Phoenix in Guillermo Reyes's *Places to Touch Him*

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> I am concerned with what it means to be an outsider, and how this is negotiated with the majority. (Guillermo Reyes, qtd. in Fitch Lockhart, "Living" 120)
>
> Hacerse visible conlleva un riesgo en tanto que la economía de lo especular dicta que una imagen puesta en circulación inmediatamente sale del control de su emisor. Este "exceso suplementario" que proyecta la imagen la hace susceptible de lecturas múltiples que, según en manos de quien caiga, pueden conducir a la opresión o a la resistencia. (Antonio Prieto Stambaugh [parafraseando a Peggy Phelan] 294)

Guillermo Reyes was born in Chile in 1962 and came to the United States in 1971, where he grew up first in Washington, D.C. and then, as a teenager, in Islos — East Los Angeles (Huerta 148).[1] After completing his BA at UCLA and his MFA at UCSD, Reyes accepted a position at Arizona State University in 1996, where he remains a member of the School of Theatre and Film, teaching Playwriting and Screenwriting (see the encyclopedia entry by Pérez, "Reyes, Guillermo"; and the interview with Fitch; Huerta, regrettably, devotes little space to Reyes). In 2000, along with Trino Sandoval and Daniel Enrique Pérez, Reyes launched the first season of Teatro Bravo, an ambitious bilingual theater project that has been an important contribution to a solid presence of theatrical activity in the Valley of the Sun where Phoenix and surrounding suburbs are located (See Pérez, "Dramatizing the Borderlands," on the Teatro Bravo plays anthologized in *Borders on Stage*; see also Trujillo).

Although prior to Teatro Bravo, there had been various attempts to perform theater in Spanish in the Phoenix area, Teatro Bravo has been the longest lived, and it has amply fulfilled its project to perform theater — both established international texts, but more frequently texts by Reyes and other Latino authors — in versions in both Spanish and English. Although some of the plays performed were written originally in Spanish, most of the plays, as is characteristic of Latino theater in general today, were written originally in English and are performed in Spanish in translations by the authors or others.

Typically, Reyes writes exclusively in English, although, as is the case with Latino cultural production in general, the texts contain an abundant use of Spanish words and phrases, particularly those with a regional or local resonance (that is, various forms of Southwest Chicano Spanish). Reyes has a solid and functional command of Spanish. But English is the dominant language of his dramatic texts, which are oriented essentially toward capturing the contradictions and difficulties of US Latinos in interacting in a social dynamic that plays out essentially in English; indeed, many of his characters, which are represented iconically by the two texts *Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown* (1994) and *Men on the Verge 2: The Self-Esteem Files* (2004) — see also *The Hispanick Zone* [1998]) — draw the dramatic tension of their roles from their interaction with the non-Spanish speaking world of Anglo America.

Because of his long association with Southern California and the complex Latino society of that area, it is not surprising that the bulk of Reyes's dramatic texts take place within these geographic and social parameters, although one of his finest plays, *Deporting the Divas* (1996), is set in the southern Arizona desert between Tucson and the Mexican border.[2] Yet, because Reyes has now lived and performed his works for almost fifteen years in the Phoenix area, it is inevitable that a share of them take up the particular circumstances of Latino (which means mostly Chicano) life in the central Arizona metropolis.

It is important to remember that over thirty percent of both the State of Arizona and the Greater Phoenix Area identifies as Hispanic,[3] that Phoenix is the largest state capital, and that it is the fifth most populous urban area in the country. These are circumstances that contribute synergetically to the growth of the Hispanic population of Phoenix (an important profile of the Phoenix Hispanic population is provided by Luckingham; see also the photographic dossier by Barrios). This despite current economic circumstances and the intense rhetoric of prevailing anti-immigrant ideologies. Anti-immigrant sentiment predominantly translates into an anti-Mexican stance fueled in part because the mostly open border between Arizona and Mexico is at the moment the principal

point of uncontrolled crossing of Mexicans (and often others, such as Central Americans) into the United States. There is much cultural work to be done to represent both the stories of longstanding Hispanic families of Phoenix and those of recent immigrants. Reyes, however, has chosen to focus his work — the texts set in Phoenix as well as the majority set in California — in terms of the struggles to compete in Anglo America, which means a significant component of social mobility and the attempts to achieve it. If the self-image of Phoenix (considerably more so than Los Angeles[4]) is that of an all American middle class metropolis, one where it is staggering to grasp the exclusion of Hispanics and other minorities from the halls of power, it is not surprising that a fundamental tension in Reyes's plays involves a lower-class Hispanic interacting with a higher-class Anglo.

