

Spring 2022

Meta: una telenovela, quizás

Faith Amrapali Williams
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2022



Part of the [Modern Languages Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Williams, Faith Amrapali, "Meta: una telenovela, quizás" (2022). *Senior Projects Spring 2022*. 199.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2022/199

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Projects Spring 2022 by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

META, UNA TELENOVELA, QUIZÁS
A Metafictional Play

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts and The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
Faith Amrapali Williams

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2022

This project is dedicated to the Lindas out there, wherever and whomever you may be.

Acknowledgements

To Mariella, Ocean, Gaby, Immanuel, Antonio, Sophia, and Varona - you breathed life into this piece and brought your whole selves to the table every single rehearsal. I learned so much working with you, and you encouraged me to keep making work. Thank you for your dedication to *Meta*.

To Marissa, Gabo, Syd, and Freddie - Your expertise tied everything about *Meta* together. The play was visually joyful and vibrant. Thank you for your artistic creativity and advice.

To Nilaja Sun and Ganavya Doraiswamy - I could not have completed this project without your guidance, wisdom, and encouragement. Thank you for letting me cry and process many things over Zoom :-)

To Thai, Macey, Ella, Jake, Taty, and many others who consistently inspire me to think critically about my work while also telling stories from the heart. It is always a pleasure to work with you, and thank you for FaceTiming me while I vent about the institutional accountability of Senior Project even though you probably never wanted to hear the word “SPROJ” again in your life.

To Gavin, Immanuel, and Jonja - We did it! I'm so glad to have spent my four years with you as friends and collaborators. Whether it's campus drives, dorm room hangouts, front desk shifts, or music rehearsals, I have enjoyed every minute we've been together.

Table of Contents

Introduction and Background Research.....	4
Script of <i>Meta: una telenovela, quizás</i>	15
Theatrical Thesis: Introduction.....	49
Telenovelas and Adaptations.....	50
Outer Script/El guion interior.....	52
Latinidad, Identity, Intersectionality, and the Spanish Language.....	57
Rehearsals and Directing.....	59
Tech Week and my Production Team.....	62
Performances and Reflections.....	66
Works Cited.....	69
Original Photos by AnnAnn Puttithanasorn '22.....	70

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND RESEARCH

“What were your favorite TV shows in high school?” I don’t remember exactly who it was who asked this question, but it was asked at the little cast gathering following the final performance of *Fucking A*, which was the POC Theatre Ensemble and Theatre and Performance Department collaboration in 2021. I’m typically terrible at answering questions pertaining to my “favorite” thing because I’m not a particularly picky person, and I tend to connect with multiple elements of things. However, as I rewinded my mind through my high school years, the show that came to mind was the CW’s *Jane the Virgin*, starring Gina Rodriguez as the titular character. The show had enchanted me with the way it employed tropes from telenovelas such as a character coming down with amnesia, love triangles, secret evil twins, and murders, and placed them in a Floridian setting starring an aspiring romance novelist, her mother, and her grandmother. When I answered my friend with this TV show title, others chimed in about how they, too, enjoyed the show and we all agreed we loved the way the form of telenovela drove the storytelling throughout the series. During this conversation, I realized that the adapted telenovela medium related to my two majors, and thus the seeds for *Meta: una telenovela, quizás*, were planted.

Much of my research and inspiration for this project stems from film and theatrical works that I encountered in my classes in the Spanish Studies program at Bard, however I also looked into the development of the Historical Telenovelas in Mexico as inspiration for developing the telenovela in *Meta*, which is titled *Pan de mi corazón*. In this introduction, I discuss this research, the works of film, television, and literature which breathe through my work, and the ways in which I seek to interrogate, or even subvert, some historical and contemporary tropes,

roles, and expectations for certain characters. June 18th, 2021: I sat on the floor of my New Robbins dorm room while working the Bard Summerscape festival and began my research by considering the origins of telenovelas and the characters and roles within the medium. I read the journal article *Mirada de mujer: Negotiating Latina Identities and the Telenovela* by Layla P. Suleiman Gonzalez. Since my intention with the project was to center Latine women and other women of color, lesbians, and queer femme identities with this project, I was called to begin my research with a feminine perspective. Gonzalez states that the purpose of her article is to, “examine the representation of Latina identity within the medium, from the perspective of the telenovela as a vehicle for cultural reproduction as well as for social change.” (Gonzalez, 84) Through the lens of this article and other research I conducted, I was able to formulate the way I wanted my characters to take shape within the medium of the play and how they would engage with each other.

Gonzalez describes the medium of telenovela as a vehicle for legitimizing taboo topics. It provides opportunities for representation with shows that often feature working class people in addition to more wealthy characters. These 180-episode shows were typically geared towards families and audiences of all generations. Shows with family-friendly plotlines would air earlier while shows with more mature themes would air later at night. Since most everyone in a community would watch the telenovelas, the form presented an opportunity for self reflection amongst everyone. Particularly in regards to women, there were specifically curated archetypes that were often present in telenovela narratives. The most predominant trait in leading ladies formulated into *marianismo*, which was/is the virtuous, pure, ideal of femininity imposed on women. “Applied conceptually by theorists to describe the traditional notion of Latina female gender roles, *marianismo* embodies the values ascribed to the Virgin Mary as a model of

womanhood, values such as virginity, chastity, purity, self-sacrifice, submissiveness, obedience, motherhood, and the dutiful daughter and wife.” (Gonzalez, 87) These virginal, damsel - type women are also often light skinned and perhaps even blonde, aligning this godly ideal with whiteness. Additionally, marianismo is ultimately curated within these female protagonists to complement the male protagonists and characters, so she can be seen as worthy of his love and pursuit. With this understanding of these protagonists, I wanted to acknowledge them in my script without perpetuating or replicating them exactly, so when I began writing, I was particularly intentional with the way I was writing each character and potentially subverting these gender roles. I will explain more deeply the ways in which I do this later on in the paper.

It’s important to note that while lighter-skinned women were often imposed with characteristics of marianismo, Black and Indigenous women in telenovelas were typically assigned characteristics of being moral compasses for the lighter-skinned protagonists. One example of this was the 1997 Mexican telenovela *El alma no tiene color* which was based on an original story by Alberto Gómez. This telenovela featured the narrative where a light-skinned protagonist named Guadalupe (a reference to la Virgen de Guadalupe, no doubt!) discovers that the Black woman who works as a maid for her family is in fact her mother who was assaulted by her white father. When Guadalupe marries and has a daughter, she gives birth to a darker-skinned son, and her husband leaves her, suspecting adultery. The premise behind this storyline is that,

...the protagonist, who appears to be white, has a Black mother [which is] the crux of the “tragedy” in this story! In the denouement, of course, love transcends color, the husband gets used to the idea of having a little “coffee” in his cream, and eventually the racial barriers are overcome so everyone can live happily ever after. (Gonzalez, 90)

This example leaves Blackness or the concept of being darker-skinned as an obstacle or general tool of an antagonist that results in a lesson to be learned by the lighter-skinned protagonists.

This lesson is also more aligned with a “love conquers all” narrative rather than a “we shouldn’t be racist or anti-Black” narrative.

In addition to the anti-Black content within telenovelas, there has also been the distinct presence of colorism and perpetuation of beauty standards for non-Black Latina women as well. This was prominently addressed in the 1999 Colombian telenovela, *Yo soy Betty, la fea*. This telenovela features Betty, a young woman who aspires to thrive in the fashion industry who is appointed as the secretary to Armando Mendoza, the wealthy, handsome, and foolish new CEO of Eco Moda, a revered fashion company. The pilot of *Yo soy Betty, la fea* follows Betty as she goes to Eco Moda to apply for the secretary position. The cinematography of the pilot is set up so that the viewers do not see Betty’s face until three quarters of the way through the episode. We only see the reactions of other characters as they gaze upon “Betty, la fea”. When her face is finally revealed, we see that her hair and skin are darker than the other women who work at Eco Moda. She wears large braces and glasses, and is clearly not up to speed on the current clothing trends. She eventually lands the secretary job, but rather than gaining success from her abilities, she is hired because Mendoza’s father, who owns the company, believes she will be the first secretary whom Armando does not sleep with. While this pilot episode seems incredibly sexist and favorable toward Eurocentric beauty standards, the telenovela eventually continues to position Betty as a new president of Eco Moda by the third season. Eventually, she becomes seen for her capabilities and passions (albeit, still by male figures), and “overcomes” prejudices placed on her based on her appearance.

After watching *Yo soy Betty, la fea*, I moved to watching the next most logical television show: *Ugly Betty*, the American adaptation of the telenovela that premiered in 2006 on ABC starring America Ferrara as Betty Suarez, a young Latina from Queens, NY who applies for a

secretary job at Mode magazine in Manhattan. This version of Betty, like the character who inspired her, applies for this job during the pilot and is hired by Bradford Meade, the CEO of Mode because he believes his son Daniel, who is the editor, will not sleep with her. The plot of the show deviates episode to episode from the Colombian version because there is a rival member of Mode, Wilhelmina, the creative director, who wants to take over the company with her mentor Fey Sommers, who used to co-own the company with Bradford. Additionally, the Betty from the ABC version has an ever-doting boyfriend while the Betty from the Colombian telenovela is perpetually single. However, one important similarity between the two versions is that Betty also gains recognition and admiration from Daniel. He runs every important business decision by Betty. The life and future of Mode eventually becomes indebted to Betty. The message of the shows from both Colombia and the United States is consistent: beauty does not define your worth, and furthermore, beauty is subjective. Both Bettys remain the same at heart regardless of their appearances. Both Bettys eventually transcend desirability politics (even if it's simply internally) and become successful of their own volition.

After watching these two versions of the same story, I began to focus on the concepts and themes of adaptation, specifically of the medium of telenovela by a television network in the United States. I was asking myself the question: "What components make up a telenovela, and is the ABC version of *Ugly Betty* still a telenovela?" Particularly in conversations with my adviser Patricia López-Gay, we began to talk about the difference between a telenovela and a soap opera. I looked back to my foundational research and a journal article I read called "El pasado nacional como narrativa de ficción o la historia es una telenovela" by María de los Ángeles Rodríguez Cadena. This article focuses mainly on Historical Telenovelas from Mexico, but it can definitely inform one's understanding of telenovelas as a whole and their relationship in comparison to a

soap opera made in the United States. This article considers the definition of telenovela as it relates to social, cultural, and political influence.

