

The Concept of Narration in Luis Valdez's Plays and Their Relation to the Chicana/o Experience.



Yesenia Durán
Advisor: Donaldo Urioste

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Capstone project is to analyze and discuss the importance of narration in Chicano/Latino literature, and particularly in the dramatic work of Chicano playwright and film director Luis Miguel Valdez, the founder of Teatro Campesino. Focusing on several dramatic works of Valdez, I analyze his creative use of narration and describe the effectiveness of his narrative of the Chicano experience; both in telling a story and in denouncing issues of social injustice affecting the Chicano/Latino community. To accomplish this task, I discuss and analyze the following works: *Soldado Razo* or *The Buck Private*, *Los Vendidos*, *Zoot Suit*, and his short film adaptation of the narrative poem *I Am Joaquín*, by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales.

Agenda

- Luis Valdes
 - Teatro Chicano/ Teatro Campesino
 - The Buck Private (Soldado Razo)
 - Excluded History
 - The Sellouts (Los Vendidos)
 - Zoot Suit
 - I am Joaquin
 - Pensamiento Serpentino.
-

Luis Valdez

- Born in Delano, California
- Child of migrant farmworkers
- Gave Chicanos a voice and a presence in the history of the United States
- Creator of Teatro Campesino
- One of the first founding fathers of California State University, Monterey Bay.



Teatro Campesino

- Created by Luis Valdez
- A combination of his love for theater and his passion for social justice
- Represents the difficulties of the farmworkers and the Chicano movement
- Best known for their “Actos”
- Dramatized plays that resemble current social issues in the community



Chicano Theater/Narrative

- Narratives bring legends and history to life and educate others
- The Chicano narrative is unique; the experiences tends to share the social issues the affected the Chicano communities and other minorities.
- These plays and narratives tend to be bilingual and assimilated to both cultures, with the creation of their own.

Actos

- Inspire the audience to social action
- Illuminate specific points about social problems
- Satirize the opposition
- Show or hint at a solution
- Express what people are feeling

Soldado Razo/ The Buck Private

CHARACTERS

- Johnny
- Father
- Mother
- Cecilia
- Brother
- Death

Valdez uses satire on the character of death to demonstrate the importance of fear that the Chicano families lived through during the Vietnam war.

Death in this play serves as an omniscient narrator. He is a character that only the audience is aware of and that appears to the characters as a “ghost”

Untold history

The presence and contributions of minorities in the war of this country is something that to this day is excluded from our textbooks.

The sacrifices made by Chicanos and other minorities are experiences that have been taken for granted. With our history stories missing from our textbooks, it is as if these experiences never happened.

These pieces of literature help build consciousness to the Chicano community by demonstrating their contributions to this country.

Los Vendidos (The Sellouts)

- Characters
 - Farmworker
 - Johnny Pachuco
 - The revolutionist
 - Mexican-American
 - Honest Sancho
 - Miss JIM-enez
- With lots of humor and satire, Valdez criticizes the stereotypes of Chicanos



Zoot Suit

- Based on a real event (Part fact, Part fiction)
 - This play highlights the major events that impacted Chicano history.
 - Brings consciousness to the fact that police brutality and injustices were present at the time and still are today.
 - This play demonstrates the essence of the Pachuco Culture with lots of music dance and its unique language; caló.
- Characters
 - Henry Reyna
 - Pachuco (henry's alter ego)
 - Henry's Gang
 - The Downey Gang
 - Detectives
 - The press
 - The judge

I am Joaquín

A short film of the poem, *I am Joaquin*, by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez, narrated by Luis Valdez.

Gonzalez shares his visión of the “Chicano”.

Joaquín is the topic of this poem as he soars through the multiple identities of our ancestors and historical leaders.











Pensamiento Serpentino (In Lak'Ech)

- Analyzes the cultural, religious and political circumstances of Mexican Americans and prepares a framework for their future.
- Pays homage to the Chicano theater and community.
- Offers a sense of self love and liberation.



References

- Broyles-González, Yolanda. *El Teatro Campesino: theater in the Chicano movement*. Austin, TX: U of Texas press, 1994. Print.
- González, Rodolpho. *I am Joaquín = Yo soy Joaquín: an epic poem*. Toronto: Bantam , 1972. Print.
- Hernández, Guillermo E. *Chicano satire: a study in literary culture*. Austin, TX: U of Texas Pr., 1991. Print.
- Hernández-Gutiérrez, Manuel De Jesús., and David William. Foster. *Literatura chicana, 1965-1995: an anthology in Spanish, English, and Caló*. New York: Garland Pub., 1997. Print.
- Huerta, Jorge A. *Where are our Chicano playwrights?* Santa Barbara?: Publisher not identified, 1975. Print.
- Jiménez, Francisco. *The Identification and analysis of Chicano literature*. New York: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1979. Print.
- Ochoa, Edna, and Luis Valdez. *Zoot suit*. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2004. Print.
- Shirley, Carl R., and Paula W. Shirley. *Understanding Chicano Literature*. Columbia: U of South Carolina , 1988. Print.
- Tatum, Charles M. *Chicano and Chicana literature: otra voz del pueblo*. Tucson, AZ: U of Arizona Press, 2006. Print.
- Trujillo, Charley. *Soldados: Chicanos in Viet Nam*. San Jose, CA: Chusma House Publications, 1990. Print.
- Valdez, Luis. *Soldado Razo*. N.p.: n.p., 1965. Print.
- Valdez, Luis, and Stan Steiner. *Aztlan: an anthology of Mexican American literature*. New York: Knopf, 1972. Print.
- Valdez, Luis. *Pensamiento serpentino: a Chicano approach to the theater of reality*. Place of publication not identified: Cucaracha Publications, 1973. Print.