Moreover, there is another significant fault line in Reyes's theater, and that is the conflict between heterosexism and gay identity, which plays out along a number of axes that include not only the social disjunction that affects the circumstances of interaction between gay men of differing social classes, but also the differing effects of the closet on Hispanic men as much as on Anglo men (see Fitch; Prieto Stambaugh; Foster, *Nuestro ambiente* for various expansions on this matter). Paradigmatically, this means, in the case of the latter, life in the closet as the cost of surviving, and competing successfully, in a homophobic world. By contrast, in the case of Hispanic men, while such a cost may also be present, there is the separate factor of not only the heterosexist presumption of Mexican — and especially Mexican American — society, but also the increased possibility of violence within working-class communities of any ethnic identity. Moreover, the heterosexist presumption of Mexican/Mexican American society may manifest itself in terms of the situation of the individual who has conformed to the imperative to marry and have a family, while at the same time pursuing homoerotic needs, as African American culture would say, "on the down low." Indeed, if the presumption of gay culture is the social and economic freedom to decide against compulsory heterosexism, including the reproductive imperative, members of ethnic working-class communities may not customarily be in a position to exercise such an option, with the inevitable conflict of unsatisfied sexual desire or such desire fulfilled in particularly unsanctioned ways as represented by extramarital affairs: if such affairs are, in terms of "all American norms" scandalous in a heterosexual context, they are even more so in homosexual ones.

In the case of the "all American norms" of a city like Phoenix, characterized by a sense of relative youth (the first settlers date from the 1870s)

and intransigently conservative social values, the tensions of the unorthodox are especially enhanced. I use the allusion to orthodoxy advisedly, since, in addition to various other forms of conservative religious beliefs and their effect on sociopolitical and cultural processes, the Phoenix area is characterized by the presence of three conservative mainline faiths: Catholicism (especially in its Mexican dimensions), Southern Baptism, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormonism).[5] The moral conservatism of all three, of course, opposes any form of sexual life beyond that prescribed by compulsory heterosexism. Phoenix, to be sure, is not unique in such a conjunction, but it is perhaps the largest American city in which public sociopolitical and cultural debates remain staunchly framed in religious and moralistic terms. Increasingly Hispanics are enrolling in organized religions other than the Catholic Church, but it is notable that their options remain decidedly conservative, as they migrate toward not only varieties of Baptist Protestantism and Mormonism, but also a wide array of Pentecostal sects.

Although Reyes's plays do little more than refer in passing to organized religion (such as the "free-thinking ex-Mormon" in one of the sketches in *Men on the Verge 2: The Self-Esteem Files*; or the authoritarian Mormon uncle who threatens to send the main character of *Little Queen* [2009] to a deprogramming camp to rid him of his gayness), conflicts relating to sexual identity resonate precisely to the degree to which the horizons of knowledge of audiences involve an awareness of prevailing levels of homophobia, and this is in particular true of plays performed by Teatro Bravo in Phoenix. Indeed, the very name Bravo, "courageous," refers as much to the daunting task of pursuing bilingual theater in Phoenix, with its majority English Only views, but to promoting forms of sexuality and desire that differ significantly from prevailing social norms. While it is true that theater audiences are mostly self-selecting, both in linguistic and thematic terms, it is significant to note that, as much as there is little Spanish-language theater anywhere else in the Phoenix area, there is also a scant record of queer theater among university, commercial, and amateur groups in the city.[6]

It is within these parameters that I would like to discuss in detail Reyes's play *Places to Touch Him*, first performed in Phoenix in 2002 at Playhouse on the Park in downtown Phoenix, a regular venue for Teatro Bravo productions. Reyes makes a specific reference to the relationship between the play and the place in which its story takes place:

> *Places to Touch Him* became my way of dealing with one man's awakening to sexuality, to obsession, and, yes, to plain carnality all within the milieu of Phoenix where I had come to learn a thing or

> two about my sexuality for various reasons I won't go into right now. A lawyer, and aspiring politician, seeks to run for the city council at the same time that he's developed an obsession for a young man who eventually becomes a stripper. This politician is considered safe and asexual, completely non-threatening to mainstream voters. But this relationship will clearly threaten his asexual image. [...] Can the politician maintain his personal private life, and can he afford to fall in love when the issues of the local Latino community have heated up and deserve the attention of serious politicians? (Reyes 178)

The answer the play gives to both these questions is a resounding no. With particular regard to the second of them, it is important to note that, while the Phoenix City Council has and has had very discreet and non-threatening gay members, its record on members drawn from minority communities is decidedly thin. Mary Rose Wilcox (her very name is non-threatening, and one may assume that there are voters who may not know that she is Hispanic) is only one of two Hispanics to serve on the Phoenix City Council; she is currently a member of the Maricopa Board of Supervisors. Michael Nowakowsi — another non-threatening name for those citizens frightened of even Hispanic names — currently serves on the Council.[7]

Places to Touch Him immediately provokes in some the desire to know who the lead, Cesar, the lawyer with political aspirations, might be in "real life" among Phoenix public figures suspected — or known by those who claim to be cognoscenti — to be gay.[8] What is interesting about this response is that one suspects no audience member has ever given any thought as to who the model is for the New York lawyer — the closeted and intensely anguished Joe Pitt — in Tony Kushner's important *Angels in America* (Part One: *Millennium Approaches* [1900]; Part Two: *Perestroika* [1992]), a play in which, incidentally, Mormonism is also a crucial factor, among many others, in sexuality (see Pace on this connection). The fact that Reyes's play, set in Phoenix, where there is limited public discourse with regard to queer issues and where there is even less theater impinging on those issues, provokes such a response is significant to the degree that it is a telling commentary on community values, where being openly gay in a major public service position is still outrageous in a way in which it is not likely to be in the American cities that precede Phoenix on the list of the most populous, with the possible exception of Houston.

The point is that Cesar's personal drama is not really his being gay. If he is identified as an "unsuccessful gay man" in the thumbnails of the characters in the script (179), it is because the circumscriptions on his being

Places to Touch Him. Photo: Sean Kapera.

able to be a "successful" gay man (whatever that may precisely be) do not derive from internalized psychological or religious constraints. Rather, they are based on the very pragmatic principle that he cannot be unrestrainedly gay and be a successful politician in Phoenix. Being unrestrainedly gay will mean being publicly gay, in a spectrum of demonstrating or performing gayness that runs from the articulation "I am gay" to engaging in public acts of affection with another man. Domingo, the object of Cesar's affection, is a working class man, also Chicano like Cesar, formerly married with children, but like Cesar with aspirations of bettering himself. In Cesar's case, the aspiration means moving from being a lawyer to being elected to public office, while for Domingo it means moving from the working class to whatever the formal education he seeks may provide him.

If Domingo is willing to be openly gay — that is, performing openly his homoerotic desire[9] — Cesar is not, and this disjunction, which provides the major dramatic tension of the play, marks the difference between what to be gay might mean for a working-class Mexican/Mexican American and what it might mean for a professional one. Significantly, Reyes's play does not explore the class differences of being gay and Hispanic (as does Cherríe Moraga's lesbian theater and as she does in important essays such as "Queer Aztlan"; see Foster, "El lesbianismo multidimensional"),[10] but rather the pragmatic ones of Phoenix electoral politics.

