onstage, they are hopefully able to relate to it as well as feel representation for their specific bilingual culture.

Rather than focusing on learning English so well that they forget their native language, we should focus on reinforcing to help more people become bilingual, if that is what they want. Language and culture are an important part of Latino identity to some and to strive to get rid of the language is incredibly harmful. Every person has their own unique identity and people should be encouraged to explore it as well as the languages that go along with it.

Plays and Playwrights

While it is not possible to cover every play and playwright who has made contributions to bilingual theatre, this section includes three plays and playwrights who can be seen as some of the most influential and recognizable names. In this section the plays *Heroes and Saints*, *Zoot Suit*, and *In the Heights* will be covered as well as their major themes.

Heroes and Saints

Heroes and Saints was written by Cherrie Moraga and focuses on a community that is being impacted by poison from the fields that they are working in. In addition to this, they are not being paid enough to survive, their houses are built in places where the water is polluted with toxic waste, and because of this, cancer and birth defects are common. One of the main characters is named Cerezita and because she was born in this community, the pollution caused

her to be born with only the upper half of her body. She is placed in the middle of the stage as all the events in the community happen around her.

This community continues to work while attempting to show the government that they are not safe and are not being paid a living wage. People in this community are bitter towards the government, their god, and each other. Cerezita later becomes friends with the priest named Father Juan who is trying to unite the community through religion and hope. The main idea that divides his parish is politics. The different generations and genders refuse to be brought together because of their ideas of how things should be. The older men are cynical alcoholics, the older women decide that they do not want to intervene in politics, and the younger members are angry at the present situation and want change. Another prominent character in this play is a young Chicano man named Mario. Mario is a gay man with AIDS and feels the need to leave his family because they do not see eye to eye, and he feels they never will.

Certain members of this community are heavily involved in protests against the government. They are fed up with being paid so little while being subjected to such harsh and, frankly, unlivable conditions. The community decided that, in an act of protest, they would hang up the bodies of the children who had recently passed away due to the conditions they were living in. This was intended to cause outrage and draw the attention of the media, which it successfully does. This causes more tension to be created between the government and workers. At the peak of a protest, Father Juan and Cerezita are shot, causing the community to lose two of their leaders. This causes Mario to understand that the next thing that must be done has to put an end to everything. He calls for everyone to burn the fields that they had been working in and tending. They burned their source of income to show that they will not be treated inhumanely and silenced.

Community is prevalent theme throughout this play because while everyone is together physically, there are smaller communities differentiated by their political ideologies. Some people are willing to fight the ideas that they see as unjust, and others were content with staying out of it. This leads to the theme of activism. Throughout this play the community is participating in protests because of the unfair treatment that they are receiving. They are engaging in activism to help their community's voice be heard and show that they will not stand to be neglected and tormented as they are. In addition to this, religion is a prevalent theme throughout this story and Father Juan is the personification of this theme. Religion is a large idea that both unites and separates groups in the community. The name of the play suggests religious themes will play a role in the character's lives throughout the play.

Finally, this play focuses on worker's rights and the humane treatment of workers. This play was written in 1994, just about 25 years after Cesar Chavez led his farmworkers strike for better working conditions. This coincided with the Chicano movement and, no doubt, influenced Moraga when writing this play. There are striking similarities between how the members of the community in the play are treated and compensated and how the farmworkers that Cesar Chavez fought for were treated. Cherrie Moraga identifies as a Chicana playwright, which shows her alignment with the movement and, thus, can show where she drew her inspiration from for this play.

Zoot Suit

Zoot Suit begins by introducing the character of the play, Henry Reyna, and the 38th Street Gang who are headed to a dance with Henry's girlfriend, Della. However, the rival gang, the Downey Gang, has also arrived at the party, which caused tensions to run high. Eventually, after a fight between the gangs, Henry and his girlfriend decide to go to Sleepy Lagoon, which

was a place for them to be alone and escape the violence that was around them. Once they got there, Henry begins to hear noises from a ranch nearby, which they further investigate. Through a large misunderstanding, the group from the ranch attacks Henry, causing a fight and eventually leading to the death of a young man named Jose Williams. The 38th Street Gang is arrested and charged with the murder, even though the evidence shows that the Downey Gang are the guilty party. Race plays a large part in why one gang is convicted instead of another. The Downey Gang is largely made up of young white men, while the 38th Street Gang is made up of mostly Chicanos. After the trial, the 38th Street Gang is sent to San Quentin Prison while waiting for their appeal.

