PROJECT MUSE®

Relationality, Comparison, and Identity: The Performance,
Politics, and Academic Reception of Denise Stoklos

Glenn Odom

Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism, Volume 34, Number 2,
Spring 2020, pp. 93-110 (Article)

Published by The University of Kansas, Department of Theatre and
Dance

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/dtc.2020.0010>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/758133>

Relationality, Comparison, and Identity: The Performance, Politics, and Academic Reception of Denise Stoklos

Glenn Odom

Literature and cultural production from around the world is subject, within the Anglo and European academy, to analysis via a set of institutionalized theories that, while diverse and often contradictory, represent only one such body of institutionalized theory. When these different theoretical terrains become the object of comparison, the definition of comparison itself shifts. The comparison at stake here is between two analyses of the theatre of Denise Stoklos, a Brazilian performance artist—the first grounded in Lacanian psychoanalysis and the second in Brazilian cultural theory. The Brazilian theory suggests that a multiplicity of contradictory elements contained within a single subject or nation is, in fact, a source of democratic strength rather than an obstacle to an imagined unity. Similarly, Brazilian comparative theory suggests that keeping both the Anglo/European and the Brazilian theoretical terrain in sight simultaneously allows for a richer understanding of the political implications of cultural production within Brazil and of new definitions of comparison more broadly.

Keywords: *comparativity, relationality, Brazil, theatre, Denise Stoklos*

“If you seek simply the sententious or the exegetical, you will not grasp the hybrid moment outside the sentence—not quite experience, not yet concept; part dream, part analysis; neither signifier nor signified . . . the non-sentence does not relate to the sentence as polarity . . . it is the question of agency as it emerges in relation to the indeterminate and the contingent, that I want to explore ‘outside the sentence.’”

—Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994, 81–82

Theoretical Pluralism as Methodology

While we are currently experiencing various retrenchments of nationalisms (e.g., “Make America Great Again” and Brexit), it is easy to contextualize these as responses to perceived and actual changes in quantity and types of global contact. Indeed, it has become an academic truism that we live in an era of globalization. Pedagogically and in research, theatre scholars in the United States and United

Glenn Odom is a Reader at Roehampton University. He is currently completing research on intercultural theatre, alternative modernities and a global definition of globalization. His books, *World Theories of Theatre* (Routledge 2017) and *Yoruba Performance, Theatre, and Politics: Staging Resistance* (2015), and his articles in *Asian Theatre Journal*, *Comparative Drama*, *TDR*, the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, and *Comparative Literature* explore theories and practices of theatre and performance across Europe, Asia, and Africa. Odom received his BA and MEd from Vanderbilt University and his MA and PhD from University California, Irvine.

Kingdom are working with a greater diversity of material, often in comparative, transnational, relational, or postcolonial frameworks that specifically benefit from the juxtaposition of materials from different cultures. In any given article, it is not uncommon for this impulse toward plurality to extend to the texts studied, but it is far rarer to see a methodological pluralism. Indeed, how—and why—would one apply an array of theoretical models to the same material?

In what follows, I present two readings of the work of Denise Stoklos, a Brazilian writer, director, solo performer, theorist, and theatre artist. The first reading is grounded in psychoanalysis, and the second is grounded in Brazilian materialist cultural theory (Brazilian cultural theory is a discipline that is not the same as cultural studies in either the United Kingdom or the United States, although the two disciplines overlap). These two readings exist in two separate, nonhomogeneous discursive fields that share some concerns, texts, and vocabularies. From within these discursive fields, these readings generate remarkably different ideas of the intrasubjective nature of subjectivity (the *intra* here signals interactions that occur within one subjectivity rather than between subjectivities). It is hardly surprising that an American academic utilization of psychoanalysis and an application of Brazilian materialist theory would lead to different conclusions about subjectivity, and thus I turn to the generous, if aggressive, theoretical pluralism of another Brazilian theoretical model, Oswald de Andrade's *antropofagia*, to suggest ways in which keeping both of these readings in view might be productive.

The utility of theories of literature, theatre, culture, and politics emerging from outside of Anglo and European locations remains largely unexplored beyond narrowly focused Area Studies models, while theories emerging from the Anglo and European academic systems are too often treated as universally applicable. The first obstacle toward overcoming this disparity is familiarity—it is still not uncommon to see literary and theatrical anthologies that contain only a few token canonized writers from Africa, Asia, or Latin America—and numerous scholars have devoted their careers to getting these literatures more widely recognized. The move to bring theories from these regions to a wider audience has been even slower. The second obstacle is that people even marginally outside of the immediate fields tend to believe that such use of theories emerging from other locations is already happening (inasmuch as a few token examples are easy to cite). It is not—a fact that has been well documented by precisely those scholars whom individuals outside of the field cite as counterexamples (e.g., Christopher Balme, Philip Zarrilli, and Diana Looser).¹ The final obstacle is academic hubris—the assumption that scholarship emerging from the United States and the United Kingdom can—and indeed does—account for the whole world and that any challenges to this universality are essentialist. In my prior work I have dealt with the first two of these obstacles with field overviews and anthologized selections of theories from around the world.² Here my project is an attempt to probe the benefits of a theoretically pluralistic approach

to textual and performance analysis: an approach that is grounded in the potential to communicate across difference without either exaggerating or diminishing the separateness of the various discursive fields.