Cesar attempts to justify himself to Domingo by appealing to the higher ideal (higher, that is, than the open display of their mutual affection) of getting a Hispanic elected to the Phoenix City Council. This is hard enough given the role that race plays in Phoenix, without confusing matters by being perceived, in addition to being a threatening Hispanic,[11] as being also a threatening gay

man: a threatening gay Hispanic male, not exactly a privileged demographic in the context of the high-pitched public discourse over the evils of illegal immigrants and the diseases they bring with them.[12] If such a public discourse is as specious as it is incoherent, it is one factor driving elections, and Cesar is acutely aware of that fact, no matter how much he may agonize over his inability to respond in an uninhibited fashion to Domingo's demanding advances. Matt is Cesar's campaign manager, who frequently expresses exasperation over what he perceives to be Cesar's political ingenuousness:

> CESAR: And if I do [pursue the alleged worst side of Domingo], Matt, that's my business.
> MATT: No, it's our business.
> CESAR: No —
> MATT: And the business of the people of Phoenix, particularly the Latino community, which has not been fairly represented in this town.
> CESAR: The Latino community can survive without me. Maybe I don't need politics any longer —
> MATT: You live for polit —
> CESAR: Maybe it's time for me to live for something else. [...] Why is it too much to ask for after thirty-eight long, long years, that somebody should be there for me? What is it about me that says he's meant to be asexual? Is it written on my forehead? You tell me.
> MATT: Look, personally, I am just used to the idea that you're just a unit, alone, and unencumbered.
> CESAR: A eunuch, you mean?
> MATT: You can keep your balls; nobody has to *touch* them, that's all. [...] I think everyone in this city sees you this way: as the celibate gay politician. And for a campaign manager, that's a big relief. (190, my emphasis)

Places to Touch Him — and in the foregoing dialogue part of which I have omitted for reason's of space, is Cesar's heartfelt plea to have someone to touch him; I have included Matt's response — turns on an ironic double meaning of the title. Very transparently, the play is about an "unsuccessful gay man" who needs desperately to be touched by another man, touched as much as he fights being touched for what he perceives to be the political consequences of the sexual narrative that will set in motion; it is a perception emphatically reinforced by his campaign manager. Thus, what is at issue in the first instance is a corporal geography of sexual desire: what it means to be touched sexually, what that touching might be, and what it means for sexual narrative set in

motion by touching and being touched. Since one important dimension of the gay movement has meant the insistence on a degree of public visibility, at least some proxemics of sexual interest and commitment between individuals, the denial of touching becomes the denial of desire, the whole basis of how Cesar is such an "unsuccessful gay man."

In the following scene, Cesar does begin to kiss Domingo's neck in the privacy of his office, but the latter brings him brutally up short as to how this is not the touching he has in mind — that is, it is inadequate to what would be for him a satisfactory sexual narrative. All Cesar can do is fabricate a losing narrative of fantasy:

> DOMINGO: See? You're rushing now. There'll be plenty of time for the smoochie stuff later.
>
> CESAR: You'll be gone soon; I may never see you again.
>
> DOMINGO: We haven't even dated and you're already feeling abandoned. You've already built an entire life for us together, haven't you? Haven't you fantasized it to death already? You've even imagined the breakup scene.
>
> CESAR: And my heart's been torn to pieces already, yes.
>
> DOMINGO: Man, I done nothin'. I'm not your lover, so how could your heart possibly be broken, *pinche pendejo*? (195)

Yet, there is another sense to Reyes's title, and that refers to the locales in which touching might take place. If, as the feminist maxim teaches us, the personal is political, corporal geography is also physical geography, in the sense that the life of the body takes place in the context of community, even though much of the life of the body — perhaps the most important life of the body — may not always take place in full communal view. Still, there can never be a full disjunction between, to use a common synecdoche, one's public face and one's private face. Matt may wish to exploit the proposition that Cesar is "just a unit, alone, and unencumbered" (190), but that is precisely Cesar's point about his thirty-eight-year failure as a sexual subject. Any performance as a sexual subject takes place within the confines of a community, and, for this reason, the places where one may be touched must necessarily refer to the sociogeographic places in which such touching may take place.

