

THE TROPIC OF X

This **PORTFOLIO** is a collection of texts, links, visuals, etc. that the Imago Theatre team is using as research or inspiration for the show. The aim of the Portfolio is to give educators material they can be inspired by to then use as a jumping-off point for class discussions, exercises, essays, and projects.

DISCLAIMER: This document is meant to encourage critical discussion and does not necessarily reflect the views of Imago Theatre.

ABOUT IMAGO THEATRE

MISSION

Imago Theatre is a catalyst for conversation,
an advocate for equal representation,
and a hub for stories about unstoppable women.

MANIFESTO

We are arms open, heads flung back, spinning catalysts.
We are kaleidoscopic words that ripple and tear down walls.
We are daring feminists, creators and mentors.
And we won't stop Advancing, Developing, Democratizing, Telling Her Side of the Story.



THE TROPIC OF X, by Latinx playwright Caridad Svich, is the story of Maura and Mori, two street kid lovers and arcade freaks who live in a touristed wasteland at the end of the alphabet. Maura and Mori's love is mythic quicksilver hope, a medicine for the toxicity of a cruel and unrelenting world.

Maura and Mori, together with their friend Kiki, take refuge: in each other, in taunting tourists, in the next distraction, and in the chase of a consumerist dream, a numbing high, as they rage, seduce, and barter to survive the roaring tides of a place on the edge of collapse.

And no one can stop me
cause I still got my tongue.
No one can stop me
cause I still got my tongue.
No one can stop me
cause I still got my tongue.

This is the new Babylonia and it is grand.

We're in an inferno, like Dante's. Remember him?

Like Romeo and Juliet

Like Tristan and Isolde

Number 015125



In the A, B, D

K-side

Powerful with the capital P

the Z is absent

WESTERN IMPERIALISM

'The language of the colonizer creating that most complete and effective of prisons, the prison which controls thought and expression.'

- *In Which Language Do You Want Me to Speak?* by Marvin Carlson
on *The Tropic of X*

IMPERIALISM: the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas ¹

Over a century ago a Guatemalan foreign minister said prophetically:
*"It would be strange if the remedy should come from the United States,
the same place which brings us the disease."*²

THE MONROE DOCTRINE

The Monroe Doctrine was an American policy put forth by the 5th President of the United States of America, James Monroe, in 1823. It was a clear cut statement issued by the United States which stated that the United States of America would neither interfere in the conflicts between European nations, nor allow these nations to meddle in the affairs of the 'New World', i.e. the hemisphere that included the continents of North America and South America.

At the time the Monroe Doctrine was established, European powers were being forced out of the Americas. Mexican War of Independence against their Spanish rulers was close to fruition, though it would take a bit longer for it to be officially recognized. Brazil would gain independence from Portugal in 1825, Venezuela had formed a republic in 1811, Colombia was free by 1819, and Argentina had gained independence from Spain in 1816. This contemporaneous rise of nationalist movements across Latin America was backed in the Monroe Doctrine.

ROOSEVELT COROLLARY

By the time Theodore Roosevelt Jr. came to power, the USA had shed off its old image and was emerging as a new global power. It could take a much tougher stance and could actually follow through with its plans if need be.

Roosevelt's expansionist ideology received a willing ally in the Monroe Doctrine. He formed the corollary that if any Latin American country suffered from internal unrest or a downturn in economic conditions that would provide European powers a trapdoor to enter the political scenario of the region, the USA would interfere militarily to reestablish order. The USA's superior navy gave Roosevelt the power to carry out his stated intentions. To sum it up, Roosevelt flipped the Monroe Doctrine on its head, barring European powers while simultaneously doing what the Doctrine didn't allow the Europeans to do.³



SOME NOTABLE U.S. INTERVENTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

1846: The United States invades Mexico, capturing Mexico City the following year. A peace treaty gives the U.S. more than half of Mexico's territory — what is now most of the western United States.

1903: The U.S. engineers Panamanian independence from Colombia and gains sovereign rights over the zone where the Panama Canal would connect Atlantic and Pacific shipping routes.

