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Passion Plays: The Dominican Diaspora in Waddys Jáquez's P.A.R.G.O.

Abstract

This article analyzes how the play *P.A.R.G.O.* (2001), written, directed, and performed by the Dominican Waddys Jáquez represents the contemporary experience of the Dominican diaspora. Jáquez himself forms part of a new generation of diasporic artists who frequently return "home," to the Dominican Republic, and who, unlike the previous generation of diasporic artists and writers, continue to find their most valuable audience there. This tendency towards an increasing interconnectivity between diaspora and homeland is represented and effectively reinforced in *P.A.R.G.O.* The play brings the experience of the diaspora close to home for the audience, not by compelling them to identify with the characters' particular identities, but rather by placing center stage their ongoing negotiations and "making do" with personal and economic difficulties that define their lives both at home and abroad.

Keywords

diaspora, Dominican theatre, PARGO, P.A.R.G.O, Waddy Jáquez, Dominican diaspora, Dominican Republic, homeland

Passion Plays: The Dominican Diaspora in Waddys
Jáquez's *P.A.R.G.O.*

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Until fairly recently, accounts of the experience of the Hispanic Caribbean diaspora were likely to coalesce around the significant break that immigration caused in immigrants' lives.¹ Migration histories were structured by the "before" and "after" of immigration and emphasized the stark cultural differences between "here" and "there," the real and imaginary distance between diasporas and their homeland. Similarly, diasporic cultural production tended to be perceived as far-flung and removed from national cultural developments at "home."² Nowadays, increasing awareness of the connections and continuities between diasporas and countries of origin has shifted the emphasis in scholarship from the "before" and "after" of immigration to a concern with circular migration—migrants moving back and forth between the home and destination country—and with the ties that continue to bind migrants to, rather than separate them from, their home countries. As Ernesto Sagás and Sintia E. Molina in their introduction to the anthology *Dominican Migration: Transnational Perspectives* (2004) emphasize:

Nowadays, modern transportation provides easy and cheap travel back and forth between host and receiving societies. New communications technology allows migrants to stay in touch

with relatives and developments back home....the traditional concepts of 'host' and 'sending' societies have practically lost their meaning in light of globalizing trends in which economic exchange, political sovereignties, social structures, and even cultural practices transcend national boundaries. (4)

These ongoing exchanges have given migrants an increasingly important role in their home country with which they tend to maintain extensive and enduring ties.

This tendency also manifests itself in the case of the Dominican Republic. According to Jorge Duany, "[t]he Dominican diaspora has reshaped practically every aspect of daily life in the homeland, from family structure and business enterprises to political ideology and religious affiliation" (29). This impact has been increasingly recognized by the Dominican state, particularly since the election of president Leonel Fernández; as Sagás notes: "[i]n 1996, the election of Leonel Fernández marked another chapter in the political incorporation of overseas Dominicans" (60). A helping fact is that Fernández has himself formed part of the Dominican diaspora in the U.S., and during his time governing the country (1996-2000) and (2004-2008; 2008-to present) he has made extensive efforts to foster a close relationship between the Dominican nation and its diaspora. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel also comments on the effects of these efforts, before the 1990s "los 'dominicanos ausentes'" 'the 'absent Dominicans' were "un otro negado y minusvalorado en mucho de los discursos oficiales del gobierno dominicano" 'an other negated and undervalued in many of the official discourses of the Dominican government' (822).³ These political and economic efforts are mirrored in the national cultural realm, where artists and writers from the Dominican diaspora, once marginal, have come to play a significant role. The diaspora nowadays figures visibly in some of the most important national cultural events: the annual International Dominican Book Fair, the Biennial of Dominican Art, and the León Jiménes Art Competition.