To be sure, there are domains in Phoenix in which an entire range of touch may take place, such as, clearly, gay bars and other gay hospitality venues. And then there is the public display that is customarily a part of gay pride marches, demonstrations, rallies, and the like. But the sort of relaxed display of same-sex affection that one might find in other metropolitan areas of the country,

or the quite unrestricted display now common in most of Western Europe, is simply not to be found in Phoenix. Phoenix area-based Arizona State University may be the largest-enrolling university in the country, but one is pretty hard put to see even timid displays of same-sex affection anywhere on campus, and the student paper, the *State Press*, routinely receives complaints from students and faculty over overt and perceived homophobia in its pages. Now, it must be emphasized that, while random gay bashing takes place in Phoenix as it does throughout the country, there is no organized program of the persecution of gays, and there is a general agreement that law enforcement agencies and other official entities are relatively non-homophobic. Yet Phoenix remains a place in which, generally speaking, one does not engage openly in same-sex touching

There is much that is metatheatrical about *Places to Touch Him*, particularly in terms of various levels of self-reflexive performativity. There are at least three levels of performativity in the play. There is a common scholarly agreement as to the basic validity of Judith Butler's theories regarding how sexual identity is performative rather than essential — a proposition that she clearly means to pertain to all forms of subjective identity.[13] Concomitantly, if human life is seen as the practice of performance, a theatrical work is necessarily metaperformative to the extent that theater, as a recognized and institutionalized cultural genre, is the studied, formal performance of life as performance. Where these two propositions come together, as in Reyes's play, the audience witnesses the performance of the performance of a performance. This is the case to the extent that the play focuses not just on the question of sexual identity or the performance of sexual subjectivity.[14]

Rather, *Places* makes a specific point about the way in which there is an added level of the performance of sexuality to the extent that Cesar and Domingo are consciously aware of how they are performing sexuality and engage in various degrees of underdetermination and overdetermination of the day-to-day "natural" or "unconscious" performance of sexual identity. Matt wants Cesar to engage consciously in underdetermination, to be a "safe gay man," to which Cesar responds that Matt wants him to be a eunuch. On the other hand, when Cesar comes on too strong to Domingo in the privacy of his office, one could say that he is acting in an overdetermined way, which is why Domingo ridicules him.

The key to the way in which the characters of *Places to Touch Him* perform to a second degree is the metathetrical device by which Matt becomes an internal audience to Cesar's and Domingo's mismatched performance of sexuality for each other. Matt is a voyeur to their performance at several points

Places to Touch Him. Photo: Sean Kapera.

in the play, as, for example, when the last quote above is prefaced by the stage direction: "(*Cesar begins to kiss [Domingo's] neck. Matt enters on the other side of the stage as if he's been watching all along and watches the last half of this scene*.)" (195). To be sure, it is not uncommon in theatrical works to have a separate party witness/overhear/spy on a character or group of characters in a reduplication of what the audience is seeing and hearing: such a party is the privileged voyeur within the play in the same way in which the audience, on the other side of the proscenium arch, is also, and there are many variants on this moment of privilege. The difference in Matt's case is that he is reduplicating what we really could not see or hear, which is the exchange between Cesar and Domingo in the privacy of the former's office. Of course, the theatrical illusion routinely violates privacy. But what the particular effect of Matt's privileged access here signifies (as it is in the first scene of the play in which Matt witnesses as a flashback the original meeting between Domingo and Cesar [182 ff.]) is the dynamic of the closet that Matt, shrewdly aware of what will work and what will not work for the voters of Phoenix, is complicit in enforcing.[15]

As for Domingo, there is a particularly important moment of overdetermined performativity, which occurs when he performs publicly as a

stripper. Not only is he being out about his sexuality in a particularly emphatic way (and assuming for the purposes of discussion here that all male strippers are gay, which is not the case, although it is with Domingo), but his public performance is perceived by Cesar as something like an act of aggression:

> CESAR: And about the stripping.
> DOMINGO: You're asking me to give that up, too?
> CESAR: Well, eventually you're going to have to...reconsider.
> DOMINGO: I'll eventually get a degree, a better job in an office and a pot belly and nobody will want to see me strip.
> CESAR: Meanwhile, you'll be discreet?
> DOMINGO: How discreet can a stripper be, Cesar?
> CESAR: I mean don't flaunt it.
> DOMINGO: I don't need to go to no boring cocktail parties with stuffy people. My friends accept me as I am. Do you? (205)

Although Cesar protests that he does, it is clear that stripping in public for Cesar is a particularly unsavory performance of sexuality, and there is always Matt to remind him of what the limits are: "MATT: Time for a reality check..." (206), as he adds that the saloon where Domingo works may be up for a police raid, because the customers there are "allowed to touch!" (206). Certainly, any indication of Cesar's relationship to a saloon raided in Phoenix for not "following the rules" (206) would be devastating for his political aspirations.