An Overview of Denise Stoklos's Work

Denise Stoklos's performances, as extensively archived by Diana Taylor and others, provide what acts as data in this case, with existing and potential modes of analysis of said data being the actual object of study. The first analysis is performed by Leslie Damasceno and is grounded in Slavoj Žižek's reading of hysteria. Personal biography and areas of study quite aside, Damasceno grounded her work entirely in Anglo-European theory and critical analysis: she speaks to and from the American academy, albeit about Brazilian material.³ The second analysis is my own, grounded in the theories of Brazilian critics Roberto Schwarz and Stoklos herself.⁴ Damasceno knows the Brazilian context—including language, culture, history, theatre, and politics—far better than I ever will, and her deft use of psychoanalysis to analyze this context produces fascinating results. These results are simply different from those produced when theories more proximal to Stoklos are deployed. Rather than placing these theories in conflict, this article uses Brazilian theories of comparison, like *antropofagia*, to suggest ways of negotiating these different interpretations.

As Diana Taylor points out, “Stoklos's work is polyvalent, allowing for unusually divergent readings.”⁵ Taylor argues that Stoklos's “multicodedness” moves through different registers “ethnically, sexually, politically, aesthetically, and linguistically.”⁶ This makes the work particularly suited to an exploration of theoretical pluralism given that it opens itself to a variety of readings.⁷

Stoklos's work is linguistically diverse inasmuch as each play contains multiple languages, often ones that will not be familiar to the intended audience. In fact, the languages contained within a given performance change as Stoklos travels: she has performed her plays in Portuguese, English, Spanish, French, German, Russian, and Ukrainian. This makes the question of “translating” her works a bit odd, given that she has written versions for so many different linguistic contexts. While the majority of the language in the play will be comprehensible to a given audience, there are always some moments spoken in a language that the audience will have less or no familiarity with. I have chosen Stoklos's own English version of the texts in question, and I have also left a line of Portuguese specifically untranslated, as it is in the English version, to maintain the artistic integrity of her work.⁸

One example of a “polyvalent...unusually divergent” Stoklos piece is *Mary Stuart*, a short, one-woman show in which Denise Stoklos speaks as narrator, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary, and as “Stoklos.” The lines are a combination of bits of other texts, historical documentary style, personal letters, and Stoklos's characteristic playing with multiple languages—both in the sense of moving between English and Portuguese and in the sense of joyfully arranging words in patterns that

defy immediate logical explanation. As is generally the case, Stoklos's intense physicality—a mixture of dance, corporeal mime, and something uncategorizable and altogether her own—adds an additional layer of language to the play, albeit one that is harder to record in a written text. The plot is simple, focusing on the day of Mary's execution and Elizabeth's second thoughts. There is no characteristic bit of dialogue because the text changes its nature rapidly.

Switching between documentary voice and linguistic playfulness, the narrator comments that:

“Elizabeth, having no experience in State affairs, was twenty-five years old when she succeeded her half-sister on November 17, 1558.”

and

“Meanwhile there was Mary Stuart, Queen of SSSSSSSScots. Que, aos da Europa católica possuía mais direitos ao tono inglês que sua prima Elizabeth (Gets up and jumps around. In Portuguese, she speaks in a frantic “gossipy” tone as she plays with her hair).”

The character “Stoklos” says:

Then, in the interview, they asked me what I thought. Then I said what I think and they said no, this is not possible, then I said no then they said yes . . . Do you understand what is going on here? There is no meaning at all.

Mary says, “All I wanted was my right of succession.”⁹

The stage directions, dictated by Stoklos, suggest a series of elaborate movements that only occasionally attempt a realistic correspondence with the actions the characters discuss. Perhaps the most striking feature of Stoklos's performance, at least from my perspective, is her face, which rapidly alternates between a naturalistic mien and a series of exaggerated expressions that remind me—experientially not analytically—of Kabuki theatre in that they are larger-than-life, intensely expressive, and (at least momentarily) static. As with the movements, these facial expressions often do not correspond directly to the denotative content of the script. This mass of signifiers accounts for Taylor's description of the work as polyvalent. To quote “Stoklos” the character, at times it can feel to me like “there is no meaning

at all” within this mass of possible signs. Of course “Stoklos” only says there is no meaning after being told that she cannot possibly think what she thinks.

Stoklos’s play *Casa* also consists of an extended speech by a single actor. I hesitate to use the term *monologue* because it seemingly moves in and out of a character’s voice, or voices, without clear textual shifts between speakers as there were in *Mary Stuart*. The opening is in the tone of a documentary narrator: “Hominidae embarked on the development of language. This process was slow, as slow as mastering the use of sophisticated tools.”¹⁰ These words are spoken while the actor “rolls on the floor” and “tries to drink the juice but cannot find a way to hold the glass.”¹¹ Her rolling around on the floor and fumbling with a drink are not what we would expect of a documentary narrator, but they also don’t simply correspond to the evolutionary cycle being narrated. The word *I* enters first in a song and then, in a change of tone, as the actor picks up and plays an accordion. The *I* flows through a range of

“Non”-thoughts which occur whenever I think about our absurdity, which flows through the sewage of this non-signalized metropolis inside our head, we, the peculiar people, the daring people, the desperate people, the deprived people, the ambitious people . . . my God! How many firemen falsely alarmed . . . my God! . . . how many burning hoses [*sic*] do we have to extinguish? The hammer in the flames, the siren mute and astonished. And we have to deal with the memories of so many of those who were important in our history and now burn themselves out in a sentimental samba that spells longing and Brazilian beer that promises happiness.¹²

At this point, the text is in the form of a stream-of-consciousness monologue from a single speaking position, albeit one that is aware of the “metropolis” of voices that exist in the single brain. The metropolis, the mixture, is not an easy one. There are no signals. It is unclear whether the “our” in this passage is the plural of the singular metropolis brain, or multiple people, each with their own metropolis. Singular or plural, they are unique. The blocking of the performance, always giving a parallel stream of information forms yet another “voice” in this play, further complicating the *I*.