These cultural tendencies are reflected in the lives of an emerging group of artists and writers who reside intermittently in both the Dominican Republic and in the U.S. and whose creative work is primarily directed to audiences at home in the Dominican

Republic rather than to a U.S. audience.⁴ The intervention of these artists in the Dominican cultural landscape and their investment in Dominican audiences differs from that of diasporic artists and writers whose principal audience is found in the receiving, rather than the sending communities. For example, two of the most prominent faces of the Dominican diaspora are the writers Junot Díaz and Julia Alvarez, and, as Janira Bonilla notes, “they are not only labeled as Dominican writers and Latinos but they are also recognized as part of the U.S. literary landscape” (204). The success of these two writers in the U.S. and their incursion into the U.S. mainstream constitutes in fact a source of national pride in the Dominican Republic and both have been repeatedly invited to present their work back “home.” Also, recently, the phenomenal success of Díaz’s long-awaited novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), which garnered him the Pulitzer Prize in the U.S., has been equally celebrated by the Dominican diaspora and on the home island.⁵ Though the now iconic work of Alvarez and Díaz does play an important role in the cultural landscape of the island, I argue that their intervention differs from that of a new group of Dominican diasporic creative producers. Unlike “Alvarez and Díaz, who arrived as young children to the United States, [and who] write in English, and for the U.S. general public,” these writers and artists continue to consider Dominican audiences as a principal public for their work, reflected in the fact that their creative works are predominantly in Spanish (Ságas et al 22). I thus think that one should avoid speaking of the intervention of “the” Dominican diaspora and that ongoing developments towards greater interconnectivity challenge scholars in the field of migration studies to develop more nuanced approaches to various forms of cultural “returns.”

Among the artists who continuously return and intervene in the Dominican cultural landscape are the writers and performers Rita Indiana Hernández and Rey Andújar, who live in the U.S. (currently in Puerto Rico) but frequently return to Santo Domingo to present their work. Hernández presented the performances “Ready” and “El Miti Miti Show” in 2006 and 2007 respectively, and Andújar has repeatedly performed his piece “Ciudadano Cero” in Santo Domingo, including at the International Dominican Book Fair in 2006. However, the most well-known and nationally acclaimed

cultural producer from the Dominican diaspora is Waddys Jáquez. Jáquez has lived and worked for more than a decade in New York City and has produced a series of plays over the past seven years, all of which he wrote, directed, and acted in himself. In the U.S. these are generally staged at the Repertorio Español, a theatre principally showcasing theatrical work in Spanish, in New York City. However, he also presents all his plays in the Dominican Republic where they have been staged with great success at the Teatro Nacional in Santo Domingo and other important theatre venues.

The direct and continual intervention of Waddys Jáquez, but also of performers such as Andújar and Hernández in the Dominican cultural sphere raises compelling questions about what they bring back to the island. In her attempt to provide some answers, Peggy Levitt has usefully coined the concept of “social remittances” to describe those less tangible, non-financial investments sent back by immigrants, such as “ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital” (“Social Remittances” 926). Levitt further notes how unlike “other types of global cultural dissemination,” such as those affected by mass media, social remittances “travel through identifiable pathways” and “ideas are communicated intentionally to a specific recipient or group” (*Transnational Villagers* 64). Taking up Levitt’s concept, Juan Flores, in his essay “The Diaspora Strikes Back: Reflections on Cultural Remittances,” argues that the “idea of social remittances needs to be supplemented and sharpened” by what he terms “cultural remittances.” He adds:

In most social science accounts of more-than-economic return flows, as exemplified by the work of Peggy Levitt and others, culture is reduced to behavior, and thus not examined in relation to the national ideologies and cultures of either ‘host’ or ‘sending’ countries. Furthermore, no attention is paid to forms of cultural expression altered by the to-and-fro movements of contemporary migratory patterns. It is, after all, in language, music, literature, painting and other artistic and expressive genres that the values and life-styles remitted from diaspora to homeland become manifest in the most tangible and salient ways. (23)

Waddys Jáquez’s own creative and personal trajectory very much

follows such a “to-and-fro movement,” and several of his plays precisely aim to make tangible the contemporary experience of the Dominican diaspora.