To summarize, then, *Places to Touch Him* involves the performance of sexual identity around various issues related to being gay and being public about it. Since social subjects perform as much for other social subjects as they do for themselves, outed performances are a particularly important dimension of the gay movement, and the outing of the other is ethically complex (see Mohr). For many — and this is reasonably considered a dimension of homophobia — any performance of sexuality is overdetermined, and even more so in the case of queer sexuality. Thus, the rhetorical question "Can't they think about anything else?" and the trope about "The love that won't shut up." In the universe of the play, both overdetermination and underdetermination of queer sexuality are part of the dramatic texture of the play, which is underscored in part by the particular form of Matt's witnessing. Finally, this particular mix of questions of queer sexual identity — its performance and the degree of its performance, its legitimacy in terms of the particular sociogeographic milieu in which that mix is performed — is the performance piece that is the text itself. Finally, all three levels of performativity in the play involve the visibility of sexual or sexualized

activity, such that the play itself involves displaying forthrightly much of what Cesar must renounce to fully realize his political ambitions.

In the end, Cesar, coached by Matt, must engage in one other round of overdetermined and underdetermined sexual performativity when Cesar wins his election bid to the Phoenix City Council. At the end of the second act, he and Domingo part definitely, although perhaps it is not the break-up scene Domingo earlier accused Cesar as imagining: "DOMINGO: You will be a great leader for the Phoenix community, and now that you've learned line dancing, you can have a social life" (218). In the Epilogue to the play, what Cesar must perform is the meet-and-greet ritual of his new identity as a Phoenix politician: "*(Cesar speaks to the masses)* CESAR: Tonight, we've made history, and I'm proud that you've elected me to represent you on our city council" (219). As Cesar engages in this overdetermined political theater, Domingo tries to shake his hand; Matt, however, intervenes:

> DOMINGO: Look, bitch, I just want to say hello to him, Okay? As a citizen, as a voter.
>
> MATT: He doesn't want to see you.
>
> DOMINGO: Let him tell me that.
>
> MATT: He doesn't answer your phone calls, does he now? I have built a good network of security around him.
>
> DOMINGO: So you keep him alone *where nobody will touch him*. (220, my emphasis)

In political parlance, to be untouchable means to exercise a high degree of unblemished power and influence. In order to enjoy the fruits of this form of overdetermined political performance, Cesar, acquiescing to Matt's counsel, must return to a definitive underperformance of his sexual desire. Domingo and Matt do get to have one final friendly goodbye, but there is no longer any question of the extent of Cesar's renunciation:

> MATT: Cesar! Cesar!
>
> CESAR: Coming!
>
> *(One final look and wave of goodbye and he's out of there as he goes to join the happy supporters.)* (221)
>
> And so ends another chapter in Phoenix's political history.

The importance of examining *Places to Touch Him* in terms of its intended sociogeographic setting is the way in which it remains underinterpreted in cultural production to a degree far removed from the number of plays and novels that explore the sense of place with reference to at least the top three metropolitan areas of the country: New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. This

gap is also the case when one examines the record of Hispanic-marked cultural production between, at least, Phoenix and Los Angeles. While it is true that Los Angeles has a Hispanic history dating back to the mid-sixteenth century, the fact that today Phoenix counts over a third of its population as Hispanic means that there is a large ethnic history that remains underrepresented by the cultural production.[16] While Reyes has used a Los Angeles setting extensively for his plays, he has emerged as the strongest theatrical voice in the Phoenix area, and Teatro Bravo, which he leads as Artistic Director, is the most important Spanish-language and bilingual theater project the Greater Phoenix Area has known. It is within this context that the relationship of *Places to Touch Him* to the social and political life of Phoenix assumes its prominence.[17]

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Notes

[1] I wish to thank my Research Associates, Charles St. George and Paul Bergelin, for their assitance in preparing this essay.