The attitude toward the past is peculiar, given that *Casa* opens with prehistoric times. The samba is a marker of a distinctly Brazilian, distinctly hybrid, identity, but the “sentimental” version creates “longing”—perhaps for an idealized version of the nation that, like the beer, promises happiness. The play moves in a “non-signalized” manner between dozens of semi-contradictory and evocative ideas, metaphors, emotions, and statements. The aforementioned attempts to interpret

a piece of it—to select one element of the metropolis as representative, or even as signifying in an autonomous way, would be a mistake. In the final moments of *Casa*, the actor comments, “One day I will be able to communicate.”¹³ The national anthem plays as she leaves the stage.

The aforementioned passages were intended as descriptions of Stoklos’s work (although any attempt to describe rich performances will, of course, be analytical). The two overtly analytical readings that follow—Damasceno’s utilizing psychoanalysis and mine utilizing Brazilian cultural theory—both offer attempts to unpack either the meaning of this diverse array of signs in Stoklos’s work or the performed failure of meaning.

Importing Žižek and Hysteria: Reading One

Damasceno argues that Stoklos’s work explores the hysterical quality of the historical. Psychoanalysis was present in Brazil from the end of the nineteenth century and gained an extensive academic, medical, and cultural following. The precise nature of practice and theorization of psychoanalysis in Brazil is a subject for another article but, in brief, psychoanalysis became associated with the pedagogy/mental hygiene movement that was an integral component of nationalistic projects in the early twentieth century: The idea was that minds of the people must be trained to be part of the new nation, and psychoanalysis was put forth as one method for doing this.¹⁴

While the history of Brazilian psychoanalysis and its relationship to literary and theatre studies in Brazil is worth examining, my purpose in this section is to explain Damasceno’s argument, and the Brazilian history of psychoanalysis is not the context in which Damasceno writes. Damasceno defines hysteria in a Lacanian fashion through Slavoj Žižek as the contradiction between imaginary and symbolic identifications in the construction of an identity. To bring in issues of mental hygiene and national indoctrination from Brazilian psychoanalysis would be to depart from the argument Damasceno makes. Specifically she argues, through Žižek, that the identity we wish we had for ourselves is the imaginary and the identity we imagine others assigning to us is the symbolic. Inasmuch as Žižek bases his readings in Lacan, the disjunction between symbolic and imaginary identifications is inevitably figured as a necessary, productive lack and as productive of lack.¹⁵ The imaginary is insufficient to fulfill the demands of the symbolic, while at the same time the symbolic does not perceive of the scope of the imaginary:

The lover tries to discover what the loved one “lacks” in order to fulfill this lack, to be essential to the other. But this is the catch-22 of desire, that it leads to the attempt to decipher the inaccessible desire of the other—a gap of language and being that constitutes what we might call “normal” hysteria.¹⁶

Communication is always a failed attempt at translating the other into and out of our own inaccurate perceptions of ourselves and the other. Žižek's reading is one that redeems hysteria from its negative connotation and instead positions it as a necessary component of the speaking subject.

According to Damasceno, the concept of the hysterical in Stoklos's work emerges in the disjunctions between her multiple speaking positions (e.g., Mary, Elizabeth, narrator, actor, self) and in the multiple languages spoken in the work. The gestural language, particularly, is a place where the distinction between intent and action creates multiple possible meanings.

Damasceno argues that the hysterical is a space of possibility on a larger historical level. Brazil's identity, mapped onto the same Lacanian categories, exists as a conflict between the way that Brazil sees itself and the ways that it imagines other nations see it. Damasceno borrows from Cornel West to say that Stoklos is a "prisoner of hope," noting that she doesn't fully disagree with Stoklos's self-characterization as an optimist. Her performances display the fractured, hysterical nature of individual and national identity as produced by and productive of history and in doing so imagines a possible future identity that is unified and whole. This potential moment of a connected, integrated identity exists only as a product of showing the fracturing. Stoklos's optimism does not extend so far as the inauguration of such identities free of the hysterical past: "The hysteric feels her / himself to have no history, or at least no integrated personal history that can be a basis for dealing with the demands made on her / him . . . The feeling of lack of history is what prompts the hysteric's question—'Why am I what you're telling me that I am?'"¹⁷ Asking this question provides impetus for future change and the potential for a further recognition of the past, but the hysterical structure also prevents such changes from full realization.

While "The Gestural Art of Reclaiming Utopia" opens by placing the theatrical work in the context of Stoklos's own written theorizations of theatre, this move is descriptive rather than argumentative or analytical. Damasceno says that for Stoklos, "The local and the global (Brazil–world) are not in opposition but figure as historical and geographical coordinates whose tension she explores as a citizen of the world, aiming for a transcultural communication."¹⁸ As the article turns toward Žižek's theories for its more detailed analytical move, the key word becomes *tension*. Damasceno characterizes the polyvalence of Stoklos's work as an uneasy mixture of the personal and the political, the global and the local, gesture and language, and English and Portuguese. Damasceno goes on to say that Stoklos does play "against" hysteria in an "as if space of utopia" surrounded by hysterical historical realities.¹⁹ Hysteria is the system in which and against which any readings of Stoklos takes place.