Jáquez's repeated returns to the island and his creative and critical interventions in the Dominican cultural sphere take on several dimensions. On one hand, Dominican theatre and cultural critics generally coincide in their appraisal of Jáquez's plays as a significant innovation in the Dominican theatre scene. For example, in 2004 the Dominican critic Marivell Contreras affirmed emphatically: “lo digo sin temor a dudas que el teatro dominicano se ha avivado en los últimos 3 años gracias al ingenio y a las puestas en escena de las obras de este actor y dramaturgo dominicano residente en los Estados Unidos” ‘I say without fear of doubt that Dominican theatre has revived in the last three years thanks to the ingenuity and the staging of the works of this Dominican actor and dramaturge living in the United States.’ More recently, in 2006, Carmen Imbert Brugal similarly insisted that “la pervivencia del teatro tiene el nombre Waddys Jáquez” ‘the survival of theatre has the name of Waddys Jáquez.’ Jáquez's theatrical strategies and staging, his integration of video projection and recorded voice-overs into his theatrical works, as well as performance elements that reflect the influence of drag-shows and American stand-up, have shaken up the Dominican theatre scene.⁶ The Dominican cultural establishment has recognized the significance of Waddys Jáquez's contribution to Dominican theatre by repeatedly awarding him the best Dominican cultural prize, the Premio Casandra; in 2001 his play P.A.R.G.O. received the award for “Best Play” and “Best Actor,” and recently, in 2007, his play “Cero” won the award for “Best Play,” “Best Director,” “Best Actor,” and “Best Actress.”

Notably, the appraisal of critics and the cultural establishment is matched by the enthusiasm with which his plays are received by Dominican audiences. For example, when *P.A.R.G.O.* (the play I discuss in this essay) was staged in 2001, its one-month run was extended because of its vast popularity. The enduring appeal of Jáquez's work on the island was again clearly evident when several of his plays were re-staged in the Fall of 2005, over a period of three weeks, to almost full capacity nightly at Casa de Teatro in Santo Domingo, one of the most established independent Dominican

theatre venues.⁷ The popularity of a play like *P.A.R.G.O.*, however, has surprised some, given that it revolves around characters from the Caribbean diaspora in New York City who are utterly marginal subjects. Or, as Camilla Stevens describes in even stronger terms in her essay, “The Politics of Abjection in *P.A.R.G.O.: Los pecados permitidos* by Waddys Jáquez,” they are “abject immigrant characters” (257).⁸ These characters, who at times have turned to prostitution and drugs, include a transsexual, a homeless person, and an ex-convict, leading at least one critic to note with astonishment that “el público respondió y soportó las historias” “the audience responded to and withstood these stories”. These diasporic characters and their stories certainly diverge from and clash, as “lessons learned abroad by poor and subject peoples may, and often do ... with the traditional cultural and ideological values prevalent” in their home country (Flores 2).⁹

The particular achievement of Jáquez’s play—his “return” to the island—is how he makes these marginal diasporic subjects come alive on stage and, more importantly, makes their experiences matter on the Dominican national stage.¹⁰ He does so by strategically not positing these diasporic subjects as inherently different and removed from the reality of Dominican audiences, nor by insisting that audiences need to identify with who they are. Rather the play poses and creates continuities between the audience and its characters by divesting the focus from their particular identities and instead places center stage the processes and strategies through which they negotiate difficult experiences both at home and abroad. Jáquez’s 2001 play *P.A.R.G.O.* evolves around four principal characters from the Caribbean diaspora who are all played by Jáquez himself. These characters, who take the stage one after another each directly addressing themselves to the audience are: María Cuchívida, a homeless drug dealer and former prostitute who came to the U.S. with a stolen passport; Papi Chío, an illegal Dominican immigrant, once imprisoned for a crime of passion he did not commit; ZaZa, a beauty queen and prostitute of grotesque proportions; and Pasión Contreras, a Puerto Rican transsexual and supposedly recovering drug addict whose “husband” is also her pimp. What brings these disparate characters together is the annual celebration at *P.A.R.G.O.*, which the MC, who bridges the time gap that Jáquez needs to switch

from one character to another off stage, explains are the initials of a drug and alcohol addiction recovery program. In fact, the audience is welcomed by the MC as attendees at this program's annual celebration: "Buenas noches damas y caballeros. Bienvenidos al Patronato de Recuperación Global Organizado, P.A.R.G.O.: hoy por ti y tomorrow por mi" 'Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Organized Global Recuperation Board, P.A.R.G.O.: today because of you and tomorrow because of me.' Though one can ascertain by listening very carefully and closely that this "recuperation" program is located in New York City, the play desists from tying its mission to a specific place and pronounces instead its "global" relevance.