1903: Cuba and the U.S. sign a treaty allowing near-total U.S. control of Cuban affairs. U.S. establishes a naval base at Guantanamo Bay.

1914: U.S. troops occupy the Mexican port of Veracruz for seven months in an attempt to sway developments in the Mexican Revolution.

1954: Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz is overthrown in a CIA-backed coup.

1961: The U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion fails to overthrow Soviet-backed Cuban leader Fidel Castro, but Washington continues to launch attempts to assassinate Castro and dislodge his government.

1964: Leftist President Joao Goulart of Brazil is overthrown in a U.S.-backed coup that installs a military government lasting until the 1980s.

1965: U.S. forces land in the Dominican Republic to intervene in a civil war.

1970s: Argentina, Chile and allied South American nations launch brutal campaign of repression and assassination aimed at perceived leftist threats, known as Operation Condor, often with U.S. support.

1980s: Reagan administration backs anti-Communist Contra forces against Nicaragua's Sandinista government and backs the Salvadoran government against leftist Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front rebels.

1983: U.S. forces invade Caribbean island of Grenada after accusing the government of allying itself with Communist Cuba.

1989: U.S. invades Panama to oust strongman Manuel Noriega.

1994: A U.S.-led invasion of Haiti is launched to remove the military regime installed by a 1991 coup that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The invasion restores Aristide.

2002: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez is ousted for two days before retaking power. He and his allies accuse the U.S. of tacit support for the coup attempt.

2009: Honduran President Manuel Zelaya is overthrown by the military. U.S. accused of worsening situation by insufficient condemnation of the coup.⁴

The capitalist structures of Latin American nations are linked and entirely dependent on imperialism itself. Nevertheless, inspired by the Bolivian revolution in 1952, the Cuban revolution of 1959 and the period of international class struggle which began in 1968, Latin America saw a whole wave of combative and/or revolutionary uprisings that challenged U.S. domination and capitalist society. In South America this movement took place from 1964 to 1976 in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Bolivia. But U.S. imperialism and the native bourgeoisie smashed these uprisings with military dictatorships, murdering activists, labor organizers, students, socialists and everyone who fought for radical change.⁶



With the US in decline, its ruling class in greater disarray than for many decades, and an authoritarian in the White House, the Latin American right will be even more emboldened than in the past to press its current advantage to the full. This will mean that victories for the right could be even more brutal than under the military dictatorships.

The workers and poor of Latin America have a real fight on their hands. They will have to learn the lessons of the past to avoid more defeats. But they should have the right to decide matters in their own countries without external meddling. That means we are duty bound to exposing mercilessly and fighting the complicity of our own governments in the undemocratic outrages that are occurring in the countries of Latin America. This is the highest act of solidarity that we can offer.⁷