El término “telenovela” ha estado tradicionalmente asociado al estigma que la identifica con el género menor del melodrama televisivo, el romance, y [*sic. petite*] *histoire*, sujeto a las lógicas del mercado, los intereses de las industrias culturales, y los lineamientos del género en Latinoamérica. La telenovela es considerada como carente de toda pretensión intelectual, de mérito artístico ausente y sin ningún valor histórico. (Cadena, 181)

Cadena essentially explains here that the telenovela is associated with melodrama and contains themes in relation to Latin American pop culture. Specific telenovelas will often draw from current events of the times and pop culture interests. In telenovelas, there isn't typically an expectation of a larger intellectual point being made like there might be in a drama, and the form isn't always considered to carry “artistic merit”. This is not to say that a telenovela is not or cannot be a commentary based in academic research or support an artistic thesis. Cadena is mainly commenting on the reception and perception of the telenovela medium, particularly by academics, or even the general public. For the purposes of writing *Meta: una telenovela, quizás*, I certainly regard the telenovela medium as intricate and intriguing to study because after conducting my research, I was able to include so many layers of telenovela-inspired content, narrative, and characters in my script.

Cadena goes on to talk about the form of “Historical Telenovela” produced in Mexico in the 60's and 70's. These telenovelas, produced by the network Televisa, were dramatizations of specific periods of national history - this could be wars, political events, or cultural customs - and fictional characters would be experiencing life through these times. Rather than being produced for accurate educational purposes, historical telenovelas aired to create an avenue for mass collective processing of historical and political events through melodramatic storylines about

fictional characters. The fictional narratives would maintain the general telenovela components - love triangles, jealousy, intrigue, themes of maternity and paternity, and mystery. These dramatic and tumultuous narratives placed within historical and cultural contexts make the telenovela.

On the other hand, the classic United States soap opera caters to the desire for human connection on a basic level. While a telenovela serves as a way to understand true experiences through emphasized fictional events and characters, a soap opera serves as a way for viewers to feel involved in the day-to-day lives of the characters. There is a certain level of sensationalizing the mundane. In her chapter “One Life to Live: Soap Opera Storytelling” from the book *How to Watch Television* edited by Ethan Thompson and Jason Mitchell, Abigail de Kosnik describes the timelines of soap operas in relation to the duration of viewing by audiences.

One reason that soaps’ long-arc storylines, with their drawn out plot reveals and unceasing reverberations, can affect soap viewers deeply is that “soap time” approximates “real time”....soap opera events unfold in a timeline that mirrors viewers’ lived time quite closely. A soap opera airs five days per week for fifty weeks of each year, usually for many decades, and so viewers have the sense that they live their lives alongside, or in tandem with, soap characters. (de Kosnik, 7)

The goal of characterization in soap operas is to create realistic people with plausibility to their lives. Families who watch soap operas have the ability to become familiar with the characters in a soap opera to the point where they feel they could be friends - perhaps these characters are really people, who might live in another state - they’re just like us! The stark contrast between this viewing experience and that of a telenovela is that the telenovela is not meant to mirror the life of the viewers or suggest that the viewers are quite literally aging with the characters in the show. A telenovela presents an opportunity to reflect on particular elements of storytelling that have been dramaticized and embellished that may pertain to their own culture and community.

Telenovelas center the plot and story - and the twists that come with it - while soap operas center the lived mundane of the characters and how viewers can relate to them. This conclusion suggests that *Ugly Betty* is, in fact, a telenovela because it dramatizes a narrative that highlights the experience of a young Mexican-American woman working in the fashion industry, and emphasizes the narrative plot points of her time at MODE rather than the mundane, everyday happenings of her household.

The elements that make up a Historical Telenovela and also the subversion of marianismo were definitely going to exist within my play, but there was yet another literary element I wanted to include that would enhance the project into a three-dimensional piece: la metaficción. I was first introduced to the concept of la metaficción through the Spanish novel *Don Quijote* by Miguel de Cervantes in a class with my adviser, Patricia López-Gay. The metafictional properties in that novel are the most prominent in the prologues - both in the beginning and the middle - where the narrator addresses the reader and comments on the events of the story being told. *Don Quijote* is framed as a fictional narrative being retold by someone who read the novel. Therefore, the novel one reads when reading *Don Quijote* is not actually *Don Quijote*, but rather the retelling of the novel from somebody who previously read it. Of course, Miguel de Cervantes wrote the novel this way on purpose. The narrator who is recounting the experience of reading *Don Quijote* is fictional. However, the reader experiences the novel three dimensionally because they are constantly called to decide whether they are reading the novel, a novel about the novel, or a novel about reading a novel of a novel. La metaficción calls the reader, listener, viewer, or audience to continuously question the perimeters of the work they are engaging with and their relationship to where the story begins and ends three dimensionally.

To further my research on la metaficción, I looked to the work of Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa. Vargas Llosa often uses this literary device in his novels, but also infused it in his theatrical work, *Kathie y el hipopótamo*, bringing la metaficción off of the page and into a dramatic playspace. In “Vargas Llosa's *Kathie y el hipopótamo*: The Theatre as a Self-Conscious Deception,” Jacqueline Eyring Bixler describes this play as a work of metatheatre, opening a space where the audience watches writers and artists generate their work and watch the abstraction of the creative process, and understand that this process is not typically definitive and conclusive. Vargas Llosa himself talks about the intersection of metafiction and theatre in a prologue to the 1982 edition of the play. “Ningún género manifiesta tan espléndidamente la dudosa naturaleza del arte como una representación teatral” (Vargas Llosa, 11). Vargas Llosa indicates that the medium of theatre is the perfect avenue to experience that natural doubt that exists within metafiction. Theatre creates a situation in which the audience assumes that there is a “fourth wall”, and that the action they are about to see does not extend into their own world. However with theatre, you can make that fourth wall incredibly thin in real time in order to keep the audience guessing, in a three-dimensional manner, whether or not there are holes in that wall.

With this research to guide me, I was able to begin the process of formulating the play. “What do I want to write about right now?” Is essentially what I asked myself. Initially, I thought I was going to be writing a telenovela in the form of a play. However, once I read up on la metaficción and components of a telenovela, I realized that there had to be an aspect of television present. Telenovelas are broadcast on television, geared towards thousands of viewers. This was when I conceived the idea that the play would be about filming an episode of a telenovela, where the plot points of the play would contain components of a telenovela plot or themes. The characters in the play would be facing some of the same issues from different perspectives as

their telenovela counterparts. I also decided I wanted the play to take place in the present, to allow the audience to experience a true thinness of the fourth wall between them and the actors. With this structure, I was able to begin developing the characters in the play.

I introduced myself to Linda, the Producer who grew up in Mexico and worked there for several years before also beginning to work on television in the United States. *Pan de mi corazón*, a testament to her experiences as a young lesbian set in a current United States, is the first show she is producing in the United States. Next I got to know Eric, the Director of the telenovela and mentee of Linda, as he directed his first pilot all on his own. Next, Chelsea and Stephanie, the two lead actors in the telenovela, materialized. Chelsea, a queer Puerto Rican actress who has a steady acting career looks out for the breakout actor Stephanie, who is figuring out how to approach playing a queer character for the first time before even knowing how she identifies herself. I then wrote the character of Aria, an aspiring actress and nepotism baby working behind the camera despite wanting to be in front of it. She looks to actors she admires such as Jaime, the Puerto Rican telenovela actor who is called in to work on *Pan de mi corazón* as a last minute replacement, for advice on her dramatic craft. I invite anyone who reads my script or had the opportunity to watch the performance of *Meta: una telenovela, quizás* live to get to know them as I did throughout my writing and rehearsal process. Ask them about their upbringings, their families, their aspirations; see where you can find these things in the text or in the performances my brilliant actors gave. I am forever grateful to both my actors and the characters they portrayed for working with me to explore cultural and self-identity, the Spanish language, and the art of feeling seen.

Meta: una telenovela, quizás

Characters:

****Note - The races/ethnicities of Eric, Rain, and Aria are unspecified, as they can be played by various people of color. Script edits and acting choices can be made in accordance with actors who are cast in these roles. Actors for Eric and Rain should exist within the Black and/or Latine diasporas, while Aria can be cast within the Asian American/Pacific Islander community. Additionally, any transgender or nonbinary actors who want to be a part of *Meta* are encouraged to play any character, and pronouns and gender-specific language can be altered accordingly if needed.**

(Stephanie, who plays Amelia) - Stephanie is an actress who is Mexican American and this TV show is her first big debut. She is a natural talent but unfamiliar with the Hollywood/film industry as she submitted to an open self-tape call. Is not out as queer at the moment. Amelia es la protagonista de la obra de televisión. Quiere ser dueña de una panadería y ahora está trabajando en un café pequeño en NYC. Es Mexicana - Americana.

(Chelsea, who plays Carla) - Chelsea is a Puerto Rican actress and has acted before in mainstream TV shows, no major movies. Publicly queer. Carla es el personaje que ha trabajado en esta panadería por tres años. Es escritora y quiere ser periodista. A veces canta cuando está trabajando. Es Puertorriqueña y tiene veinticuatro años.

(Jaime, who plays el mujeriego, Joaquin)- Jaime is very well known in Puerto Rico and by Linda and Eric, but less known in the United States in general. Is primarily taking this job to reunite with his old flame, Eric. Puerto Rican. Joaquín se describe con una palabra: el machismo. Trabaja en el restaurante al cruce de la panadería en una posición administrativa porque su padre es el dueño. Tiene veintisiete años. Tiene un interés en Carla y cada día viene a la panadería y le pide a ella casarse.

(The Director, Eric) - A gay masculine-presenting person of color who is essentially the engine of the play. Might have misguided understanding of the experience of lesbians and their relationships, as his queer experience differs from theirs. Was Linda's mentee at the start of his career. Truly loves directing and is dedicated to the craft.

(La Productora, Linda) - An early-40's Mexican lesbian who is working in LA, has dual citizenship and immigrated to the States when she was 22 to do a masters program,. Very grounded and sees this project as an opportunity to truly make the work she desires to make.

(The camera person, Aria) - The camera operator that we at least get to see the most of during today's filming. An actor at heart, but wants to be in the room with these artists. She is the only cis het person on the team of *Pan de mi corazón*, but she is still a person of color.

(El supervisor del público, Rain) - As Audience supervisor, Rain gives directions to the audience as they're watching the taping. They have worked this type of job for fifteen years, and they absolutely love it because they get to meet celebrities and go to parties. Rain is also a nonbinary person of color.