What is this program trying to recuperate and how does it envision its clients moving ahead upon completion? While recuperation, particularly in the context of the Hispanic Caribbean diaspora, might appear to tap into the language of returns and longing for the "lost" island left behind, recuperation is here neither a returning to the past nor a moving forward towards a "clean" future.¹¹ In fact, from the outset the very idea and possibility of recuperation is mocked by the supposedly "recuperated" MC, who sports an oversized medal with the word *renovada* 'renewed' but who gets increasingly drunk as the play unfolds. The obvious failure of these immigrant characters to shape up or "renew" themselves undermines any possibility of imagining immigration as a "new" or "fresh" start, while simultaneously dismissing the version of America mythologized, as David Román notes, "as the very frontier of possibility" (78). Yet the ironic and also quite acerbic critique of "renewal" and the possibility of "recuperation," staged in the play not only question the social conditions and possibilities of these immigrant characters in the U.S., but also resonate critically with the ubiquitous Dominican political and economic discourse of "progress," ensconced in the popular slogan of the current government *pa'lante* 'moving forward.' This contrasts conspicuously with the enduring (and even worsening) social inequalities that shape Dominican society.¹²

What is recuperated then in this program/play if there is no going back and no starting over? While past events and experiences and some hopes for the future are recounted and "confessed" to

the audience, it is not the need to recuperate the past nor to move ahead but the act of telling itself that is emphasized. *P.A.R.G.O.* in fact replays the principal structure of addiction recovery programs, in which one person rises and “testifies” about his past and his experiences to the group. These programs—Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous—are the only widely accessible (and affordable) programs for Dominicans recovering from substance abuse, and the format of *P.A.R.G.O.* imitates these meetings. By default the recovery group that the characters testify to is formed by the theatre audience itself, which thereby becomes implicated not only as part of the recuperation effort but is interpellated as troubled members themselves. The downfalls, difficulties and shameful experiences of the characters are presented to an audience who in fact is ultimately just as troubled as they are. This insistence that it’s the troubles that bind more than the differences that may set one apart echoes precisely the mantra of these recovery groups: as the handbook of the *Confraternidad de Narcóticos Anónimos* (Narcotics Anonymous) insists, “Nuestras circunstancias y diferencias particulares son irrelevantes cuando se trata de nuestra recuperación. Si nos desprendemos de nuestra originalidad y nos rendimos ... inevitablemente veremos que formamos parte de algo” ‘Our circumstances and particular differences are irrelevant when it comes to our recovery. If we detach ourselves from our originality and surrender ... inevitably we will see that we form part of something’ (33). This call for stepping back from one’s particularities so as to see that one forms part of “something” appeals to a shared experience. However, this does not align with a specific identity category; all characters are marginal in both their country of origin and their destination. But, this marginality cannot be reduced to a single identity category (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, legal status, nationality).

The characters’ marginality and misfortune derives principally from their poverty and lack of opportunities in the Dominican Republic and in the country of arrival, where their status is further complicated through their precarious standing as illegal immigrants. For example, María Chuchívica recounts her way out from the island:

Solas yo y mamá, yo y mamá solas. Hasta el día que pasó por mi puerta Emperatriz, una amiguita que me dijo 'vamo a allí de un pronto' y me llevó pa' Holanda ...a trabajar de niñera. Cuántos niños amamantamos. Cuántos niños de 20 y de 50 años. La primera vez la vergüenza, la segunda indigna, pero la tercera esclaviza. Cinco año pará en esa maldita vitrina con un frío del diablo. Bebiendo y fumando pa no pensá.