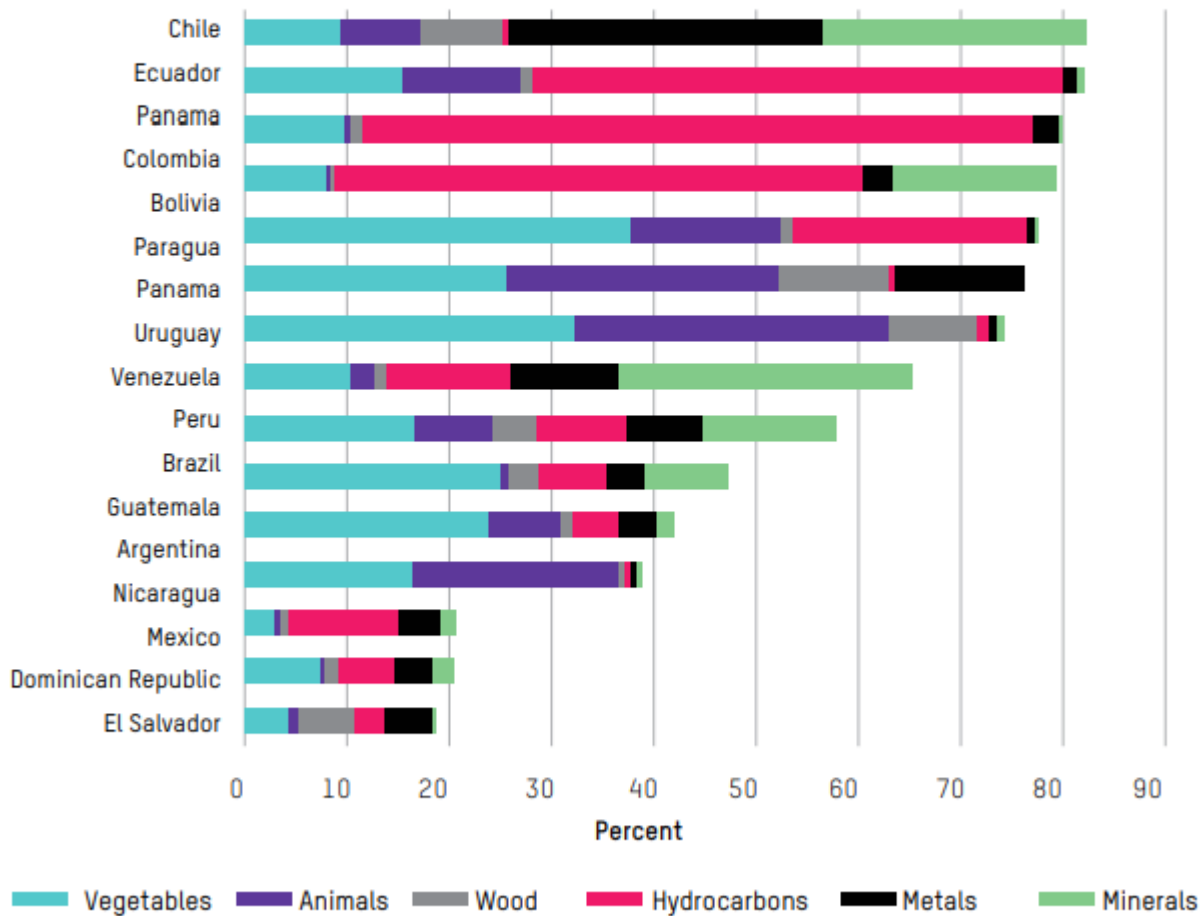
All the real food here goes elsewhere.

Maura in The Tropic of X

LATIN AMERICA IS THE REGION OF OPEN VEINS.
EVERYTHING, FROM THE DISCOVERY UNTIL OUR TIMES,
HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRANSMUTED INTO EUROPEAN-
OR LATER UNITED STATES-CAPITAL,
AND AS SUCH HAS ACCUMULATED IN DISTANT CENTERS OF POWER.
EVERYTHING: THE SOIL, ITS FRUITS AND ITS MINERAL RICH DEPTHS,
THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CAPACITY TO WORK
AND TO CONSUME,
NATURAL RESOURCES AND HUMAN RESOURCES.⁹

GRAPH 4.

RAW MATERIALS AS PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL VALUE OF EXPORTS IN 15 SELECTED COUNTRIES (2014)



SOURCE: Prepared by the author based on World Bank data, available at <http://wits.worldbank.org/country-analysis-visualization.html>

...underdevelopment in Latin America
is a consequence of development elsewhere,
that we Latin Americans are poor because the ground we tread is rich,
and that places privileged by nature have been cursed by history.
-*Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano¹¹



*because everything is broken down
down
and way down
in the triple crown
of the Mayor and Governor
and all the Powerful with the capital P.*

Hilton in The Tropic of X

ENVIRONMENT + TECHNOLOGY

Latin America now has a population of nearly 600 million of whom about 80 percent live in urban areas, and the continent includes four megacities—Mexico City, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro—where, in total, more than 55 million people reside. In addition, since the mid-1990s the region has become the most important resource frontier in the global economy through a process of massive transformation of the natural heritage of the indigenous and rural populations into natural capital to serve the global economy.