Damasceno's reading of Žižek's theory, with its foundational concept of lack, leaves the subject with an identity that must continually rehearse its hysteria

in order to reach the possibility of utopic future in which parts of the self are no longer separated. At the same time, however, the possibility of revolution and change exists as a function of the tensions created by hysteria: while things are in flux, they might change for the better, but this change would cement an identity.²⁰ This ambivalent treatment of multiplicity in identity is familiar in both postmodern and postcolonial modes of analysis. It resonates with Paul Gilroy's discussion of double-consciousness in black British identity, Frantz Fanon's discussion of the "white masks" of the Caribbean/postcolonial identity, and Achille Mbembe's psychoanalytic writing on Nigerian/African/Postcolonial identities.²¹ Each of these arguments, however, has a specific cultural and philosophical context—and none of these contexts are wholly shared by Brazil, if for no other reason than Brazil's more complex categorizations of race than a black/white division, despite the obvious trans, inter, cross and otherwise modes of interaction.

Were this an article in which my goal was to contradict one analysis using another theoretical mode, I might now proceed to discuss the negative connotations of hysteria as a starting point for critiquing Damasceno's argument. Instead I leave her analysis, with the small bit of context I provided, as it is and proceed with the juxtaposition of a second, separate analysis. The rationale for this juxtaposition—found in the notion of *antropofagia* and deferred until the conclusion—is this article's *raison d'être*.

Brazilian Pluralism and Hybridity: Reading Two

The question of a Brazilian theoretical context is not a matter of an imagined essentialized difference—it is simply a recognition that Anglo and European theoretical models are not the only possible heuristics with which we might approach a performance. Denise Stoklos has theorized her own work in the language of a performance manifesto, suggesting a Brazilian context for reading her identity: "I want to retake the tie, the knot, the manufacturing of my Brazilianism out from within the ragged fabric of the first world, so repressed, so disastrously depressive, dead before the atomic bomb."²² This is not simply a statement that there are some differences between Brazil and the First World, but the rather bolder assertion that the process of identity formation and the "manufacture" of the concept of identity are in fact different in each location. Damasceno, Taylor, and Stoklos all argue that the performances in question gesture to a different mode of identity construction, and Stoklos asserts that this mode is distinctly Brazilian. With this assertion in mind, what happens to Stoklos's work if Brazilian cultural, literary, and theatrical theory becomes the mode of analysis rather than the context? If we analyze the Brazilian "manufacture" of identity in Brazilian theoretical terms?

Roberto Schwarz, one of Brazil's best-known literary and cultural critics, notes that it is not uncommon to find scholars discussing Brazilian identity as an imitation,

always in tension with colonial/postcolonial ideologies. This is the tension that animates Damasceno's analysis of hysteria. In contrast, Schwarz argues that while

A solução implícita está na auto-reforma da classe dominante, a qual deixaria de imitar; conforme vimos não é disso que se trata, mas do acesso dos trabalhadores aos termos da atualidade, para que os possam retomar segundo o seu interesse, o que—neste campo—vale como definição de democracia.

[The implicit solution is that the dominant class should reform itself and give up imitation; we have argued on the contrary, the answer lies in the workers gaining access to the terms of contemporary life, so that they can redefine themselves through their own initiative.]²³

This conclusion follows a lengthy analysis of the ways in which the false dichotomy between original and copy is created by and reinforces economic disparity. The potentially imitative nature of Brazilian high culture and academic discussions thereof are not indicative of Brazilian culture more broadly. This culture exists and will blossom through the initiative of the masses.

It is worth noting that Schwarz initially develops his arguments in this field in explicit response to rising Brazilian nationalism in the 1970s and 1980s—under a conservative, rigid military dictatorship—which postulated an essential Brazil, citing as evidence the economic upswing of the late 1970s. Inasmuch as this was not the first coup in Brazil in the twentieth century, Schwarz's insistence on various components of national life being able to work together as a nonhomologous whole is not surprising. That being said, there has been a steady critique of Schwarz for potentially reinforcing essentialist tendencies in his obvious anti-essentialism. This critique begins in 1976—and is repeated in the years following—with Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco, whose analysis polemically positions Schwarz on the side of conservatism inasmuch as his discussion and critique of binaries reinforces the perception of a binary even as it attempts to dismantle this perception. Indeed, most of the critiques of Schwarz—at least in the academy—actually end up arguing that he does not do enough to dismantle binaries, so these critiques are actually agreements with the philosophical premise that Brazilian culture is radically polyvalent, consisting of a series of complex relationships between various nonbinary, semi-contradictory fragments that are constantly being revised and recirculated. Elias Jose Patli's 2008 work on the subject, "The Problem of 'Misplaced Ideas' Revisited," provides a solid history of these ideas and a clear explanation of how Schwarz techniques might be modified to better correspond with his underlying philosophical goals.²⁴

Schwarz's argument about the culture of the people is obviously Marxist in the broadest sense of the word, and the relationship between economic and cultural forms is well-trod ground in postcolonial theory that emerges from the Western academy. What is somewhat more distinctive, however, is the repeated refrain that the goal is not a unified Brazil that stands as equal to but different from the imagined West. Instead, Schwarz insists that the democratic strength of a new Brazil will be precisely in the "dinamismos próprios, de que a eventual originalidade, bem como a falta dela" (elements of dynamism, which display both originality and lack of originality).²⁵ Brazil will be original and copy and a mixture of the two: Schwarz is careful to give space to both the idea of hybridity and the idea of pluralism. The brokenness in Schwarz's analysis comes not from the presence of multiple semi-contradictory elements but from the imposition of a false dichotomy that assumes that the imitated identity is in conflict with some sort of real identity. Instead, both these identities are part of Brazil and, indeed, make Brazil Brazilian. The contradictions between these identities are necessary components of identity and not something preventing an ideal unity.