THE ORIGINAL CAST AND CREW, APRIL 2022

STEPHANIE/AMELIA ----- GABY SABOGAL, '22

CHELSEA/CARLA ----- VARONA MAYSONET-AYALA, '22

JAIME/JOAQUÍN ----- ANTONIO MARTINEZ, '23

ERIC ----- OCEAN ANDERSON, '24

LINDA -----MARIELLA MURILLO, '25

ARIA ----- SOPHIA LAWDER '23

RAIN ----- IMMANUEL WILLIAMS, '22

WRITER/DIRECTOR ----- FAITH AMRAPALI WILLIAMS, '22

SET DESIGN ----- GABO MORENO '25

LIGHTING DESIGN/OPERATION ----- SYDNEY MERRIT-BROWN '23

COSTUME DESIGN ----- MARISSA SALETT, '25

FILM CONSULTATION ----- FREDDIE HERNANDEZ, '22

FUNDING AND RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE OLD GYM, THEATRE ARTISTS'
GUILD, AND THE THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE DEPARTMENT

(AUDIENCE MEMBERS will be outside of the theater at the beginning of the play. “Amor a la Mexicana” by Thalía plays)

(THE AUDIENCE SUPERVISOR), RAIN

Okay hi everyone! Hi, hi. Yup! Please listen. Thank you. *(There can be improvising to get everyone’s attention. Begin to hand out CALL SHEETS and NDA FORMS)* Thank you. Welcome to the taping for *Pan de mi corazón* on this lovely evening! My name is Rain. I’ll be your guide today so you better LISTEN to ME because I will have all the answers you need. You are here to watch Scene 2.1 and 2.2 being filmed: it’s a scene where Amelia, the new hire, is being shown around la panadería by Carla, who helped hire her. You can see it on your call sheets there. The actors and the team and I are really excited - I mean ENTHUSIASTIC - to have to come watch this show. You’ll see you have received an NDA form! That means shut your pretty little mouths once you leave the studio - No posting on your little TikToks I can internet stalk like nobody’s business. Does anyone need a pen? I’ve got one pen - we’re all adults; we can share! Great. Thank you! Okay let’s head inside. I’ll be indicating some things and helping you through this event. You can always watch me, especially if you don’t know Spanish. Laugh when I laugh, cry when I cry, gasp when I gasp - all of that. I’m your best friend today. This is a telenovela - we need big energy from you all - It’s love triangles, plot twists, high stakes - the camera wants to radiate DRAMA from the actors and audience alike! *(takes a breath and makes sure they’ve covered everything.)* I’ll be over here. *(gestures to chair on a platform. Walks to the chair and sits in it.)*

LINDA

(enters)

¡Hola mi gente! *(approaches RAIN)* Did you brief them? *(RAIN nods)* We’ll get started in a few minutes.

(Once the audience is inside and seated, the rest of the ACTORS and CREATIVE TEAM begin entering the set space, not directly interacting with the audience. They are, however, aware of their presence. After LINDA sits down, STEPHANIE enters, Facetiming her mother and showing her around the set. Next ARIA enters, taking selfies on the bakery set and prepping the camera. Then enters CHELSEA, doing her own thing, and finally ERIC, sorting through some papers.)

EL DIRECTOR (ERIC)

Friends, let’s take a look at this. *(Calls to LINDA and ARIA)*

LA PRODUCTORA (LINDA)

What, do you have questions?

ERIC

I'm just trying to decide if we should start with the cake scene or leave that to the//end.

LINDA

I know the crew would appreciate it if we kept the messiest scene for last so they don't have to set up a cleaned set for the rest of the day. We can leave it to the end.

ERIC

Perfect. And double checking we are only working with Aria today.

LINDA

Yup. We're just capturing Amelia's POV. We'll fill in everything else this afternoon. *(to ARIA)*

ARIA

(LINDA heads over to STEPHANIE and CHELSEA who are going over a scene on the side. ARIA approaches Eric) Hey Eric?

ERIC

(Looking up from paperwork)

Yes, what is it? We're about to start.

ARIA

Have you...did you happen to hear about that audition//yet?

ERIC

Ricardo said his spots for this week are full -

ARIA

Oh..okay that's -

ERIC

BUT he could maybe get you in next Thursday.

ARIA

Oh. That's fantastic.

ERIC

(handing her some sides for a new pilot)

I know. So you better BRING fantastic because this is a unique opportunity.

ARIA

Right. I will. I'll have it all memorized and I'll practice everything really well beforehand and do you think I should wear anything specific *(pauses, ERIC is waiting)* Yeah. Do you have any specific directions for me about the filming of this project. The one we are currently working on. The one I should be focusing on.

ERIC

We're shooting this all from the perspective of Amelia so I'm gonna have her walkthrough each scene and then you're gonna follow her path so we can experience it through her eyes.

ARIA

Cool. Okay, sounds good.

(This conversation continues but falls silent as we turn our attention to STEPHANIE, LINDA, and CHELSEA)

LINDA

¿Qué piensas de todo esto? ¿Tiene sentido?

STEPHANIE

Uh... yeah creo que si pero like, ¿voy a seguir al camarógrafo y no estaré en el episodio físicamente?

LINDA

Exactamente. Queremos indicar que esto - este episodio es desde la perspectiva de Amelia. Así es cómo ella se mueve por el mundo y estos espacios.

CHELSEA

Wait, so like, I'm gonna be acting to her *(pointing to STEPHANIE)* or Aria?

LINDA

Both. Eric will explain it when he does it but we're gonna put Stephanie in first and then have Aria follow behind her and maybe we'll have you do it twice. Once with Stephanie to practice and once to the camera after you've gotten the feel of it.

CHELSEA

Sweet.

STEPHANIE

So we're starting with the tour scene?

LINDA

I...think. It 's the scene where Carla' s like “Eso es la manera en que hacemos los postres etc..”

STEPHANIE

Ohhhh okay sounds good.

ERIC

(finishing up his conversation with ARIA)

Are we almost ready to begin?

LINDA

I think so!

ERIC

Great - let's start birthing this baby!

(Dead silence)

LINDA

Do not say that again.

(People chuckle)

ERIC

Can I get Chelsea and Stephanie behind the counter, Aria, my friend, I need you behind Stephanie we're gonna figure out this following thing.

ARIA

(while everyone is moving)

Let me try to focus this right. *(Realizes everyone else is distracted, and pulls out sides for her audition. She starts to memorize the lines.)* “I can't. I love you. I have to stay with you, Charlie.”

ERIC

Ladies - any questions before we go over this?

STEPHANIE

Yeah - so do you want me to just -

ERIC

Act it the way you would normally and we'll track your movements and placement.

STEPHANIE

Got it.

CHELSEA

(notices ERIC's jacket)

I'm all good. I like your jacket, by the way.

ERIC

Oooh thank you! It was a gift from an old flame. I think of it as a reminder that if I'm failing in love at least my career's never fizzled out. Keeps me humble, symbolizes growth and all that.

CHELSEA

Rad.

ERIC

(to RAIN)

Hey Rain?

(Nothing)

ERIC

Rain, we're about to start

RAIN

(Looks up, To Audience)

They're starting. Follow my lead! *(to ERIC)*

ERIC

(Notices ARIA still focused on her lines)

Aria, we're going! *(Aria drops the paper and picks up the camera)* Action!

(The Following is the Telenovela script - STEPHANIE plays AMELIA, CHELSEA plays CARLA)

CARLA

(making gestures around the bakery set)

Bueno. Típicamente llegamos a las 4:00 de la mañana para empezar con las rosquillas. No hacemos los bagels aquí pero los recibimos a las 5:00. Hacemos las magdalenas a las 4:30. Quiche a las 5:15. Abrimos a las 5:30. ¿Preguntas?

AMELIA

(panning her gaze around the bakery set)

¿..Ehhh...a qué hora cerramos?

CARLA

A las tres.

AMELIA

Entiendo. *(Beat)* ¿Entonces, eres vampira, sí?

RAIN

(laughs out loud, address audience)

See, you can laugh like that. That was an example.

CARLA

¿Qué?

AMELIA

Supongo que por la noche tú haces todo lo que yo hago durante el día - ir al supermercado, poner gasolina, pagar las cuentas - , y que duermes después de todo ese trabajo.

CARLA

...No.

AMELIA

Eso es lo que yo haría.

ERIC

Cut. Stephanie, love ?

STEPHANIE

Yeah?

ERIC

What...what was that? *(makes straw fang gesture)*

STEPHANIE

Umm...I don't know I thought it was kinda funny...

ERIC

Well...It kinda was it's just - next time we do this can you amp up the flirting a bit?

STEPHANIE

Oh she's - already? Sorry, I didn't realize?

ERIC

You didn't REALIZE? Lesbians are always flirting if they're into someone.

STEPHANIE

But does she even know yet? I wasn't sure if it like, would maybe take some time.

ERIC

No. It's instant infatuation. This is t e l e n o v e l a. We make Bold Choices here.

STEPHANIE

Okay so should I like change my body language -

ERIC

It doesn't really matter we won't see you. I need to hear it in your voice.

CHELSEA

(starts to say something, and then reconsiders. Turns to STEPHANIE)

Try not to think of it as flirting but rather reacting to what I'm doing and saying. Do you want to drive the conversation or be more on the responding side?

ERIC

Exactly. Is she a top or bottom?

RAIN

Ha! *(to audience)* That wasn't part of the telenovela, I just thought it was funny.

CHELSEA

Eric.

ARIA

I'd say power bottom.

STEPHANIE

I'll try.

ERIC

Okay try it again but this time Aria, can you replace her? Stephanie, just speak your lines from over here.

(They set up to shoot the scene again)

CARLA

(making gestures around the bakery set)

Bueno. Típicamente llegamos a las 4:00 de la mañana para empezar con las rosquillas. No hacemos los bagels aquí pero los recibimos a las 5:00. Hacemos las magdalenas a las 4:30. Quiche a las 5:15. Abrimos a las 5:30. ¿Preguntas?

AMELIA

(panning her gaze around the bakery set)

¿..Ehhh...a qué hora cerramos?

CARLA

A las tres.

(LINDA's phone rings. She picks it up and begins a conversation)

ERIC

Cut. Hmm... still not working. We need to add something else.

STEPHANIE

Sorry. I'm just not doing a good job -

ERIC

It's fine. Umm...*(clearly thinking through an action)* Chelsea, I want you to grab a piece of that dough over there.

CHELSEA

(looking at a pile of bread dough or something on the counter)

This?

ERIC

Yeah. I want you to do that monologue again but this time knead the shit out of that dough. Really get your hands in there. *(to ARIA)* Can you zoom in on her hands as she's talking?

ARIA

Of course! The dough can get it.