The global nature of this crisis, and the part played by Latin America in it, calls for a historical approach that can be divided into three separate stages, which, when taken together, make up the background to the crisis that confronts the region.

The first of these stages corresponds to the lengthy period of the human presence in Latin America. This presence, in fact, dates back to more than fifteen thousand years of development prior to the European conquest of 1500–1550, which, through a wide range of modes of interaction with the environment, led to important developments in civilizational processes, particularly in Mesoamerica and the Andean altiplano. The second stage, of shorter duration, corresponds to the period of European control of Latin America. European colonial rule extended from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The interest, first, of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies in increasing income from their American colonial possessions and, then, of the dominant groups in their possessions to take on this task for their own benefit led to the breakdown during the period between 1750 and 1850 of tributary societies grounded in noncapitalist forms of economic organization, such as the indigenous commune, feudal primogeniture, and large church properties. For this reason, as well, such control operated where the conditions—manpower, resources, and access to communication routes with Europe—that made it possible and necessary existed, but they did so only nominally where they did not.

Finally, the third stage—shorter but much more intense in regard to its environmental consequences—covers the period between 1870 and 1970 and corresponds to the development of capitalist forms of interaction between the social systems and the natural systems in the region. A process of crisis and transition began about 1980, one that is still ongoing. The starting point for this third stage is the liberal reform efforts undertaken by the newly independent regimes following the revolutions of 1810, which by 1875 had succeeded in creating the land and labor markets needed to make way for capitalist ways of organizing the relations between the new national societies and their natural environment.¹²





It is worth remembering here that Latin America and the Caribbean contain 25 percent of the world's forests and 40 percent of its biodiversity. The region contains 85 percent of all known reserves of lithium, and a third of copper, bauxite, and silver. Latin America and the Caribbean are similarly rich in coal, oil, gas, and uranium, with 27, 25, 8, and 5 percent respectively of all discovered deposits in the world currently being exploited. New underwater oil reserves, meanwhile, are regularly being discovered along the region's vast coast lines. Finally, the region contains 35 percent of the globe's potential hydro-electricity and the biggest reserves of freshwater under its soil. [12.5](#)

TRASH MATTERS: RESIDUAL CULTURE IN LATIN AMERICA

"Trash is so abundant that we are unintentionally creating multiple archeological sites. Besides producing landfills, which are usually placed away from urban centers, we are erecting these enormous monuments to modern technology in Africa, Asia, and Latin America by disposing nuclear waste, technological leftovers such as old computers and printers, medical equipment, or home appliances."

- Gisela Heffes

Gisela Heffes' article addresses the concept of trash from both an environmental and biopolitical perspective. It underscores the importance of trash in our daily lives as a key component of modern technology, habits of consumption, and disposability. Focused on Latin American cultural production, it looks at literary and visual narratives through the scope of sustainability, addressing specifically the practice of recycling and reusing. It states that residual culture in Latin America is located at the intersections of trash production, globalization, and urban environments. If Latin American cities are the privileged spaces of modernity, they have also become sites of large-scale waste generation. Because of this, they represent critical spaces of environmental degradation, with large residual concentrations that pose a real health threat for the surrounding populations who are often among the underrepresented. The central thrust of this article is that trash matters because it is at the core of both the constitution and decomposition of modernity. This article calls for an interdisciplinary approach to environmental humanities that takes into account a new epistemology.¹³





"It is the sociocultural space constituted by the Arcades – as at one in the same time 'commodity graveyards' and the 'unconscious of the dream collective' – that lies at the centre of the east-west/north-south axes , and gathers together – under one roof, so to speak – the revolutionary origins (past) and ends (future) of the bourgeois culture."

*Capitalism and its Discontents:
Power and Accumulation
in Latin-American Culture*

By John Kraniauskas



Games not only allow us to do things that we cannot do in the rest of our lives, they also allow us to go to places and times that we could not otherwise experience, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “virtual tourism”.