Stoklos says something similar in the vocabulary of performance studies in her "Manifesto of Essential Theatre" (1987) when she calls for "minimum possible gestures, movements, words, wardrobe, scenery, accessories and effects...which contain the maximum dramatic power. The human figure onstage performs a unique alchemy."²⁶ The singular figure onstage performing an alchemy implies that various reagents exist within her—that the singular subject is a site of chemical reactions—and these internal reactions are precisely what is interesting and worth seeing. This alchemy is also perhaps another explanation for the energy Damasceno characterizes as hysterical. If the individual body is in constant, radical, transformative reaction within itself at all times, this could also account for the exuberance of Stoklos's work. To be an individual is to contain contradictions and these contradictions are part of a beautiful alchemy, not fragments to be melded into a whole.

The homology between Schwarz's discussion of national identity and Stoklos's discussion of individual identity does not exist by chance. It is a product of a distinctive, oft-articulated, connection between the personal and the political in Brazil:

As an actor, director, and author, I am always questioning power, social injustice, normative behaviours, aesthetics, and the workings of the State in this capitalist, patriarchal system. I am less and less interested in the microcosmic movements of society . . . more and more, I am becoming an anarchist. I laugh more and more at politicians. I save myself by following my own personal, unique path.²⁷

From my critical standpoint, there seems to be a contradiction between claiming to be interested in the macro scale of society and the mechanism of following a “unique path.” Given, however, the deeply personal nature of much of the political engagement I have encountered in Brazil, this contradiction exists only when viewing the material from *my own* critical perspective. Larger political issues are not simply inflected by the personal, nor does the political infringe on the personal through the dynamics of biopower. Instead, the individual inter- and intra-subjective negotiations are the modes of questioning the workings of the state. The profusion of history—the “lack” of an “integrated personal history” that Damasceno notes—is not a psychoanalytic lack in search of wholeness when recontextualized in this space but, in fact, a necessary context for the creation of identity and the process by which identity becomes revolutionary.

To be more specific, this isn’t just any individual, but specifically the body—the female body—on stage: “The actor as the source of theatricality itself is a utopian force.”²⁸ Simply “being” an individual isn’t quite enough; political impetus comes from staging individuality. Stoklos notes that “being a woman (in Brazil women are still not recognized as authors), and coming from the marginalized South (in my country not even the southern accent makes it on the stage), I had already experienced the isolation that motivated my critique [of society and theatre].”²⁹ Isolation is the enemy, but unification is not the answer. The alchemy of the body must be one of competing forces, but competition is not the same as conflict and lack of unity does not imply brokenness.

This is a conclusion that Schwarz reaches about Brazil through his Marxism and Stoklos through her lived experience and practice (and lived experience as practice). Schwarz is writing to and against a military rule and its aftermath. According to Stoklos’s own writing, the context for her work has to do, in part, with a northern/southern divide in Brazil. Southern Brazil has a high percentage of relatively recent European immigrants. According to Brazil’s system of racial classification as reported by self-declaration on the last three decades of censuses, the *branca* (white) population is roughly 50 percent (and has been for several decades). The next largest group is *parda* (brown)—a category that includes all those who identify as mixed—a group that makes up just under half of Brazil’s population as a whole, but only a fifth of the population in southern Brazil. Brazil’s categorization of race doesn’t have the blood quanta that exist in other countries and instead exists on a spectrum, complicated further by the fact that self-report is the dominant metric for collecting data. It is commonplace to note that almost the entire population of Brazil is actually of mixed descent, but the categories don’t fully reflect this. By saying she is understood as “southern” in Brazil, Stoklos is noting that she comes from a region known for its high standard of living and its racial connections to Europe. Put simply, Stoklos is from a region that has been characterized as elitist and out of step with Brazilian culture as a whole, even while Brazilian culture

insists on its own melting-pot status. Thus, while Schwarz is writing against the essentialism enacted on a governmental level, Stoklos places her anti-essentialist comments first on a personal level, then in terms of national community, and finally in explicitly political terms.

This specific form of anti-essentialism transcends even these contexts. Aimara da Cunha Resende's analysis of a Brazilian form of cosmopolitanism reaches a similar conclusion.³⁰ Similar questions can be found in the works of Renato Ortiz or Juan Flores (who writes about Latin America as a whole).³¹ The list goes on. I have yet to read a single Brazilian theorist in any related field who did not articulate the idea that internal divisions in nation or subject were a necessary—and most often good—part of Brazilian identity. To be sure the terms, approaches, world views, and the conclusions of these theorists vary. This variance in conclusions does not erase the fact that there are a shared set of questions in Brazilian cultural theory: How might art express the distinctly Brazilian nature of this internal multiplicity? Are Western techniques inadequate to such a task (even though they are implicated in the history of the multiplicity)?

To return to the plays, Stoklos characterizes her work as optimistic, and Damasceno argues that the hysterical nature of the work leaves this optimism as a hope that is always out of reach. Damasceno's argument stems from a definition of subjectivity that assumes certain kinds of divisions are obstacles to be overcome. Brazilian theory across multiple fields suggests that the subject is necessarily constituted by such divisions and that it is this very division that gives the subjects their unique Brazilianess—something that can lead to art, to democracy, to equality. In both analyses there is something waiting in the future but, in the Brazilian analysis, this future will be reached because of, not in opposition to, intrasubjective multiplicity.