ERIC

Great, thank you. Action!

CARLA

(now begins kneading some dough)

RAIN

(Guides the audience through reacting to this section. You can do "oohs", laughs, gasps, etc.)

Bueno. Típicamente llegamos a las 4:00 de la mañana para empezar con las rosquillas. *(Kneading grows more intense, faster)* No hacemos los bagels aquí pero los recibimos a las 5:00. *(Slams dough down and keeps at it)* Hacemos las magdalenas a las 4:30. Quiche a las 5:15. *(Slams again)* Abrimos a las 5:30. *(Slam)* ¿Preguntas? *(Slam. BEAT)*

AMELIA

(stunned to silence. Very into this)

¿..Ehhh...a qué hora cerramos?

ERIC

Cut! Girls, that was - i m m a c u l a t e .

LINDA
(entering from USR)

¡Ay carajo!

ERIC
(sighs)

Goddamn it, Linda what is it?! We are turning the corner to greatness, here. *(Turns to LINDA, miffed)*

LINDA

Ivan dropped out.

AUDIENCE SUPERVISOR

Gasp!

ERIC

What do you mean “dropped out”?

LINDA

He just abandoned us.

ERIC

No way. For what? Just now?

LINDA

Netflix original. Costarring fucking Noah Centineo.

ARIA

Ooh yikes - does that even pay better?

LINDA

We’re an independent Network.

ARIA

Oh so that means no -

LINDA

Of course it pays better!!

ERIC

That bitch. He's supposed to be here in 15! We need to get this done TODAY.

LINDA

Te entiendo. We need a new Joaquín immediately. ¡Ay! Ahora voy a hablar con los agentes en mi oficina. ¿Quién tiene tiempo? ¿Quién? (*Start to exit*) ¿Marcos? No, él tiene un proyecto en Toronto. ¿Esteban? No. (*LINDA exits*)

ERIC

Anyways. Back to the shoot - we were -

CHELSEA

“A las tres.”

ERIC

Right, can we just finish that exchange please? (*The actors nod*) Great, keep that energy we just cultivated! Action!

CARLA

A las tres.

AMELIA

Entiendo. (*Beat*) ¿Entonces, eres vampira, no? (*She is carrying the momentum from before. This section is more natural*)

RAIN

(*Laugh here*)

CARLA

¿Qué?

AMELIA

Supongo que por la noche tú haces todo lo que yo hago durante el día - ir al supermercado, poner gasolina, pagar las cuentas - , y que duermes después de todo ese trabajo.

CARLA

...No.

RAIN

Oooh...

AMELIA

Eso es lo que yo haría.

ERIC

Great! Yes, ladies, that's what I'm looking for. Stephanie, I'm really starting to see you break through. Can we explore a bit more as we move on about How she feels about this new connection -

CHELSEA

(Gets a phone notification)

Dang, sorry - it's my agent - I gotta check this out. *(Looks at phone again)* She just sent me something. Did someone give an interview about the show already?

ERIC

I'll have to check with Linda. Why?

CHELSEA

You guys follow QT-Pie right?

STEPHANIE

Cutiepie?

CHELSEA

(shows her phone to the others)

It's the journalism account on Instagram that just posts queer news and things.

STEPHANIE

I've never heard of it, but maybe I'll check it out.

ERIC

I'm barely on the site - everything I post I let my assistant curate for me.

CHELSEA

Anyway, they've got a linktree with all of these like, articles and things, and there was one anticipating the release of our pilot.

STEPHANIE
(a little excited gasp)

Woah!

CHELSEA
(confused)

What?

STEPHANIE
Oh, nothing I've just never been in something that's like, largely advertised! It's exciting!

ERIC
Exactly! This is great, Chelsea.

ERIC
(doesn't have time for this)
..Okay...

CHELSEA
It would be great! But they're talking about the way the network is marketing the show.

STEPHANIE
How are they marketing it?

CHELSEA
(To ERIC) I want to talk to publishing. It's overkill. I'm not doing this show if we're the "Chicana Lesbian Dream you've been yearning for."

ERIC
(grabbing CHELSEA's phone)
Let me see that.

"We were shocked to see the tagline for *Pan de mi corazón* written as "the Chicana Lesbian Dream you've been waiting for", as we thought even the mainstream cishet media would have moved past reducing sapphic relationships to a Pornhub category, yet here we are in the 2020's sitting at the intersection of lesbo and latinophobia."

CHELSEA
You see how the network is being degrading.

STEPHANIE

Does Linda know about this?

ERIC

I can ask. I'm sure she's taking care of it.

CHELSEA

I mean, do we really have to advertise all over the news outlets and everything that we're the new it-lesbians?

ERIC

Chelsea you literally are a lesbian!?

CHELSEA

Yeah but like if we just focus on sexuality alone it feels kind of, like, reductive you know?

ERIC

People are always selling the sex of things. It's all fucking, fighting, and fleeing these days in television. They do it to all queer relationships. Straight relationships too! It's been that way forever...Can we talk about this later? I can't fix this right now. Do you wanna be outta here before tomorrow?

CHELSEA

Ah...yeah. Sure.

ERIC

Okay let's jump ahead now. Action!

CARLA

Si. Todo pasa mucho más rápido. *(perhaps think about why the character decides to bring up Joaquín in this moment)* ¡Ay - y también, tenemos que guardar dos muffins de maíz para... Joaquín.

RAIN

(React here)

AMELIA

(perhaps broken from the spell of their connection)

¿...Joaquín...?

CARLA

Joaquín. Este hombre que viene y examina todo - su padre es el dueño. (*Decides to add this part - again, why?*) Cada día me propone matrimonio.

AMELIA

Es un poco raro.

CARLA

Me encanta la atención. A él le gusta comer magdalenas calientes con mantequilla fundida vegana y un capuchino.

AMELIA

Ah...él es vegano.

RAIN

(sarcastic laugh perhaps)

ERIC

Cut - "Me encanta la atención." WHY does she like the attention, Chelsea? Does she actually like it? What's going on here?

CHELSEA

Carla's a flirt! You know she's sweet talking anyone who walks through those doors. It makes the work less draining and dull.

ERIC

Exactly. And she likes it when people watch her flirt. It's a p e r f o r m a n c e. She's flashing her feathers at (*gestures to STEPHANIE*) this one.

CHELSEA

Well I'd even add that for gay girls -

ERIC

No time! Moving on! Action.

CARLA

No puedes olvidar que es vegano y es muy sensitivo con los productos de leche.

AMELIA

¿El es un vegano que siempre habla sobre el hecho que es vegano?

CARLA

¿Tienes algo contra los veganos?

AMELIA

No. Solo tengo algo contra la que sale con ellos. *(En un acto de valor, toma la mano de CARLA)*

RAIN

(Oh...)

CARLA

No estoy saliendo con él.

ERIC

Okay cut. Great. We'll film the next scene when the replacement gets here. In the meantime, let's just go over the scene for a bit. So Joaquín is about to come in and start flirting with Carla.

CHELSEA

Proposing's more like it.

ERIC

And then Stephanie, Amelia's gonna take notice of this and maybe try to shoo him away a bit. You know, she's jealous right. She barely knows Carla but she already feels icky when someone else is hitting on her.

STEPHANIE

Okay - so I'm looking over this part where I say "Empecé este trabajo hoy," so that's me being like, "I started this job today and I'm already stealing your girl", right?

ERIC

Yeah. She's been pretty bold to begin with with Carla; it's adding tension to the scene.

CHELSEA

This scene's wild. This would not fly for me today - if this happened I would call HR right after he left the first time he tried something like this.

ERIC

Linda said we had to include El Mujeriego though. You gotta have that straight man who's always asking for some uninterested girl's hand in marriage. It's his whole purpose. Trust me - I'm not that into it either (though between you and me I'd die for someone to propose to me I'm going through such a dry spell right now) -

CHELSEA

Ew!

ARIA

(patting ERIC on the shoulder)

I'm sorry.

ERIC

But you can think of it as an empowering hurdle, or whatever, if you want. Like she knows she doesn't want him but she has to figure out what she wants instead. What inspires her?

CHELSEA

Ohhhh. I'll just lean into the fact that Amelia has no problem fucking up his rhythm. Carla's inspired by her immediate impulse to challenge him.

ERIC

Wonderful! Great, go with that. *(BEAT)* Truly though, somebody's son needs to ask me out soon because I am so // lonely.

LINDA

(entering)

I found him!!

STEPHANIE

Found Joaquín?

LINDA

Our Joaquín! - Jaime, we're in here!

JAIME

(making an entrance)

Got it, coming!

*JAIME enters, there is a pause in the room All eyes on him. ERIC lets out an audible gasp.
RAIN pumps him up*

JAIME
(directed at ERIC)

Long time no see, amor.

ERIC
(immediately shoots LINDA a glance)

Linda...

LINDA
Now we can finish the shoot, Eric! Aren't you so happy//that I found him?

ERIC
//Can we speak in private, please?

LINDA
...Quickly, now.

ERIC
(pulling LINDA aside, harshly whispered)
Girl why - WHY the FUCK did you bring my ex into this project?

*(as this conversation happens, JAIME gracefully and charismatically greets everyone,
compliments them, charms the room)*

LINDA
I don't want to hear it Eric. You said we needed to get this done - he was in the area doing a Late Night Interview. He says he'll be here for the next three weeks. We both know he's committed, he works well, and the camera l o v e s him.

ERIC

I know but it's gonna be so weirddddddd. He's gonna be hitting on me the whole time and you KNOW I can't resist those eyes.

LINDA

Exactly. He's the mujeriego we need.

ERIC

But -

LINDA

¡Callate! He's cast. Make it work. I'm paying you to make it work.

ERIC

...Fine. *(Returns to the center of the set)* Okay, folks. I'd like to introduce you to our new Joaquín: Jaime Cuervo. *(Everyone claps or something)*

JAIME

(bows)

Thank you, thank you. I really appreciate it. Thank you for welcoming me into this process on such late notice. I promise I will bring my entire heart and soul into the role of Joaquín. I am so excited to grow closer with some of you *(looks to ERIC)* and to reconnect with others. I know my dear friend Linda is looking out for all of us - we are going to make something//
BEAUTIFUL!

ERIC

//Okay okay we're running on a very tight schedule....

JAIME

(close to ERIC)

Nice jacket ;-)

ERIC

(pushing away from JAIME to talk to LINDA)

You already worked out the contract?

LINDA

It's getting done.

ERIC

Linda!!! I can't put him to work without a contract.

LINDA

Yes you can.

ERIC

No! I -

LINDA

(makes sexy gesture)

Yes YOU can.