The themes of exploration, discovery, and acquisition have a long history worldwide, but in Latin America they irrevocably call to mind a historical legacy of seafaring expeditions, conquering forces, forced colonization, and genocide. In addition to its immeasurable historical, cultural, and demographic impact, the history of colonialism has profound effects on the way Latin America is portrayed in video games, making the regions’s indigenous empires and colonial administrations one of the most frequent tropes for in-game representation.

Latin American gamers consume and play games in ways that reflect diverse and idiosyncratic regional subcultures within the gaming community. With regard to global and local gaming, Larissa Hjorth has noted that “each location adopts and adapts particular types of games and gameplay that reflect the specificities of the place and its associated techno-culture.” Computer games first arrived to the Latin American region in the late 1970s, in the form of coin-operated arcade machines exported to major urban centers by US-based game companies including Atari.¹⁵

As a culturally rich region, Latin America has the potential to use its resources in the development of the video game industry. It is also a region of gamers, growing in numbers, with 60% year-on-year growth for the mobile market, the largest of any region according to Newzoo, a market intelligence company. For Latin America video games are becoming a form of expression, a good investment for our cultural assets and an important aspect of the tech industry. As new successful games appear, a larger community of developers, musicians, illustrators and animators will find a place to put their skills to use, while a huge number of gamers will find entertainment, knowledge and sometimes inspiration.¹⁶

VIOLENCE + OPPRESSION

*Cause bottom-feeders are the first to get screwed,
cause we're disposable.*

Maura in *The Tropic of X*

Violence against men

One of the few academics to have looked into the issue in any detail is Lara Stemple, of the University of California's Health and Human Rights Law Project. Her study *Male Rape and Human Rights* notes incidents of male sexual violence as a weapon of wartime or political aggression in countries such as Chile, Greece, Croatia, Iran, Kuwait, the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. Twenty-one per cent of Sri Lankan males who were seen at a London torture treatment centre reported sexual abuse while in detention. In El Salvador, 76% of male political prisoners surveyed in the 1980s described at least one incidence of sexual torture. A study of 6,000 concentration-camp inmates in Sarajevo found that 80% of men reported having been raped.^{[17](#)}

Violence against the people

In Uruguay torture is applied as a routine system of interrogation: anyone may be visited, not only those suspected or guilty of acts of oppositions. In this way panic fear of torture is spread through the whole population, like a paralyzing gas that invades every home and implants itself in every citizen's soul...; in Argentina they don't shoot: they kidnap. The victims "disappear."

The invisible armies of the night carry out the task. There are no corpses and no one is responsible. In this way the bloodbath has more impunity for not being "official", and thus collective anxiety is more potently spread around. No one renders accounts, no one offers explanations.

Each crime builds horrible uncertainty in persons close to the victim and is also a warning for everyone else.

State terrorism aims to paralyze the population with fear.

*There are screams, and children on fire.
Sweet children walking in flames.*

Frankie in *The Tropic of X*

SEX TOURISM, STREET LIFE + RESILIENCE

*And Maura and Mori go after the tourist with restless
vengeance screaming in their lungs.
They want to feel their strength, and release themselves
from the hard drive in which they are packed.*

*Pierce,
break,
split open*

*the man in the strange hat who wears his pride as
casually as his fine leather shoes.*

The Tropic of X

[VIDEO LINK²⁰](#)

No al turista sexual

An organization
working towards
banning sex tourism



"[...] the colonized are given voice against the roaring sea of colonizing capital and the tourists that come with it - visitors blinded either by will or by design to the darker realities that make a vacation of this outpost of European colonization, now left to its own devices to somehow survive its effects."

-After Words by Tamara Underiner on *The Tropic of X*

Resource-scarce regions, including many Latin American countries, where tourism has experienced considerable support from the government, have proven to be fertile areas for the growth of sex tourism. Until the tragic events of September 11, tourism had been increasing steadily worldwide, with Latin American countries among those enjoying rising figures. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) reports that the total number of visitors to Latin America and the Caribbean grew by 6.1 percent last year to 57.6 million. Research indicates that as countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua have increased efforts to promote tourism on a wide scale, sex tourism has risen proportionately.¹⁸

Maura: The silver city of stores where people buy nothing
Mori: Because no one can afford anything
Maura: But themselves
Mori: Human traffic.
Maura: Trafficking in flesh, meat, and salsa. Hold on world.