While in prison, Henry is often visited by a character named El Pachuco who can be described as the textbook suave Chicano. He is full of *machismo* and dressed in his flamboyant zoot suit. While visiting Henry, he offers advice on how to get out of the situation that he is in while also reminding Henry of what is it to be a man. While they are in prison, the Zoot Suit Riots are in full swing in Los Angeles. Military men are clashing with Chicanos wearing zoot suits and it results in much more violence and death in the community. This community is ultimately divided by race.

At the end of this play, the 38th Street Gang is released from prison after finally winning their appeal and the play shows us three possible scenarios for Henry: he can either go back to jail and die because of the stress, join the military, and die in World War II, or he can get married and have a family. While we are not told which path he takes, we are told by El Pachuco that he still lives. This ending shows that in life, there are always choices and there are ways to begin to rewrite the narrative that is forced upon you.

Racism is a major theme in this play. It can be traced from the first trial that the 38th Street Gang sits through when they are convicted of a crime that they did not commit all the way through to the idea of the Zoot Suit Riots, when men in the military treated Chicano and Hispanic people violently because of their race. Closely related to this, the idea that the law is not equal and fair for all is a theme that is explored throughout the story. The Downey Gang is made up of young white men and, because of this, they can escape capture for a crime that they committed while the 38th Street Gang sit in prison. It took significant intervention by Alice Bloomfield and George Shearer, two white characters, in order to convict the gang who was guilty of the murder. For the Downey Gang, it was innocent until proven guilty, while for the 38th Street Gang, it was guilty until proven innocent.

The final theme that is present in this play is in the form of a character. El Pachuco is the embodiment of the *machismo* that Chicano men are told that they need. Men are told to be smooth, confident, and full of prowess for women. They are supposed to look handsome, act tough, and make women swoon. El Pachuco appears in his zoot suit, which can be seen as a status symbol. He speaks smoothly, knows what he wants to do, and serves as a guide for Henry. Throughout this story, he is the one who the audience knows is cool, calm, and collected until he is thrown off his pedestal by the Zoot Suit Riots. He is stripped of his suit and left naked and empty onstage. Since he put so much of himself in that suit, he is seen as a shell of a once great figure, which is a heartbreaking and devastating moment to both Henry and the audience. Luis Valdez is a Chicano playwright who helped create El Teatro Campesino in addition to writing several plays and movies about Chicano life and culture.

In the Heights

The story begins with Usnavi waking up to get his bodega in Washington Heights ready for the day. He introduces the audience to the characters of the neighborhood as well as their struggles. Daniela and Carla run the salon in the neighborhood, Kevin and Camila run the local cab company, and Abuela Claudia, helped raise Usnavi and many other characters in the neighborhood. We also meet Nina, Kevin and Camila's daughter who has just returned from Stanford. Initially she does not tell anyone that she has dropped out of school. She had to work two jobs to pay for her tuition and this caused her grades to suffer and cost her her scholarship. Vanessa also walks into the story while on the phone with a future landlord talking about her plans to move out of the neighborhood and on to something much bigger.

Every character has their own goals in mind. Usnavi wants to move back to the Dominican Republic with Abuela Claudia, Vanessa wants to move out of the neighborhood, and the rest of the characters are simply trying to make ends meet because the city keeps raising rent to drive everyone out. Later in the story, it is discovered that Abuela Claudia won the lottery of \$96,000. She wants to split it three ways between her, Usnavi, and Sonny so that Usnavi can reach his goal of moving back to the Dominican Republic to open a bar by the shore. Usnavi later meets Vanessa at a club for a date and, after letting jealousy build for much too long, lashes out and punches a man who is dancing with Vanessa. After this, the power in the neighborhood goes out, leaving everyone in the dark, humid night.