Alone, my mom and I, my mom and I alone. Until the day Emperatriz, a girlfriend of mine, stopped by and said to me 'lets step out a minute' and she took me to Holland ... to work as nursemaids. How many children we breastfed. How many 20 and 50 year old children we breastfed. The shame of the first time, the disgrace of the second, but the third time enslaves you. Five years standing in a damn showcase, in hellish cold. Drinking and smoking in order not to think. (P.A.R.G.O.)

The play does not impel the audience to identify with Maria Cuchívada's experience of prostitution, illegality, and as we find out later, violence and drug addiction, but rather with the multifarious and ongoing ways through which she and the other characters negotiate and process these experiences through pain, anger, and humor.

P.A.R.G.O. achieves an unlikely alliance between the marginal characters by bringing the audience closer to the characters not necessarily through who they are (or are not) but through the characters' negotiation of their struggles. The structure of the play as a Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous meeting furthers this process as the audience is repeatedly reminded that they are members themselves of this troubled group. The play's audience testifies to and is impelled to identify with the characters' ongoing effort to negotiate and "make do" with experiences of shame and misfortune integral to their lives both in the Dominican Republic and abroad.

In this "making do," humor clearly plays a central role. The characters' excessive gestures, dress, and looks—reaching a definite culmination with *ZaZa*—give the play parodic overtones; the characters' gestural and visual hyperbole at first suggests that this

play offers principally a parodic take on these regularly stereotyped figures. Yet as it progresses, the play assures us that these characters cannot be grasped simply as parody. While parodic and humoristic elements draw the audience towards the characters, these characters are never passive embodiments of the stereotypes that Jáquez draws upon. Their nonchalant telling of their misfortunes gives the audience much occasion to laugh, but they just as easily shift the tone towards pain and anger, which makes the audience fall silent. In a recent staging in Argentina, Jáquez further highlighted this aspect of these characters by pruning them of the excessive visual elements that lent themselves to be read as parody.

The play, even as originally staged, also forestalls a simply parodic interpretation by slowly stripping the characters of their props and excessive gestures. The bodily movements and use of props make the first character, María Cuchívica, the most “theatrical” act in the traditional sense. By the third act the only non-bodily prop is an invisible dog, which ZaZa at one point simply throws away, killing him. This shift in the use and role of props reflects how Jáquez’s work taps into a variety of different genres—including cabaret, drag shows, and stand-up. This hybridity in Jáquez’s work leads the theatre critic Vivian Martínez Tabares in her article “Cuerpos caribeños entre el teatro y el performance” ‘Caribbean Bodies between Theatre and Performance’ quite rightfully to wonder how much his work should be considered theatre instead of performance. *P.A.R.G.O.* moves from a more traditional form of theatrical representation towards a presentation of realness that culminates with Pasión, the last character, who takes the stage without any theatrical props. The excess of dress and gestures of the previous two acts, through which Papi Chío and ZaZa, produce their respective masculinity and femininity, makes Pasión appear much more “real.” The artifice that goes into the production of their supposedly “natural” gender roles highlights their performativity and makes these appear strange and funny, while Pasión, in contrast, appears as almost anti-theatrical, a sense that is reinforced by the lack of theatrical props during her act. This shift skillfully forestalls the reception of her transsexuality as being inherently different and strange; in fact, she appears at first like the one whom the audience most likely will encounter as a neighbor. At the same time her sexual difference is never underplayed nor

presented as a problem, but rather simply shared by her as a “detail” when she introduces herself:

Buenas noches compañeros de P.A.R.G.O., para los que no me conocen mi nombre es Pasión, Pasión Contreras es mi nombre. Tengo un año y medio en la organización. Ex-adicta, ninfómana y alcohólica debido a la soledad según dice mi siquiatra. Latina por descendencia, pero nacida y criada en Nueva York, así que yo soy del grupo de los que ellos dicen que no somos de ningún sitio. Noticia curiosa, un pequeñito detalle, mi mai me parió varón aunque usted no lo crea. Y fui bautizada y todo bajo el nombre de Ramón, Ramón que nombre tan bello. Pero a los 19 años hice mi cross-over hacia el sexo femenino, soy operada de mi parte, transexual es el término medico de mi condición actual. Yo me hice los pómulos y los senos con inyecciones y años más tarde cuando salieron los implantes yo me aumenté dos tallas para ir a la vanguardia con la tecnología.