The Tropic of X

Legal in 53; Limitedly Legal in 12; Illegal in 35; Total: 100

- | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Afghanistan | 26. Czech Republic | 51. Israel | 76. Portugal |
| 2. Albania | 27. Denmark | 52. Italy | 77. Romania |
| 3. Angola | 28. Dominica | 53. Jamaica | 78. Rwanda |
| 4. Antigua and Barbuda | 29. Dominican Republic | 54. Japan | 79. Saint Kitts and Nevis |
| 5. Argentina | 30. Ecuador | 55. Jordan | 80. Saint Lucia |
| 6. Armenia | 31. Egypt | 56. Kenya | 81. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines |
| 7. Australia | 32. El Salvador | 57. Korea, North | 82. Saudi Arabia |
| 8. Austria | 33. Estonia | 58. Korea, South | 83. Senegal |
| 9. Bahamas | 34. Ethiopia | 59. Kyrgyzstan | 84. Singapore |
| 10. Bangladesh | 35. Finland | 60. Latvia | 85. Slovakia |
| 11. Barbados | 36. France | 61. Liberia | 86. Slovenia |
| 12. Belgium | 37. Germany | 62. Lithuania | 87. South Africa |
| 13. Belize | 38. Greece | 63. Luxembourg | 88. Spain |
| 14. Bolivia | 39. Grenada | 64. Malaysia | 89. Suriname |
| 15. Brazil | 40. Guatemala | 65. Malta | 90. Sweden |
| 16. Bulgaria | 41. Guyana | 66. Mexico | 91. Switzerland |
| 17. Cambodia | 42. Haiti | 67. Netherlands | 92. Thailand |
| 18. Canada | 43. Honduras | 68. New Zealand | 93. Trinidad and Tobago |
| 19. Chile | 44. Hungary | 69. Nicaragua | 94. Turkey |
| 20. China | 45. Iceland | 70. Norway | 95. Uganda |
| 21. Colombia | 46. India | 71. Panama | 96. United Arab Emirates |
| 22. Costa Rica | 47. Indonesia | 72. Paraguay | 97. United Kingdom |
| 23. Croatia | 48. Iran | 73. Peru | 98. United States |
| 24. Cuba | 49. Iraq | 74. Philippines | 99. Uruguay |
| 25. Cyprus | 50. Ireland | 75. Poland | 100. Venezuela |

Definition of Street Children by UNICEF:

"any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults" (Inter-NGO, 1985).

On a structural level, the primary cause of street youth in Latin America is poverty and the stress it imposes on families. Contributing factors include high birth rates, rural-to-urban migration, inadequate housing, economic stagnation, unequal distribution of income, and the absence of government assistance programs.²¹



Playwright Caridad Svich mentioned that she became interested in the resiliency of people, taking inspiration from Cubans and their attitude of 'I will make due'.

DRUGS

Baby loose fine

Basuco cane

Gutter glitter

Bubble bunk

Coca is not cocaine.

She has been given a bad name.

Zip

Witch

Coconut

Jelly

Merk

Rock

Pimp

Stardust belly

Coca is placed on the mouth.

The leaf is chewed.

The pinch of lime soothes

In Bolivia,

Columbia,

Venezuela

and

Peru.

Kiki in The Tropic of X

In broad terms, the development of the Latin American drugs industry can be broken into four periods.

From the late nineteenth century to 1945, Mexico controlled the illegal trade in opium and marijuana, and Peru dominated the mostly legal trade in cocaine products.

A second period, from the end of World War II to the 1960s, saw the professionalization and greater organization of trafficking as networks of traffickers emerged.

The third era, from the 1960s to 1984, witnessed the rise of Colombia as the predominant producer and trafficker after Bolivia, Chile, and Cuba fell by the wayside and the Mexican government attempted to curb marijuana and opium production. This period also witnessed a sharp spike in the violence associated with the drug trade.