Theoretical Cannibalism: How to Have Both Readings and Eat Them Too

So, what do we do with these two different analyses of Stoklos's work? It would be comforting to say that Schwarz is a Marxist and therefore the difference in opinion could simply be a matter of different schools of thought within the same discursive field—I could sweep all this under the rug of the Western academy, with any differences being the usual squabbles. This ignores the fact, however, that across decades and disciplines Brazilian scholarship has consistently raised a distinctive set of questions. Obviously, inasmuch as the subject matter in question is often colonization's effect on culture, many of these ideas will resonate with, imitate, or reject notions that are also in the Western academy. They are not, however, the same ideas once they move. They are juxtaposed with other ideas in new disciplinary formations. This is not simply a matter of variant interpretations within one academic system—even though both systems recognize the presence of a world system in some sense.

So, one must be right and one must be wrong? One better one worse? One original and one copy? Moving away from the absurdity of the final statement points us back to the ideas that Brazilian theorists claim gives strength to Brazilian culture—its ability to assimilate on the level of intrasubjective, intersubjective, intranational, and international. This brings us to cannibalism—into the devouring of one critic by the other—and perhaps the most well-traveled piece of Brazilian theory.

In 1928, with the intermittent violence that would culminate in the 1930 revolution/coup clearly visible alongside a global rise in attention to workers' rights, Oswald de Andrade, one of the first Brazilian modernists, articulates a relationship between Brazil and other countries, saying, "Só a ANTROPOFAGIA nos une. Socialmente. Economicamente. Filosoficamente. Única lei do mundo. Expressão mascarada de todos os individualismos, de todos os coletivismos" ("Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically. The world's single law. Disguised expression of all individualism, of all collectivism").³² As with Schwarz, Andrade's concern with finding unification is hardly surprising given the tense political climate, but his specific formulation of unity is distinct. To be an individual or a collective requires devouring other identities. As becomes rapidly clear in the "Cannibalist Manifesto," however, the modes of cannibalism are different in Brazil and in Europe: "Sem nós a Europa não teria sequer a sua pobre declaração dos direitos do homem" ("Without us Europe wouldn't even have its meager declaration of the rights of mankind").³³ Europe has colonized and stolen from Brazil with little recognition of the fact. Brazil, on the other hand, utilizes self-aware cannibalism—devouring other cultures—as a means of becoming embodied subjects: subjects that are specifically formed in opposition to European ideologies, even while cannibalizing from Europe. Europe becomes hybrid, with all portions of the devoured thoroughly mixed with the self. The British Empire becomes Britain's self-perception, with colonization a footnote to modernity. In Brazil, however, "O espírito recusa-se a conceber o espírito sem o corpo. O antropomorfismo. Necessidade da vacina antropofágica. Para o equilíbrio contra as religiões de meridiano. E as inquisições exteriores" ("The spirit refuses to conceive a spirit without a body. Anthropomorphism. Need for the cannibalistic vaccine. To maintain our equilibrium, against meridian religions. And against outside inquisitions").³⁴ To resist is to engage in a self-aware devouring of the other and to integrate what might appear as fractured pieces into a single body without homogenization of these pieces.

The soul divided from the body is here externally imposed—an imported idea—and something that has been/can be overcome. This overcoming occurs through cannibalism, through the ingesting of "what is not mine."³⁵ Except, as a cannibal, what is ingested is precisely "mine" both in the sense of a shared flesh and in the sense of taking possession of something else. This is what Andrade refers to as

A luta entre o que se chamaria Incruido e a Criatura—ilustrada pela contradição permanente do homem e o seu Tabu. O amor cotidiano e o modusvivendi capitalista. Antropofagia. Absorção do inimigo sacro. Para transformá-lo em totem. A humana aventura. A terrena finalidade. Porém, só as puras elites conseguiram realizar a antropofagia carnal, que traz em si o mais alto sentido da vida e evita todos os males identificados por Freud, males catequistas. O que se dá não é uma sublimação do instinto sexual. É a escala termométrica do instinto antropofágico. De carnal, ele se torna eletivo e cria a amizade. Afetivo, o amor. Especulativo, a ciência. Desvia-se e transfere-se.

[The struggle between what we might call the Uncreated and the Creation—illustrated by the permanent contradiction between Man and his Taboo. Everyday love and the capitalist way of life. Cannibalism. Absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform him into a totem. The human adventure. The earthly goal... which carries within itself the highest meaning of life and avoids all the ills identified by Freud—catechist ills . . . Carnal at first, this instinct becomes elective and creates friendship. When it is affective, it creates love. When it is speculative, it creates science. It takes detours and moves around.]³⁶

Andrade's explanation of the impulse toward wholeness is not one that starts with a fundamental premise of something having been broken. There is a hunger, a visceral desire to reach out, but it is not a broken self that reaches out—instead, a whole self reaches out to incorporate and assimilate other selves. There is a constant impulse to continue this, but the impulse is born of the spirit of carnival, not the spirit of hysteria. This is different again from something like Derek Walcott's celebration of the Caribbean ability to live constantly in the twilight, in the in-between space.³⁷ This is a manifesto about reconsidering what it means to form relationships with the world beyond Brazil. It is not a comparative manifesto—one that would lead to a hysterical situation of a disjunction between identities—but, instead, a manifesto of a different sort of aggressive relationality. Brazil is constantly devouring, constantly in flux, whole, and containing a multiplicity.