ERIC

Stop it!!! *(She does not stop)* You're lucky I love you more than I love him.

ARIA

(goes up to JAIME)

I just have to say: I'm a HUGE fan. I've seen all your stuff - *El amor de la rosa, Siguienda la destina, Rebecca in Madrid*, I'm just really - I really love your work.

JAIME

Awww that's so nice I really appreciate that.

ARIA

Ooh my god yeah of course! *(pause)* If - if you have a moment like, at the end of the day to maybe talk about how you do it.

JAIME

It?

ARIA

Acting. I'm really an actor at heart. How you do acting, then that would be so so so cool.

JAIME

Yeah! I'm happy to sit down with you - I don't have too much going on after this since. It's my vacay time.

ARIA

Really? That's so nice of you wow. Thank you so much, sir, it'll only take a few minutes...And! I also have this audition I'm working on for next week that maybe you could..?

JAIME

Of course I can look at it! Truly, it's no trouble.

ERIC

We're back! Aria, I need you over here now. We're gonna hold off on the POV until later.

ARIA

(to JAIME)

I'll come find you after. *(Moves to new spot)*

ERIC

We're going to go from Joaquín's entrance. Jaime - I want you to start off camera over there and then move into frame after your first line.

JAIME

Easy. Anything for the handsome director.

ERIC

(rolls eyes)

Action.

JOAQUÍN

¡Carla! Mi bonita...

CARLA

(drops AMELIA'S hand)

¡Joaquín!

JOAQUÍN

Sí, soy yo, Joaquín. *(BEAT, he leans on the counter)*

RAIN

(Some reaction that is swooning over JOAQUÍN)

JOAQUÍN

¿Cómo estás hoy?

CARLA

Joaquín, me siento igual que siempre.

JOAQUÍN

Yo veo. Aburrida de está posición, horneando por los pobrecitos que no pueden funcionar sin café.

CARLA

(grabbing JOAQUIN'S order)

Tu lo sabes.

JOAQUÍN

Carla...sabes que odio decirlo de nuevo pero - si te casas conmigo, ya no tendrás que trabajar aquí. Podrías seguir tus sueños. Volver a la escuela y -

CARLA

(laughs like a bird)

Joaquín, sabes que no puedo. No creo en el matrimonio. Disfruto mi libertad.

JOAQUÍN

(Curtly grabs the paper bag)

¿O...posiblemente disfrutas las mujeres?

RAIN

GASP!

CARLA

Joaquín -

JOAQUÍN

No no no no digas <<Joaquín...>>. *(a AMELIA)* ¿Tu eres... su novia?

AMELIA

Empecé este trabajo hoy.

ERIC

Cut. Stephanie -

STEPHANIE

Yeah?

ERIC

Do you see this? This is chemistry. I need to see more of this from you with Amelia.

STEPHANIE

What - leaning on the counter and smirking?

ERIC

Yeah, that - or just like, exuding charisma.

JAIME

You think I still exude charisma?

ERIC

(verbally stumbling)

Um, it's a testament to your acting skills. I'm referencing Joaquin here, not you. Please keep your focus on the work.

STEPHANIE

How do I start to exude charisma?

CHELSEA

How do you usually flirt with people?

STEPHANIE

I - well I don't really.

CHELSEA

Flirt with me.

STEPHANIE

What?

CHELSEA

Hit on me. Go.

STEPHANIE

I like your...face. Nope! Do you come here often? Nope - you literally work here. So....like what got you into acting? I'm sure it's more than just your natural talent to attract the camera.

CHELSEA

Great.

JAIME

And now you've gotta add the (*approaches ERIC*) sonrisa y toca el brazo así -

ERIC

(*playfully ish*)

Cut it out!

JAIME

Lo siento mucho.

ERIC

I want to do the rest of the scene now, but just keep this in mind, Stephanie. Let's just stage it out right now so Aria can also do a test run with the cameras?

JAIME

Anything for you (*pause*) Eric.

ERIC

(*glares at JAIME*)

Places, please. From, "O posiblemente..?"

JOAQUÍN

(*Takes his order from CARLA.*)

¿O...posiblemente disfrutas las mujeres?

RAIN

GASP!

CARLA

Joaquín -

*****LINDA begins to watch the filming process intently*****

JOAQUÍN

No no no no digas <<Joaquín...>>. (to AMELIA) ¿Tu eres... su novia?

AMELIA

Empecé este trabajo hoy.

JOAQUÍN

¡Qué promiscua, Carla! Siempre estás aprovechando a la empleada nueva.

CARLA

Ew, no es verdad. Estoy harta. Se larga, cabrón.

JOAQUÍN

Me matas, Carla. Pues, elegir la vida que quieres. Pero, no me quedo aquí para tí para siempre. Elige sabiamente.

ERIC

Cut! Stephanie, what was that?

STEPHANIE

I'm so sorry, I don't know. It was hard to find a place to like, insert something.

CHELSEA

Well, you don't have to really insert it, babe, you can just react more and follow your impulse to do something.

STEPHANIE

I think I'm finding it difficult to do that with so few lines.

ERIC

Well -

CHELSEA

It's not about what you're saying. It's more about what we say does to you.

ERIC

Exactly it's -

CHELSEA

Like when this man Amelia's never met before comes in and just unabashedly harasses Carla like he apparently does every day, what's her reaction? Does she freeze up or want to fight him?

ERIC

So you might want to think about how -

CHELSEA

Like, is Amelia wondering if he might start doing the same to you? Or is she completely focused on Carla?

ERIC

(really irritated)

CHELSEA oh my god whatthefuckdoyouthinkyou're doing are you trying to take my job or something? You are the ACTRESS. For the love of God just let me do my job and shut the fuck up for TWO SECONDS and let me do mi -

LINDA

Eric! Can we talk for a bit?

ERIC

(Being taken out of it)

Linda -

LINDA

Now. *(To everyone else)* Everyone please take a 5!

(Everyone exits except LINDA and ERIC)

LINDA

Dios mio, Eric, what are you doing?

ERIC

...Directing the scene?

LINDA

No, what were those directions you were giving poor Stephanie earlier?

ERIC

(realizing she's about to side with CHELSEA)

What...

LINDA

Have you ever even been to the club and seen women flirt? Do you ever pay attention?

ERIC

Well no -

LINDA

Exactly! Why would you, I guess? But you have to learn to listen better.

ERIC

To the actors when I'm the director.

LINDA

To the actual lesbians who are trying to help you understand their experience to create a more authentic show!

ERIC

(breathe)

I - Oh. I'm sorry I didn't. Okay.

LINDA

When was the last time you really saw yourself on screen, Eric? Think of the last time you looked at one of those white gay trauma porn stories and thought "when will we stop simply being consumption for straight people?" "If I could just be the one telling my story - or working with people to tell one like mine - if I could just -" *(Breath)* We have an opportunity to do better. But it takes doing -

ERIC

What those people don't.

LINDA

Go talk to her. Stephanie too.

ERIC

Okay. *EXITS*

LINDA

(Takes a breath and then realizes she is alone with the audience)

Oh. Right. Thank you for taking the time to listen through all of that. All of this, honestly, it has been quite hectic. Can I just talk to you guys about this for a second? Yes? Thank you <3.

I think that - this is and has been quite the experiment as you can tell. Did you know I'm used to doing TV in Mexico? I've worked here for a bit but this is my first time producing a show in LA and it's just us trying to put this little show together. I've worked with Eric twice before on more mainstream projects here and he's so dedicated to his work that I think he sometimes loses - well it doesn't matter now. Anyway

I just wanted to thank you for choosing us to come see today. I'm joyful that the story I'm telling is one you want to listen to. If we don't even get picked up for a season I'm just glad that we were able to show it to someone. That someone wanted to see Carla y Amelia even if only for a few minutes and let them exist as full beings. Not as watered down tropes. I'm not really sure where this project is going to go but it went here and that's still important. We're not making this for the people who don't want to enjoy this. I hope you will watch the pilot when it airs.

STEPHANIE

(entering)

Are we back?

AUDIENCE SUPERVISER

Yes!

STEPHANIE

Great *(Calling offstage)* Guys it's time!

(Everyone starts to wander back on stage)

CHELSEA
(Talking to ERIC)

See, that's why I think it's hard to juxtapose lesbian flirting with the direct nature of the telenovela style.

ERIC
Okay I see what you're saying, but I think we can work with it still.

CHELSEA
All right.

ARIA
Again, Jaime, I really appreciate this advice. I didn't realize that I was missing the passion the character was feeling. I was playing it way too melancholic.

JAIME
No te preocupes, Aria. Let me know how that audition goes.

ARIA
You know I will!

JAIME
(goes over to ERIC, who is now looking over stage directions and script notes)
The job never stops, does it, bello?

ERIC
You're never gonna let me go are you, Jaime?

JAIME
I will hold you back from you career from now until you become a household name.

ERIC
(sigh, then -)
Let's get a drink after this.

STEPHANIE
Chelsea?

CHELSEA

Yeah?

STEPHANIE

Is it always like this?

CHELSEA

¿Cómo qué, mujer?

STEPHANIE

Like with everyone fighting over how we should do this?

CHELSEA

People are always fighting about the plot and the characters and what the ratings will be and what the public will want. But honestly, I don't think what you're talking about is really - fighting.

STEPHANIE

Why not?

CHELSEA

Did any of it make you feel icky?

STEPHANIE

...No.

It wasn't fighting. It was something of the inverse.

ERIC

Okay everyone we're gonna move on to the next scene. Set up the rehearsals for Escena 3.

LINDA

(Goes up to RAIN and shakes them awake)

We're moving on now! It's time for them to go.

"Amor a la Mexicana" plays once more.

RAIN

Okay okay it's time for us to all head out, but before we do let's just give it up for our amazing cast and crew - Let's give some love for our actors - Chelsea, Jaime, and Stephanie! (*Audience clap*) and then there's our fabulous camera operator Aria! (*Audience clap*) Our powerhouse of a director, Eric (*Audience clap*) and finally our ethereal Producer, a vision with a vision, Linda! (*audience claps*) and last but certainly not least, ME! Clap for me, please. Yes, clap! Thank you, thank you! (*Audience claps*) Thank you, thank you, and we are moving on so we will not keep you any longer. But We are so happy you came today!