Finally, Mexico has returned to a leading role since 1984 (as a result of connections made with Colombian traffickers in Panama), and drug-trade violence continues to escalate.²³

Wounded by dictatorships and other U.S. interventions, Latin America was a breeding ground for the development of cartels and gangs ("maras") during these decades. The drug trade has deeply affected much of Latin America, with narcotics being smuggled from Colombia through Central America and over the Mexican border to the United States.

Along with direct military intervention and economic policies, the war against drug trafficking is the prominent, "security" measure employed by U.S. imperialism. The war on drugs maintains Mexican, Colombian and other military forces under American control and keeps the bloodshed of the drug war outside U.S. borders. In this way, the United States disciplines the various cartels that directly supply narcotics to the United States.²⁴



GENDER + SEX

I'm special, ok?

I'm one of those...

they don't got a name for me

cause I'm too special,

that's how special I am,

you know what I am saying?

Kiki in The Tropic of X

"Gender, sex, and sexuality are shown to be instrumentalities of POWER."

-After Words by Tamara Underiner on The Tropic of X

The latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) categorizes a range of gender identity and presentation experiences under the title of "Gender Dysphoria," dysphoria meaning a state of unease or dissatisfaction. This transition illustrates the psychiatric community's evolution in its understanding of gender identity issues not as illness, but as states of anguish for those unable to identify and present as their true gender.

To understand what this all means, we need to dig deeper into the historical and cultural factors that play into this debate. First, we must understand that the terms "sex" and "gender" are not interchangeable, nor are they the same. Sex is a biological characteristic based on chromosomal factors and sex characteristics such as genitals. Gender is a social construct and refers to how an individual navigates the world through identity (pronouns, names, etc.), how we dress and our mannerisms (feminine, masculine), and how we see ourselves. Often, these two get mixed up, resulting in the misconception that our body parts decide our gender.

GENDER FLUIDITY

Some folks (heterosexual and LGB) continue to argue that there shouldn't be a difference between a person's sex and gender—that, in fact, they must be one and the same. The problem with this argument is twofold. 1. There are dozens of variations in chromosomes. 2. The idea of only two genders is a modern-day creation. While it is most common for people to be born with either an XX pair of chromosomes (female) or XY (male), it has been well-documented that many other clear variations (XXX, XXY, XYY, XXYY) and slighter variations of the X and Y combinations are more common than many people understand. What this means is, even if sex decided our gender, there are far more than two sexes.

SOME VIEWS FROM THE CREATIVE TEAM

We're the X corner of the alphabet.

Maura in The Tropic of X

"We discover characters through the contact with the page, through the heart to the brain. We discover the environment that contains the characters - the ecology that makes them breathe, the tectonic shifts that give them light. As technology moves our lives forward, influences our ways of shaping text, we are still, in the end, in the theatre, left with the most dangerous, radical subject of all: the human being framed in space and light, governed by time."³⁰

- Caridad Svich, *Theatre in Crisis?*



SOPHIE GEE

Director

I learned how intricately linked politics were to daily life in Latin America, especially hearing the stories of the names of each of the actors with Latin American ancestry.

I think it's important to stress from the get go that this play is about western imperialism in Latin America. The exploitation and control of Latin America by the west at the macro, national, level plays out in the micro level of these street kids and the street hustler, whose lives are ripe for exploitation by rich foreigners.

VICTOR TRELLES

Kiki

It seems like a constant puzzle that every time you feel you understand something you just end up realizing that there can be some many more meaning to everything. It is a text that is open to interpretation and we as a team just need to make choices, it's like we are detectives or archeologists discovering a new community.

The play evokes survival, loyalty, belonging, love to the point of losing yourself, a sense of reprogramming, remodelling people and behaviours, and this strange dichotomy of being together

EO SHARP

Set and Costume Designer

As a designer workshops are a big part of my creative process. There is meeting the actors - getting a sense of who they are, what they look like, how they move, their physicality, how they will approach the roles - it gives me insight into the characters as written in the play and inspiration for how I will realize their costumes. Seeing the actors move through space also leads me into the space of the play and how to create a space that will function well for the cast. Once the actors were on their feet I could see how the text moved through space - I then realized there was a need to find spatial focus in my design. The text, while it is chronological and linear in time in its storytelling, is often nebulous about the space in which the action is taking place.