How might one apply a cannibalistic mode of relation to the two aforementioned readings of Stoklos? What is it about Damasceno's reading that can be devoured and how might this devouring lead to things like love, friendship, and the hope that Stoklos claims for her work? Andrade's cannibal incorporates difference without becoming a homogenized, blended hybrid. The difference is still visible as difference, but is now part of a new body. It is precisely the incorporation of the idea of brokenness, of hysteria, that makes antropofagic wholeness

recognizable as wholeness. Without Damasceno's suggestion that division is fractured brokenness—a suggestion that is at play in Stoklos's work—Stoklos's confident assertion of her ability to weave together the strands of her identity into a powerful force loses its political impetus.³⁸ The evidence Damasceno compiles is there, and her analysis of it is accurate, but in the broader frame, provided by the devouring stomach of Brazilian theory, philosophy, theatrical and cultural studies, these inherent fractures are identity and not a foreclosure of completeness. Again, the cannibalistic approach rejects a determination of which of these theories and attendant analyses is “correct.” Instead, Andrade's work, a manifesto of relationality, pushes us to question what happens when we keep both these theories clearly in sight while examining one body of performance work (or one body at work performing).

Stoklos has said that “the [mere] potentiality of power is always destructive.”³⁹ Damasceno argues that this potentiality is destructive because “as long as power is stifled in its realization, signifying an uncompleted identity, it is vulnerable to repetition of the circumstances of its own fulfillment.”⁴⁰ For Damasceno, it is lack that makes potential power—not actual power—dangerous. That unformed identity is dangerous because it is vulnerable. If, however, we contrast that to the wholeness of Brazilian theories of identity, the potential danger of power might actually be the collapse of multiplicity into singularity—potential power moving into actual power in the hands of a demagogue or monolithic homogenizing theorization that no longer recognizes internal or external multiplicity. Certainly Stoklos's own work keeps multiplicity—of languages, of modes of communication, of identities—clearly in focus as the site of productive interactions.

As the American institutionalization of comparative and world literatures grapple with ideas of similarity and difference, the notion of relationality as distinct from comparison has begun to gain ground as a tool of literary analysis. Brazilian theory has long suggested a similar relationality as a mode of negotiating between critical terrains (in addition to cultural production). *Antropofagia* provides a useful mode of considering Stoklos's work and, as in this article, a mode of considering the interactions of different analytical tools we might apply to her work. Andrade is one of many theorists around the world advancing concepts of relationality that require a rethinking of the ways in which we perform analysis. How is *antropofagia* different than Lu Xun's grabbism? From Susan Stanford Friedman's discussions of relationality? From Nishida Kitaro's theories of nonhierarchical juxtaposition? From Michael Chapman's discussions of South African foldedness? For that matter, are *antropofagia* and Schwarz's notions of cultural dynamism related iterations of the same, perhaps evolving concept or are they pointing to two different notions of relationality? How might we reconceive the analytical process if we take these varied theories of interaction into account not simply as objects of study but as approaches to study. The value of swallowing up a multiplicity of theories lies precisely in the balance between the two dangers of power and the performance

of the possibility of a stable, shifting, multiple, unified nation, region, or—perhaps too utopian a thought for now—world.

Notes

1. C.F. Diana Looser, "A Piece 'More Curious Than All the Rest': Re-Encountering Pre-Colonial Pacific Island Theatre, 1769–1855," *Theatre Journal*, 63:4, 2011, 521–540. Philip Zarrilli, *The Psychophysical Actor at Work: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski*, New York: Routledge, 2008. Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-colonial Drama*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

2. *World Theories of Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2018) and my article co-written with Julia Walker, "Comparative Modernist Performance Studies: A Not-so-Modest Proposal," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 31:1, 2016, 129–53.

3. For a more extensive explanation of the distinction between writing about a given culture and writing from within or writing to a given culture, see the introductory material to my *World Theories of Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2018).

4. Early readers of this article asked why I was positioning Damasceno, a female critic, "against" a male critic, Schwarz. This is not the positioning that the article sets up. Both Damasceno and I analyze Stoklos's work. Damasceno uses Žižek's theories, while I use the theoretical work of critics writing within the Brazilian context. The division here is not a gendered one, nor indeed anything to do with personal biographies of the critics involved: it is about the theoretical contextualization and citational communities. The Brazilian theoretical context and citational community of course include a number of Western works (the reverse of this statement is considerably less true) but nonetheless retain their own distinctive, varied, diverse contours.

5. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 213.

6. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 220.

7. While Taylor's work is generally written in and to the Anglo-European academic context, her writing about Stoklos in the chapter from which this passage comes is an analytical description of Stoklos's work and is not driven by any specific named theorists, although it is contained within a book grounded firmly in Western theory. As such, for the purpose of staging a moment of theoretical pluralism in this article, I treat Taylor's work as providing a description of Stoklos's performances—which is, indeed, largely in keeping with how the work contextualizes itself. While any such description will, of course, be given from a specific subject position in a specific intellectual context, Taylor's writing is adept at separating her interventions from her descriptions—both of which are necessary given the relatively unknown status of much of the theatre with which Taylor works.

8. The extent to which these "versions" of the text are translation or adaptations of an initial text is a subject that would require detailed explanation of the language politics of Brazil (particularly the southern region) alongside Stoklos's own discussions of language. The idea of a cosmopolitan artist able to move fluidly between a number of different languages reflects Brazil's diverse nature but also suggests a degree of privilege—a topic worthy of a wholly separate analysis. Stoklos's work certainly challenges simplistic notions of original language and translation. An insistence on the primacy of the Portuguese text runs counter to Stoklos's own anti-essentialism and that so richly explored by Schwarz and Andrade. Indeed, in much of Stoklos's work the initial premiere and development took place in New York City, so even if the issue of "original" were appropriate in this context, it is not entirely clear which language should be counted as such.