STAGE LIGHTS DOWN, END OF PLAY

THEATRICAL THESIS

“I just wanted to thank you for choosing us to come see today....We’re not making this for people who don’t want to enjoy it!” - LINDA

Meta: una telenovela, quizás, was a healing process. Linda’s monologue toward the end of the play comes very much from the heart and many reflections I have about my experience making theatre throughout the past four years. Like Linda, I want to make theatre that invites people in. I want to make theatre that directly addresses the audience and says “you are here to experience a reciprocal journey of feeling seen, heard, and cared for”. I wholeheartedly believe I have seen this intention through with *Meta*. With this play I wanted to celebrate and engage with Latin American culture, queer identity, and the breaking down of the artistic process. I also wanted to create a space where the audience is invited to place themselves in the same world as the characters in the play, so that they leave knowing “these characters represent real people with whom we share the world”. By creating a metafictional, interactive play about queer Latine people sharing a story based in an art form that is intrinsic to their culture, I invite all who interact with *Meta*, whether in it or in the audience, to see the piece and feel seen.

I went into this project with a clear vision for my developmental process: I wanted to begin my research over the summer and continue it simultaneously with my scriptwriting in the Fall Semester of 2021. I would then cast my play and rehearse from February - March, and then tech and go up in early April. This entire process would be centered around the student and theatre community, and eventually culminate in a performance in the Old Gym, rather than the LUMA festival. As someone who has performed in and been involved with productions in both the Fisher Center and the Old Gym, I chose to work in the Old Gym because it has been the home to my student theatre career at Bard. It is a place with which I am familiar; it is a place into

which I have personally invested time and energy. By taking place in the Old Gym, *Meta* could welcome new students into the Old Gym who had perhaps never seen a show there before, or it could inspire students who hadn't worked there to put up their own piece in the future. With this plan, I set about my inspiration and writing process in the Fall.

TELENOVELAS AND ADAPTATIONS

As I mentioned in the Introduction, I watched *Yo soy Betty, la fea*, and *Ugly Betty* as inspiration while I was writing the script. The primary aspect of the *Yo soy Betty, la fea* pilot that made it into *Meta* was the fact that we don't see the face of the title character until $\frac{2}{3}$ way through the episode. I knew I wanted to nod to this trope in my play because it creates a reason to center the experience and perspective of the female protagonist by forcing the viewers to see and experience the world through her eyes. It can exist to provide a pathway to empathy for the viewers. My intentions in writing this into my script were that Linda wants the audience to experience that first day *en la panadería* as Amelia. This is her first major pilot to be pitched to mainstream streaming services in the United States, and she is aware that many viewers in the United States either aren't used to seeing themselves empathized with in mainstream television, or do not consider what life in the States is like for young Latinas discovering their queerness. By forcing them to literally see Amelia's life through her eyes, other young queer Mexican-American girls are invited to insert themselves into the narrative, and those who do not consider that Mexican-American lesbians exist are forced to know that they do, and they deserve to have their experiences understood.

I also watched almost all of the first season of *Ugly Betty*, the English adaptation of the Colombian telenovela. Watching this show helped me understand what it looked like to create a

show that references the telenovela medium but is also accessible to audiences in the United States who may only speak English. As I mentioned before, *Betty la Fea* brings the narrative to the current moment of the time. This show premiered in 2006, and takes place in Queens and Manhattan, NYC. Betty wears clothes that might be what an “unfashionable” young woman in the mid-2000’s would wear. There is also the presence of two gay characters on the show: Betty’s nephew and Marc St.James, the assistant to the Creative Director. The characters also use the same types of cellphones that existed in the general American public 2006. The costuming of the characters, the early depictions of queerness, and the specific technology indicate something familiar to the audiences watching ABC in 2006, which made the adaptation accessible to them. They could dive into the story and engage with the elements of telenovela that were maintained in the adaptation because there were aspects to the show that were familiar.

In terms of writing *Meta*, *Ugly Betty* inspired me to keep the setting contemporary while preserving the telenovela medium. I set the play in present day Los Angeles and included cultural references that audiences would recognize (“Noah fucking Centineo!”) in order to make them understand that the world of the play is their own world. I also took inspiration from *Ugly Betty* to allow the characters to experience both the hardships and joys that queer Latine people encounter in our world. Just as Betty is made fun of for the food she eats, the community in which she lives, her body type, and her intrinsically Brown features, she also maintains a strong relationship with her father Ignacio, who is a first generation immigrant from Mexico, and prioritizes helping him continue family traditions and values. She is allowed to unapologetically love her Mexican heritage even though her coworkers at Mode Magazine are racist. While I didn’t want to include the white, heterosexual, and cisgender-centric world as an antagonist in *Meta*, I did want to give a space for my actors and characters to unapologetically express love for

themselves and each other, as well as the work they are doing together. Linda does ask Eric when she confronts him at the end,

Think of the last time you looked at one of those white gay trauma porn stories and thought “when will we stop simply being consumption for straight people?” “If I could just be the one telling my story - or working with people to tell one like mine - if I could just -” We have an opportunity to do better.

Linda reminds both Eric and the audience that they are creating a show that reflects their livelihoods in a world that does not support their existences. This is an incredibly difficult undertaking that requires resilience and ironclad self-love and preservation. She reminds both Eric and the audience of this, grounding us in the root of why *Meta* wanted to be written. Queer people of color deserve space, deserve joy, and deserve engagement.

THE OUTER SCRIPT/EL GUIÓN INTERIOR

When writing *Meta: una telenovela, quizás* (in English “*Meta: a telenovela, perhaps*”), it quickly became clear that I would need a way to distinguish between the narrative of the play and the narrative of the telenovela, *Pan de mi corazón* (Thank you, Antonio for the title idea!). I developed the terms “Outer script” to reference the narrative of *Meta* and “Guion interior” to reference the narrative of *Pan de mi corazón*. “Guion interior” translates to “interior script” in English, and I chose to use the Spanish translation to reference *Pan de mi corazón* because the telenovela script is entirely in Spanish. The title of the Outer Script, *Meta: una telenovela, quizás*, is a reference to the metafictional experience the audience has while watching the play. They are constantly asked to question “Am I watching a telenovela? Or am I watching a

telenovela about filming a telenovela? Is it both? Am I in the telenovela?” The “quizás” asks for that question to be continuous and never truly answered.

I began my writing process by sketching out the characters that I would want to include in the script. I knew I wanted a medium sized ensemble cast, and I also wanted to cast some actors who speak both Spanish and English and some that only speak Spanish. I ended up creating the following simple breakdown:

- Three actors - two women to play the romantic leads, and one actor to play el mujeriego
- A producer - an experienced artist who moved to the States as an adult and purposes to write and produce love stories about Mexican and other Latine Lesbians
- A director - someone who has worked closely with the producer before and is eager to tell this story, but does not entirely relate to it
- A camera operator - someone who is consistently capturing the telenovela, but secretly wants to be the center of attention
- An audience supervisor - someone who interacts with the audience and bridges the world of *Meta* with the audience’s world

After figuring out the types of characters I wanted to be working on the telenovela, I had to also construct a breakdown of characters for the telenovela. I had already decided on three “actor” characters in the Outer Script, so I focused on three characters interacting in one scene:

- La protagonista, Amelia - the main character, starting a job at a bakery and realizing she has a crush on her supervisor, Carla
- La interés romántica, Carla - the romantic interest for Amelia who is experienced at both the bakery job and being confident in her romantic needs and desires.
- El mujeriego, Joaquín - As Eric says, “that straight man who’s always asking for some uninterested girl’s hand in marriage.”

Equipped with these outlines, I was able to hone in on the specifics of the characters, their identities, and their relationships to both *Pan de mi corazón* and each other. I decided that while Amelia would be bold and wanting to outwardly explore her sexuality, the actor playing her, Stephanie, would still be coming into her queerness and not confident to publicly come out at the moment. Both Chelsea and her telenovela character Carla are confident in their identities and expertise regarding their workplace. Jaime would be a charismatic romantic pining after his past love, while his character Joaquín would “unabashedly harass” Carla everyday at work. Writing a character such as Jaime to play Joaquín calls attention to the trope of el mujeriego while also acknowledging that this stereotype can be harmful to queer masculine people in addition to the cis women we first consider victims of the trope because it erases their identities. Each actor would share the identity of the character they were playing. This is to say - both Stephanie and Amelia are Mexican-American, and Chelsea, Carla, Jaime, and Joaquín are all Puerto Rican.

I then started to characterize the director, Eric, and the producer, Linda. I wanted their relationship to be familiar, and I wanted Linda to be the mother of the telenovela and Eric to be her mentee. I decided that Linda would be a Mexican lesbian because I mainly conducted research based in Mexican telenovelas. She is a lesbian because as a lesbian myself, I want to write stories that acknowledge queerness and queer people without centering the narrative solely around sexual relationships. I also think that while we rarely hear and see queer people of color living vibrant lives in theatre and television in the first place, we really don't see queer people of color much older than their late 20's at all. I wrote Linda to represent the storytellers who want to share their experiences in spaces that don't typically acknowledge their existence. Eric was going to be a masculine person who dates men because I wanted to write about more than one type of

queer relationship in the piece. Eric also was going to be “the engine” (as my adviser Nilaja calls him) of the piece. As the director, he would be interrogating the text of *Pan de mi corazón* and asking the actors about their acting choices, as well as communicating with the camera operator to fulfill the artistic vision of both Linda, the supposed writers, and the script itself. Eric is the only character that is involved creatively in *Pan de mi corazón* but does not speak any Spanish in *Meta*. The choice to make Eric not a Spanish-speaker and also not a lesbian was to highlight the fact that oftentimes directors take on projects about identities that aren’t their own. It is also a nod to the fact that I wrote and directed *Meta*, but I myself am Indian and not Latin American. I wanted Eric to be able to relate to the fact that the characters in *Pan de mi corazón* are queer people of color in the United States, but since he does not speak Spanish and is not a lesbian, he is unable to relate to those identities. This point is again noted when Linda asks Eric to listen better to the “actual lesbians who are trying to explain their experience to create a more authentic show”.

The character of Aria, the camera operator who is “an actor at heart”, originally was called Allan, and I actually wrote this character after casting my friend Sophia and was able to picture the type of character she might play. This camera operator originally did not have much purpose beyond filming the telenovela, but once I became inspired by Sophia’s ability to hold down a comedic role, I decided that the renamed camera operator Aria would serve as the character who, like her camera, was always watching the people around her but never fully included. Aria is not Latine, does not speak Spanish, and is not queer, but she is showing fully invested in becoming an actress like Chelsea and Stephanie. She supports the work that the rest of the team is doing even though she does not quite understand everything about the queer

culture they are writing about, but she wholeheartedly contributes because she knows she wants to be in their position someday, perhaps making television authentic to her own experience.