ERIC DAVIS

Fabian and Frankie

My task is to understand and convey the character without the lense of judgement.

To any rational empathetic person but particularly to a parent wanting to protect and guide their children through and past the darker corners of the modern world, the topics of human trafficking, sex trade, torture, conditioning and reprogramming are abhorrent and terrifying, to say the least; the stuff of nightmares. Attempting to understand and dissect Fabian and the play itself in a more clinically removed way is, in a sense, an attempt to face those fears head on. I do, however, have a particularly Nietzsche quote which has been haunting me of late quietly looking over my shoulder. It's a little ditty about staring into the abyss.

INSPIRATIONS FROM PLAYWRIGHT CARIDAD SVICH

[Wong Kar-Wei's Chunking Express \(film\)](#)

[Jean-Luc Godard's Breathless \(film\)](#)

[Jim McBride remake of Breathless \(film\)](#)

[Julian Schnabel's Before Night Falls \(film\)](#)

[Deborah Levy's Billy and Girl \(book\)](#)



POST-SHOW CLASS DISCUSSION JUMPING OFF POINTS

ON THE THEMES:

- How does imperialism take form today? What are images or expressions that come to mind when you hear the word?
- What were the reasons for the U.S.A to crack down on drugs? What are the continuing repercussions of the so-called War on Drugs?
- Why do many Latin American countries suffer from political and economic instability?

*... I like gum. It's a limited pleasure.
You put it in you mouth, you chew, you wear it out,
and then you toss it.
It requires nothing of you.*

Fabian in The Tropic of X

ON THE PLAY:

- What is Hilton/DJ's role in the play? What does this character add to the story? In what time and place does Hilton live?
- Why does Kiki beat up Maura and Mori?
- What are the differences between Fabian and Frankie? Why do you think they are cast with the same actor?
- What is the role of language in this play? What does the alphabet symbolise?
- What do you think the playwright is discussing by setting the story by the sea, in the Americas, in a touristed location?
- Why does Fabian make Mori dress and act like a woman?

WRITING EXERCISES

WRITE A REVIEW! Reviewing is a controversial practice. Reviews can often make or break a performance. It is an enormous responsibility. A reviewer has to be conscious and sensitive to the art form in order to best serve the practice of it.

In order to learn how to write a review, reviewers must be aware of their own prejudices and background to write a review that is true to their understanding of the play and the journey of the artist.

What a skilled reviewer is on the lookout for: A good theatre review accomplishes several things: it informs the reader about the play without spoiling the plot, it evaluates the success of each aspect of the performance, and it possesses a strong, personal style that will appeal to the reader or target audience.

WITH YOUR REVIEW, TRY TO TOUCH ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

1. What do you think this play was trying to do? What did it want to teach you or make you feel? Why?
2. Where do you think the play succeeded and where did it fail?
Explain your reaction.
3. Was the overall production well executed (acting, directing, writing, set, lighting, sound, costumes, etc.)?
4. How did each element of the production contribute (or not) to the overall meaning of the play?
5. Given the chance, how would you stage the play? Why?

Playwright CARIDAD SVICH,

when asked about what inspired the musicality of the script wrote:

CS: I was listening to a lot of Nortec Collective when I was writing the play. There were other artists on my playlist but they kept rising to the fore as well as early Chemical Brothers and Daft Punk and Café Tacuba. In terms of language, I wanted to work with fragmentation, elements of cut-and-paste and collage, and also smashing words and images together. A feeling of fullness even though it's sparse. Also, a sense of freedom.

The play itself – how it is written – is an act of resistance.

-Choose a song you like and write about your day so far using it as the inspiration for how words can mimic a beat and flow.

-Write a monologue from Mori's perspective during his detention.

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