9. Denise Stoklos and Marlene Ramirez-Cancio, trans., "Mary Stuart," in *Stages of Conflict: A Critical Anthology of Latin American Theater and Performance*, ed. Diana Taylor and Sarah J. Townsend (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 285–90, 285–86.

10. Denise Stoklos, "Casa," in *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*, ed. Diana Taylor and Roselyn Costantino (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 141.

11. Stoklos, "Casa," 141.

12. Stoklos, 145.

13. Stoklos, 151.

14. One of the most thorough overviews of the field in English is Jane A. Russo's "Psychoanalysis in Brazil—Institutionalization and Dissemination among the Lay Public," *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 18, no. 1 (2007): 63–80.

This discourse of training minds to thrive in the new national context is also where Paulo Freire's work fits, which is why his theorizations of theatrical pedagogy are less relevant here than might be expected in an article about Brazilian theatre.

15. While one might normally offer a citation of Žižek at this point, what is at stake here is not his theory of hysteria, but rather Damasceno's utilization of this theory in the Brazilian context. As such, the relevant information is what Damasceno provides—not what Žižek directly said.

16. Leslie Damasceno, "The Gestural Art of Reclaiming Utopia: Denise Stoklos at Play with the Hysterical-Historical," in *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*, ed. Diana Taylor and Roselyn Costantino, 152–78, 157.

17. Damasceno, "The Gestural Art of Reclaiming Utopia," 158.

18. Damasceno, 153.

19. Damasceno, 155.

20. Similarly, Diana Taylor articulates the idea of a globalized Brazilian subject who is always existing and communicating interculturally but, like Damasceno, she maintains a tension between a notion of a united subject and the multiplicity of Stoklos's work: Taylor's globalized Brazilian is still one thing, a hybrid with mixed elements. Multiplicity is something to be translated and a unified meaning awaits: "Together, we will make meaning, or we'll keep trying—again and again and again" (Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 237). In Taylor's analyses, as in Damasceno's, division and multimediality are useful tools, but ultimately things to be overcome in order to secure a meaningful, and meaning-filled, future.

21. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, New York: Verso, 1993. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*, multiple presses, 1952. Achille Mbembe, *On the Post-colony*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001.

22. Stoklos, *The Essential Theatre* (n.p.: n.d.), 10. This English edition appears to have been prepared by Stoklos for teaching at NYU (as opposed to Diana Taylor's published translation excerpts).

23. Roberto Schwarz, "Nacional por Subtrção," *Folha de São Paulo*, 7th June, 1986, trans. Linda Briggs, trans., "Brazilian Culture," in *Misplaced Ideas* (Verso: London, 1992), 16.

24. Elias Joe Palti, "The Problem of 'Misplaced Ideas' Revisited: Beyond the 'History of Ideas' in Latin America," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 1 (2006): 149–79.

25. Schwarz, 16–7.

26. Diana Taylor and Roselyn Costantino, eds., *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform* (trans. Diana Taylor. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 137.

27. Taylor and Costantino, *Holy Terrors*, 137.

28. Taylor and Costantino, 138.

29. Taylor and Costantino, 138.

30. For a readily accessible English-language summary of Resende's work, see *Foreign Accents: Brazilian Readings of Shakespeare* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 2002).

31. While I contend that each scholarly community, often defined by national or linguistic boundaries, creates its own body of theory in communication with other groups, it is worth noting that some of Brazil's geographic neighbors theorize similar, albeit not identical, constructions of identity. Nestor García Canclini, an Argentinian, Paris-educated social and cultural theorist attempts to create a universal definition of culture free from Eurocentric influences. In *Hybrid Cultures*, he defines culture as production in Marxist sense as a hegemonic drive even when challenging social order. Unlike many of the other critics, Canclini doesn't emphasize South America's peculiarity, but he does emphasize the extent to which European theories don't fully explain the situation. He borrows Levi-Strauss's idea that things are not known because they are useful, but are deemed useful because they are known: things like popular culture or cultures outside of Europe are deemed less useful precisely because they are unknown. Canclini's conclusion, like Schwarz's, is that Eurocentrism and cultural relativism, both of which he rejects, will come to an end only when "inequalities" are overcome. Canclini argues for solidarity among "subordinate" cultures, not to reify each national culture but, instead, to create a synthesis of cultures free of Eurocentrism. If culture is a social production, a society that has inequalities will reproduce these inequalities in its social structures. Canclini argues that Brazil is already hybrid—it just needs to figure out how to balance this hybridity, and that balance, while incorporating universal cultural elements, will still be unique inasmuch as it responds to the cultural conditions of Brazil.

32. Oswald de Andrade, "Cannibalist Manifesto," in *Revista de Antropofagia*, 1: 1, 1928, trans. Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review*, 19, no. 38 (1991): 3847, 38.

33. de Andrade, "Cannibalist Manifesto," 39.

34. de Andrade, 39.

35. de Andrade, 38.

36. de Andrade, 43.

37. *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988).

38. Weaving is perhaps an imprecise metaphor, given that Stoklos keeps the strands so clearly visible and distinct—indeed, I have repeatedly found that the “natural” flows of the English language surrounding identity are ill suited for explaining the concepts at work here. Stoklos works in multiple languages, often in the same performance. Lacanian hysteria is about the inadequacy of language and communication, but the inadequacy of language relative to this particular task seems built into English and not perhaps my psyche. There are echoes here of Emily Apter’s untranslatables, but (American) theories of translation themselves rest uneasily next to Andrade’s cannibal.

39. Interview quoted in Damasceno, “The Gestural Art of Reclaiming Utopia,” 166.

40. Damasceno, 166.