Finally the character of Rain, the Audience Supervisor, ever so slightly began to materialize. I'll admit that even now I am still developing this character. At first, Rain's purpose was to simply guide the audience in and out of the theatre. I also originally pictured the character providing an interesting subplot where they took shrooms before coming into work (their job being the start of *Meta*) not realizing that they were scheduled to work that day. I originally had Rain moving around the set, looking confused and moving around equipment, much to the confusion of Eric, Linda, and the actors. However, once my adviser Nilaja watched a rehearsal of *Meta* and asked about how busy the stage would be, I realized that there were already many layers to *Meta*, I thought having a subplot that was never explicitly stated outright would be too confusing and draw from the main point of the show. The week before the show, I rewrote Rain's character to be more of a bridge between the audience and the team working on *Pan de mi corazón*, encouraging the audience to react to certain funny or dramatic moments in the telenovela. However, later in the script, Rain begins to encourage the audience to react to parts that aren't part of *Pan de mi corazón*, but rather moments that are happening in the Outer script of *Meta*, contributing to the metafictional nature of the whole play. I see Rain developing as the acknowledgement of the thinness of the fourth wall. The fourth wall is nonexistent in *Meta*. The characters acknowledge the audience and address them as part of their world.

LATINIDAD, IDENTITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

Meta: una telenovela, quizás is truly a joint project between Spanish Studies and Theatre and Performance. The use of Spanish in the script exists to highlight the way it's used by bilingual Latine people in the United States, both among themselves and with other people who may not speak Spanish. I wanted the telenovela to be entirely in Spanish because Linda is from Mexico and would have started out writing and producing work entirely in Spanish. Because she values cultural preservation and the decentering of white comfort in television, she would definitely continue to write her first mainstream show in exclusively Spanish. It also would make sense that three characters who are fluent in Spanish (Amelia, Carla, y Joaquín) would speak in Spanish with each other if there are no English speakers present. This situation is also presented in the first conversation that Linda has with Stephanie and Chelsea at the top of *Meta*.

LINDA

¿Qué piensas de todo esto? ¿Tiene sentido?

STEPHANIE

Uh... yeah creo que si pero like, ¿voy a seguir al camarógrafo y no estaré en el episodio físicamente?

LINDA

Exactamente. Queremos indicar que esto - este episodio es en la perspectiva de Amelia. Así es cómo ella se mueve por el mundo y estos espacios.

CHELSEA

Wait, so like, I'm gonna be acting to her (*pointing to STEPHANIE*) or Aria?

Here, Linda addresses both of the actresses in Spanish, and Stephanie replies in Spanish while Chelsea responds in English. All three women speak Spanish, so Linda addresses them in Spanish, much like the three Spanish-speaking characters communicate in Spanish in *Pan de mi corazón*. However, whenever they are in conversation with Eric, Aria, or Rain, they primarily

communicate in English while utilizing certain Spanish words and phrases because the conversation includes people who only speak English.

I wrote and directed *Meta* with the intention to include the audience in the narrative plot of the play, but not to cater to the comfort of any monolingual white people who may be present. I want the Latine, bilingual, and other queer people of color in the audience to feel like this play is for them and that they are the intended and invited audience, and I want White Americans to experience watching a play where they were not the default audience. When they sit down to see *Meta* and experience untranslated Spanish and queer POC talking about their lives with no explanations or trauma behind them, they realize that this existence is not something that is going to be explained to them. I decided that while I would give context to the plot of *Pan de mi corazón* through the format of the discussions Eric, Chelsea, and Stephanie have about the scenes in between takes, I wouldn't translate the Spanish directly in any way. I also wanted to assume my audience was going to be filled with queer Latin American people and other POC, even though I am so used to seeing mostly white audiences at the Old Gym. The latter part was difficult for me to do, especially in the last week leading up to opening because I was thinking through making sure the entire plot (both the Outer Script and el guion interior) would be understood by my audiences, and figuring out a balance between making the narrative comprehensible and literally holding White American audiences hands the entire time. When looking back through the text and talking with my adviser Nilaja, I realized that the answer was in the acting, and that as long as I worked with my actors to ensure that they were in a close enough proximity to the audience, the audience was given clear instructions by Rain before the show started, and the words my actors said were always audible, the story was going to be very apparent. I would not need to worry so much about the possibility of the plot of *Pan de mi corazón* getting lost.

REHEARSALS AND DIRECTING

I am really happy to say that my actors, my production team, and I too really enjoyed the rehearsal process for *Meta: una telenovela, quizás*. I have been involved with planning and scheduling many shows in the past, so I was able to come up with a timeline that would allow adequate time for us to explore the text and the characters but also wouldn't overwhelm us since everyone involved had incredibly busy semesters. I had my first readthrough on the first Wednesday in February after we returned from break, and I then proceeded to hold two rehearsals a week through the week after spring break. Since the piece was not going to be longer than 30 minutes, I figured four hours of rehearsal per week would suffice for rehearsals. I would begin these rehearsals with a check in, and we would all go around and acknowledge how our days were going and the way we were feeling as we entered the rehearsal space. We would then do a guided warm up where I would ask the actors to connect physically with their characters and explore how they might interact with each other in situations beyond the action of the play.

For example, one time Sophia, who played Aria, was wondering how much she should be "glued to the camera" and when there might be times she would want to move away from the camera. For an activity at the next rehearsal, I had Sophia and some other actors, Varona, and Antonio, select random objects to keep on their person. I then instructed them to improv a situation where their characters were taking a 5 minute break from filming and to incorporate these objects into their improv. Sophia chose a hand sanitizer bottle and sanitized her hands once before talking to the other actors who were fixing their hair and makeup with a mirror and comb as they improvised. From this exercise, we were able to figure out that Sophia could utilize the camera when it was needed to film the telenovela, but could feel free to move around and relax from the camera when it was not in use. The camera was a tool, rather than an extension of Aria.

After warm up activities, I would start staging. We would always talk through the scene I was planning to stage before actually doing it on its feet. I wanted to ask my actors about their relationships with the characters to really bring them to life. Truth be told, if you look at the way Eric and Chelsea talk through each telenovela scene in *Meta*, you will immediately have a good grasp on my own directing style. For me, this process was fascinating because I wrote about Eric directing, and then directed my actors on how to play a director and actors that I wrote about, and then asked them how the characters they were playing would feel about playing Amelia, Carla, and Joaquín. It was truly a “meta” experience to direct my actors in the situation where their characters were being directed by Eric. My actors were always up to tackle anything I threw at them. They approached the metafictional material with so much insight, intuition, and excitement, and I was always inspired to add their character work into the fabric of the show itself.

This was also true in terms of the use of Spanish in the text. The first rehearsal I held after the readthrough was with the actors who were going to be speaking Spanish in *Meta*: Varona, Gaby, Mariella, and Antonio. We went through every Spanish line in the play and talked through the structure and at times pronunciation of the words. It was wonderful to have several fluent or experienced Spanish speakers to work with because that meant if anyone had a question about the phrasing of a line, we could work collaboratively to figure out the best way to reword the Spanish. For example, Joaquín has a line that is currently written as:

JOAQUÍN

Carla...sabes que odio decirlo de nuevo pero - si te casas conmigo, ya no tendrás que trabajar aquí. Podrías seguir tus sueños. Volver a la escuela y -

This line went through many revisions, particularly “si te casas conmigo, ya no tendrás que trabajar aquí.” Originally, I wrote this line as “Carla... sabes que odio decirlo de nuevo pero - si

casarte, no tendrás que trabajar aquí...etc.” After talking through this with Antonio, Gaby, and Varona, the line was changed to “...si te casas conmigo, no tendrás que trabajar aquí”. We rehearsed that way for a few weeks, and then Antonio offered to have his mom look over the script, and after consulting her we finally changed the line to the way it currently reads. There were many other Spanish lines that went through a similar workshopping process, and I’m so grateful I had this experience of talking with multiple people who may have different experiences with Spanish within different cultural contexts. Since I learned Spanish primarily in a classroom setting, *Meta* has given me the chance to better understand country and cultural-specific Spanish, and I hope to continue this education and understanding in future projects (or maybe iterations of this one!)

After staging and working through scenes, I would end rehearsals with a discussion and reflection time. This would allow me to understand how my actors were coming into their characters. Some of the collective notes/questions I took down during these discussion are:

- What does the fact that Stephanie is not out mean for her and the way she approaches playing Amelia?
- Linda is in a committed relationship with her partner and is planning on adopting a child from México with them
- What impact does Western femininity have on the women in *Meta*?
- How do these characters interact with and feel about the Live Audience?
- How can Antonio use voice work to distinguish between Jaime and Joaquín?
- Aria wants to be in the room with these people but not in the role that she currently has as camera operator
- Linda takes selfies like a middle aged woman and loves it

These notes were not necessarily character points that were communicated to the audience or even the final script, but they were intrinsic to the versions of these characters that my actors portrayed. The final versions of these characters were multidimensional and contained personality traits and histories that were devised in the rehearsal process. I love that even though

there is no textual evidence that Linda is in a relationship and planning to become a parent, or that Jaime leans more towards his femme side but can easily jump into the masculine shoes of Joaquín, but these traits are what make these characters uniquely the versions played by Mariella and Antonio.

I was eager to work with this cast in particular because some of my actors had acted many times before, while others were fairly new to it! Ocean Anderson, who played Eric, joined our cast about a month before we opened, and even though Eric was to be his first speaking role in a play, he took on the fast paced, line-heavy role with enthusiasm and inspiration. In the week leading up to opening night, I worked with Ocean on some projection, line memorization, and physical acting techniques that some of the other cast members had already done previously. In just one week, I observed Ocean settle into his character embodiment and physically connect with Eric. Because there was so little time for him to memorize lines, we put together a “director’s binder” as a prop for him to hold onstage. We put Post-It notes and highlighted segments in the binder and marked times in the show when he would use the binder to help cue his lines and times when he would put the binder down and have sections of the script memorized. Ocean’s final performances were captivating, clear, and confident. He particularly excelled at the section where Eric comes at Chelsea for interrupting him directing! This is the climax of the play, and Ocean nailed the delivery and emotion behind the writing in an authentic way to both himself and the character. It was a pleasure to work with him!