[2] For an analysis of the queer dimensions of this play, where the othered divas to be deported are as much "illegal" Mexicans as they are "illegal" gays, see Foster, "Queer as Border"; and Fitch Lockhart, "Gender Bending" and "Queer Representations."

[3] I will from this point use the term "Hispanic," since that is the one preferred by Reyes in the bulk of his works.

[4] As in plays like *The Seductions of Johnny Diego* (1990); *Farewell to Hollywood* (1993); and *The West Hollywood Affair* (1993).

[5] The 2000 Association of Religious Data Archives for Maricopa County, of which Phoenix is the county seat, report 38% churchgoing Catholics; 11% churchgoing Mormons, and 5.5% percent of church going Southern Baptists, for a total of over 50% of the survey base.

[6] The one exception would be the productions, since 1999, of the Nearly Naked Theatre, which is based out of the Phoenix Little Theater in a space that is part of the campus of the Phoenix Art Museum.

[7] As of this writing in August 2009.

[8] I regularly use *Places to Touch Him* in my seminar on Phoenix and Urban Cultural Production, and there are inevitably students who want to know what politician Cesar is based on. Reyes, in a personal communication and in class visits, insists that he had no interest in basing Cesar on any known public figure.

[9] The audience is thus asked to suspend any reservations regarding what this may mean for Cesar's ex-wife and children.

[10] Moraga, who lives and works in the Bay area, set one of her plays in Phoenix, *Hungry Woman* (1995; see Foster "Phoenix as Dystopia").

[11] Note that it is Cesar G. Gutierrez, not César G. Gutiérrez: written accents are the damning trace of threatening Hispanics; even better than getting rid of the accents is to Anglicize names and drop those that cannot be Anglicized. The writer Richard Rodriguez may be Richard Rodriguez because of his commitment to assimilation, but Mary Rose Wilcox, who was born in Superior, Arizona to a fourth-generation Mexican American pioneering family, does not use her maiden name Garrido; it is not clear if her birth name is Rose

Mary or Rosa María or some variant of the latter. One of the monologues of Reyes's Men on the Verge of a His-panic Breakdown, "The Marriage of Figaro," is built around Federico, who is definitely the prototype of the threatening Hispanic: Knock, knock, knock... Hello, it's me... I'm back... Remember me?... I'm Federico Last year you refused to open the door for me. Well, I'm still around and I haven't forgotten you, pendejo!" (Reyes, Men 47).

[12] Rossini, in his brief comments on identity negotations in *Deporting the Divas*, speaks of how the internal voice in the play of anti-immigration sentiments, Marge McCarthy: "Marge's 'horrible fantasy' of having an illegal alien is expressed in the same language of coming out as the supposed lesser of two evils, gay identity" (133).

[13] It is important to consult the preface to the second edition to understand Butler's clarification of ways in which she feels her formulations have been misunderstood, especially to the extent that if gender is performed, it is not "real," not socially relevant.

[14] Although he is not specifically interested in performance theory, John M. Clum cleverly titles his anthology of gay plays *Still Acting Gay*, fusing the concept of theatrical acting with the display of sexuality.

[15] There are a few instances in the play in which Matt's watching is not metatheatrical in the sense I am insisting on here, as he watches Domingo attempting to teach Cesar to line dance at the beginning of Act II (201).

[16] For that matter, Phoenix remains underrepresented in studies of Hispanic society in the US. Phoenix is not mentioned in collections like Latinos in a *Changing Society*, *Latinos: Remaking America*, or *Orbis/urbis latino: los hispanos en las ciudades de los Estados Unidos*. However, see Oberle, "Se venden aquí," which appears in a collection edited by Arizona State University Prof. Daniel D. Arreola.

[17] In addition to the already mentioned Phoenix reference in *Men on the Verge 2: The Self-Esteem Files*, the original *Men on the Verge of a His-panic Breakdown* contains a monologue, "Castro's Queen," involving Paco, who is President of the Arizona Gay Republicans and runs a Cuban restaurant in Phoenix.

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