The next day, tensions are still running high when the devastating news of Abuela Claudia's death is announced. Usnavi tells the audience that it was a combination of her not taking her medication and the heat from the power being out that caused her to die. Nina and Usnavi are tasked with going through her belongings and end up rediscovering what their community means to them. They see that Abuela Claudia has saved everything from baby

pictures of Usnavi to the graduation program from Nina's high school graduation. They begin to reflect on their time and Nina remembers her motivation for attending Stanford and, with the help of her parents, decides that she will return and finish her education. Vanessa visits Usnavi after learning that he supported her moving out of the neighborhood and their feelings for each other are brought to light. The next morning, a mural of Abuela Claudia is painted outside of the bodega and, because of this, Usnavi realizes that this is where he has always belonged and decides that he will not be leaving. He decides that his true home is in Washington Heights with all the memories he has created and people he has met.

Community and the true meaning of the word "home" are large themes throughout this play. Every character is looking for the place that they can consider home and feel a sense of belonging, whether that is in Washington Heights or on an island far away from it. Everyone is looking for the place that they fit in, without realizing that that place could be right where they are. In addition to this, pride is a large theme that is covered in this story. Everyone in the neighborhood is proud of where they came from and in the song "Carnival del Barrio" they all sing about where they came from and wave the flag of that place, whether it is Puerto Rico, Peru, or the Dominican Republic. This scene shows that while the people who live here are from many different places, they are all able to call this neighborhood home and each other family. Lin Manuel-Miranda is a Puerto Rican playwright who wrote this musical. He wanted to tell the story of a neighborhood that, despite all odds, comes together to call their neighborhood home and their community a family.

Bilingual vs. Monolingual Audience Reactions

Bilingual theatre is meant for everyone who would like to take part in it. That being said, it is not going to hold a monolingual audience member's hand and guide them through all the aspects of a different language. They either have to be able to use context clues from the text or be willing to do some learning before the show. Staging multilingualism can be described as “a fine balance between two opposites: representing a dystopian present characterized by racism and prejudice and rehearsing a utopian future where equity and inclusivity have prevailed,” (“Performing Multilingualism”). There is inherently a split of power when multiple languages are present onstage. This can be traced to both the history that the languages have with each other as well as the specific characters who speak them. While it would be wonderful to assume that placing multiple languages onstage would provide the utopian future, sometimes it turns into the dystopian present.

For a monolingual audience, the presence of multiple languages onstage can feel somewhat alienating. This is, in fact, the goal of some performances. However, this does not mean that the audience is completely in the dark about what is happening onstage. Rather, the audience must rely, “on non-verbal communication and careful dramaturgy,” (“Performing Multilingualism”). When one aspect of the performance is taken away, it allows a monolingual audience to focus on the others more intently and, hopefully, appreciate them more as they might be their only clue as to the story of the show.

For a bilingual audience, multiple languages onstage can make them feel more at home and welcomed. If they are used to hearing both English and Spanish in their homes, they might feel more connected to the performance simply because of the languages that are being used. It is familiar to them and reminds them of a place where they are free to express themselves in any language that they see fit. The idea that “theatre-makers have a duty towards the audience, that

is, to create work that is accessible and fully understandable despite being multilingual,” (“Performing Multilingualism”). This idea plays well into the bilingual audience as it is both accessible and fully understandable, however this is not the case for monolingual audiences.

There is also enough information to make a case that multilingual theatre simply is not meant or monolingual audiences. One can argue that they have already got plenty of theatre made for them, but bilingual audiences do not. In this argument, bilingual theatre is solely meant for bilingual audiences to give them a space to feel connected to a show in a way different than ever before. I am sure that this is the path that some directors choose to take with their shows. This is neither a bad nor a good thing, because on one hand, a group of people is excluded, however on the other, it creates a safe space for a previously ignored audience.

Bilingual audiences and monolingual audiences alike can both enjoy multilingual theatre, however they almost certainly will have different experiences while sitting in the same audience. Bilingual audiences might naturally feel more connected to the story and the characters, while monolingual audiences might have to put in some work by researching before the attend a show. Either way multilingual theater can, and should, be enjoyed by all regardless of the number of languages an audience member knows. Theatre is meant to communicate stories and imagine the world of stories that open up once more than one language is used onstage. These shows allow people whose identities are not paid enough attention to to take centerstage, tell their story, and show not only their language, but their culture.

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