TECH WEEK AND MY PRODUCTION TEAM

My production team was just as fantastic and innovative as my cast. I worked with Marissa Salett as my costume designer, Gabo Moreno as my set designer, Syd Merrit-Brown as

my lighting designer, and Freddie Hernandez as my film consultant. Each of these team members were able to give stellar perspectives on their areas of expertise while creating a cohesive picture that was consistent with the writing, direction, and acting. Marissa created a beautiful slideshow with outfit inspirations for each character based on the early drafts of the *Meta* script. I invited Marissa to come to a rehearsal and talk through the slideshow with the cast. We talked through which pieces we may be able to source from our own closets and which ones we might want to thrift or order. Cast members also suggested items from that they already owned, which influenced the final designs. Marissa then asked people to bring in samples of their clothing at a later rehearsal, and between those clothes and some thrifted items, the characters' visual looks materialized. My personal favorite has to be Eric's bright red shirt, burnt orange pants, and iconic embroidered shirt. The entire look matches both the telenovela set and Linda's bright red skirt, really connecting the creators of *Pan de mi corazón* to the visual imagery of their work.

Gabo Moreno and I have worked together throughout the semester because he was recently hired as an Old Gym Head, which is a position that I also hold. Together, we work with Ali Kane and Rosalind Werner-Winslow to maintain and manage the Old Gym as a student-run theater. Because of Gabo's experience in the Old Gym and his ability to build dynamic and creative set pieces and props, I was confident he could really help me bring to life a theatrical set that also includes a film set. Gabo and I had meetings one-on-one and also with the film consultant to talk about the balance between the areas where Linda, Eric, and the actors would be working on the side vs. the actual telenovela set itself. We decided we wanted to buy flooring to show a contrast in the base of the set, so we went to Lowe's and purchased five white flooring panels that we gaff-taped to the floor of the Old Gym. Gabo and Freddie also suggested incorporating green screens into the telenovela set to both create the realistic effect and

assumption that more scenery would be added in after filming, and also to continue to contrast between the black box theater color palette of well, black and the telenovela set which had bright red tablecloths, white flooring, and now green screens. During tech week, Gabo found a door in the Old Gym storage which we painted white and placed at the upstage left corner of the set where the two green screens met. This really pulled la panadería together and also gave Antonio a point of entrance for Joaquín's first scene. Finally, we placed some plants and a cash box we found in Old Gym storage on the counter, and created a rack of baked goods behind Carla. The set looked vibrant and realistic, and was very functional!

Syd and I mainly worked on the lighting during tech week because we only get to work with the Old Gym lights, per the policy. Syd came to a staging rehearsal earlier in the semester so she could grasp an understanding of the set and where actors would primarily be playing. On the Tuesday of our tech week, Syd and I spent a couple hours repositioning the lights in the Old Gym, and then I went through the script and explained where I would want lighting changes throughout the show and which parts of the play were most important to be lit at which times. We then had a cue-to-cue that evening from 7:30-10:00, and Syd programmed the lighting cues into the Old Gym's iPad lighting system, Luminaire. I was so grateful to have Syd's expertise and vision as a part of *Meta* because I personally know very little about lighting, and Syd skillfully balanced the lighting between scenes where telenovela takes were happening and when the actors were discussing the telenovela plot.

The film element of the set was heavily developed by Freddie, who also filmed the performances! Freddie joined conversations with Gabo and myself to figure out how to create the visual effect of a film set. The green screens were a fantastic idea, as I mentioned before, as well as the use of a real camera and track for Aria to use. Freddie worked to make sure that the

camera was easy to set up and hold, as Sophia would be moving around frequently while holding it. Representing the film medium in a realistic way was really important for this piece because telenovelas are broadcast through television, and having a film major as a consultant really solidified that element into the visual and narrative fabric of *Meta*. I staged the play so that Aria was sometimes using the moving track and tripod and sometimes holding the camera by itself and filming the action on the set. This fully created the look of a functioning camera which contributed to the realistic belief that *Meta* is truly a live taping of a telenovela pilot. Without Freddie's help I could not have easily created this effect and incorporated this element into the set as seamlessly and effectively.

To further create the film set vibe with the play, I also formatted the playbill for *Meta* to look like a call sheet. On film sets, call sheets are used to indicate to the cast and crew what is going to be shot that day, who is called and when, the conditions and location in which they are filming, and other pertinent information. My playbill [WHICH YOU CAN SEE IN APPENDIX X] featured the name of the play as well as the title of the telenovela, *Pan de mi corazón*. I listed the Old Gym's location, the weather for the day, and included each of my actors and crew members, the characters they were playing or production roles they had, and a brief bio for each of them. This call sheet playbill added to the meta experience for the audience because by receiving a call sheet that listed the scenes that would be filmed for *Pan de mi corazón*, it truly indicates that they are part of that live taping. They are just as much a part of this theatrical/cinematic experience as the actors themselves.

PERFORMANCES AND REFLECTIONS

I decided to be in the tech booth with Syd during the performances so I could both run sound while Syd ran lights and also so I could watch the entire play - audience included. I am not going to lie - I had no idea how people were going to receive *Meta: una telenovela, quizás* because I had put so many layers into the piece. I was worried that la metaficción would get lost in the exploration of the queer experience and el español and the television element and the display of an artistic process and the audience reactions. I wanted to be able to watch the audience while also watching *Meta*. I also had not been able to show any of the play to anyone aside from the people directly involved because at midways I only had a first draft of a script and had not yet casted anybody. In truth, I was also worried because the reactions to my Theatre and Performance midway presentation, in which I outlined much of the research which went into the Introduction of this paper, was met with confusion and disbelief by many of the Theatre and Performance professors. Rather than receiving commentary on the research I had presented, I learned there was a question as to how I would find actors to cast in this show (which made me want to ask some of the professors - "Why do you assume there are no Spanish-speaking Latine actors at this school?") There was also a difficulty in understanding how I would incorporate all of the layers - el español, queer identity and latinidad, television and la telenovela - into a 25-30 minute piece. To this I wondered "Why do you consider intersectional identity and lived experience to be too complicated?" I exist as a queer, adopted, Indian-American who speaks both English and Spanish, but not the language of the people who birthed me. I am also an actor, singer, writer, director, music director, and much more. I do not consider my existence to be "too complicated" but rather full, expansive, and unique. It took the entirety of my winter break and then some to work through this feedback, or honestly lack thereof, from some of the Theatre and

Performance faculty and create an intention for my theatrical process. Thankfully, I ultimately felt extremely happy about the way my performance weekend went.

Throughout the rehearsal process I would hear from my actors that they were really happy to be a part of *Meta*. I was also able to grow closer with some of the people involved in my show, and we connected through talking about the play. I find it exciting that Antonio's mother wanted to help edit some of the Spanish in the telenovela scenes, or that *Meta* was the first play in which Ocean, who played Eric, had a speaking role! The purpose of writing and performing *Meta* extends beyond putting up a show and having it run for two nights in the Old Gym. It was also about introducing people to acting or other theatrical production roles. It was also about building community and inviting new audience members into the Old Gym (some upperclassmen told me this was their first Old Gym show!) It was also about Linda's exchange at the end of the play with Eric, and also her monologue.

LINDA

We have an opportunity to do better. But it takes doing -

ERIC

What those people don't.

- - - - -

LINDA

I just wanted to thank you for choosing us to come see today. I'm joyful that the story I'm telling is one you want to listen to. If we don't even get picked up for a season I'm just glad that we were able to show it to someone. That someone wanted to see Carla y Amelia even if only for a few minutes and let them exist as full beings.

This play was an opportunity for me to put into practice things I had wished for in previous years doing theatre at Bard. This was my opportunity to write and develop a show that centered queer

people of color and prioritized their voices and contributions to the piece as a whole. While not explicitly stated, Linda, Eric, and the rest of the characters in *Meta* are creating *Pan de mi corazón* in a situation where most other pilots will be predominantly white and also in English. We can only imagine the battles Linda must have fought to have this pilot produced. The words Linda speaks here are also reflective of what it took for *Meta: una telenovela, quizás* to exist this semester. It took a collective of people saying “We are here. We are going to be seen and celebrated, and we are going to dedicate ourselves to uplifting ourselves and our communities through this work.” I am forever grateful to the people who took this on with me.

The energy after opening night was radiant. It had been some time (even for those who have acted many times) since some of us had performed or shown work in front of an audience. My actors were impressed with themselves and how well they performed. I had many conversations post-performances with students who really connected with *Meta* and were excited to hear the Spanish or enjoyed Rain’s energy and the audience interactive component. The experience of talking with both audience members and my team is compelling me to continue developing this work and exploring the material with different people. I would love to add more Spanish conversations to the Outer Script. I would love to try casting this both with High School Students and people who actually are the ages of the characters. I would love to work with a dramaturg who could really assist me with incorporating telenovela acting into the Outer Script. I’m happy I had the opportunity to begin this project in the Old Gym with the people who worked with me, and I hope this is only the foundation for more productions of *Meta: una telenovela, quizás* in the future.

Works Cited

"Pilot." Produced by RCN Television, directed by Mario Ribero Ferreira. *Yo soy Betty, la fea*.

"Pilot." Produced by Jeremy Beim et al. *Ugly Betty*, season 1, episode 1, ABC, 2006.

Vargas Llosa, Mario. *Kathie y el hipopótamo*. Lima, 1892.

El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha ("The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha"). Spain. Vol. 1 of *Don Quijote*. 2 vols.

Gonzalez, Layla P. Suleiman. "Mirada de Mujer: Negotiating Latina Identities and the Telenovela." *Counterpoints*, vol. 169, 2002, pp. 84–96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42977475>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2022.

María de los Ángeles Rodríguez Cadena. "El Pasado Nacional Como Narrativa de Ficción o La Historia Es Una Telenovela." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2014, pp. 180–211, <https://doi.org/10.1525/msem.2014.30.1.180>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2022.

DE KOSNIK, ABIGAIL. "One Life to Live: Soap Opera Storytelling." *How To Watch Television*, edited by ETHAN THOMPSON and JASON MITTELL, NYU Press, 2013, pp. 355–63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qght3.42>.

APPENDIX - PHOTOS BY ANNANN PUTTITHANASORN '22



Joaquín asks Carla for her hand in marriage, as he does every day



Amelia arranges baked goods at la panadería



Aria films Chelsea performing as Carla in *Pan de mi corazón*



Rain guides the audience through participation in the telenovela taping



Linda addresses the audience explaining why she is producing *Pan de mi corazón*



Eric and Jaime share a moment



The cast and crew of Meta: una telenovela, quizás

Front Row: Sydney Meritt-Brown, Antonio Martinez, Marissa Salett, Faith Amrapali Williams,
Immanuel Williams

Back Row: Sophia Lawder, Mariella Murillo, Gaby Sabogal, Varona Maysonet-Ayala, Ocean
Anderson