Good evening fellow members of P.A.R.G.O.; for those who do not know me, my name is Pasión, Pasión Contreras is my name. I have been a year and a half in this organization. Ex-addict, nymphomaniac, and alcoholic all due to loneliness, according to my psychiatrist. Latina by descent but born and raised in New York, so I belong to those who are said to belong nowhere. A curious detail, believe it or not my mom gave birth to a boy. I was baptized by the name of Ramón; Ramón, what a pretty name. But when I was 19 I made my crossover to the female sex, I had surgery. Transsexual is the medical term for my present condition. I got my cheekbones and breasts done with injections and years later when implants became available I enlarged my breasts two more sizes, to keep up with the vanguard of technology. (P.A.R.G.O.)

Pasión addresses herself to an audience of *compañeros* ‘comrades,’ people who she claims thereby as affectively close without positing that they are “like” each other or that they need to identify with her difference. She thereby most fully embodies the play’s strategy of putting the apparently marginal center stage and bringing it emotionally close, making what appears different familiar—though

never normal. Quite rightfully then, it is Pasi3n who at the end is crowned as the new “queen” of the Patronato.

Pasi3n’s exclamation that ends the play, “Cuando se ha vivido tan mal, morir se ría redundante” ‘When one has lived so badly, dying would be redundant,’ effectively declares these characters as the living dead; there is no happy ending, no “renovarse” (“renewal”). Rather, P.A.R.G.O. suggests how despite their social death these characters make do and how this making do, by the continuous reworking of negative experiences, functions as a repetition with a difference through which shame is turned for example into anger or humor. These processes are what tie this disparate diasporic community together. Here, in this play, unlike in the work of Dominican American writers Julia Alvarez and DÍaz, in which “migratory experience” is a “concomitantly traumatic and liberating process,” migration is neither a traumatic rupture that needs to be healed nor a liberating starting anew (Sagás et al. 23). Rather, for these diasporic subjects migratory experience implies a constant making-over of and making do with traumatic experiences that these characters share without erasing the specificities and differences of their identities.

Waddys Jáquez’s play presents a Dominican diaspora in whose experience “loss” is not structured around the experience of immigration but rather results continually from conditions of scarcity and social inequality at home and abroad. This diaspora neither looks back nostalgically nor blithely forward; rather, their humorous and at times mordant dismissal of the possibility of “renewal” and moving forward sheds a critical light on American discourses as the land of unlimited possibilities and on Dominican discourses of progress that fly in the face of enduring social inequalities.

Notes

1 Ernesto Sagá and Sintia E.Molina emphasize, “[i]n the past, migration was considered a major and definitive step in an individual’s life” (4).

2 This tendency has come under critique in the case of the Hispanic

Caribbean diaspora; critics such as Daisy Cocco de Filippis and Flores have faulted the Dominican and Puerto Rican cultural establishment for ignoring, or at best considering ancillary, contributions of the diaspora to Puerto Rican and Dominican national culture. In his book, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican and Latino Identity*, Flores critiques the “oblivion and exclusion” Nuyorican literature faces in prevailing cultural discourses, both in the U.S. and in Latin America (13). He insists in turn that, “though usually ignored or relegated in ‘Puerto Rican discourse’ (and in much ‘Caribbean discourse’ as well), the diaspora is integral and relational to the national and regional” (41).

3 All translations are mine.

4 Díaz’s recent novel *Oscar Wao* features extensive footnotes, albeit in a colloquial and humorous rather than academic tone, which mostly explain Dominican history to the reader—who is thus presumed to be unfamiliar with the irreverence and idiosyncrasy of the island’s history, and who at least implicitly is not a Dominican reader.

5 For example the Dominican daily newspaper *Listín Diario* ‘Daily Newspaper’ published an article by Sarah Leyla Puello entitled “La importancia de llamarse Junot,” which ends with the following sentence: “llamarse Junot en la actualidad es símbolo de orgullo nacional, progresión del crecimiento artístico de nuestro país, y sin lugar a dudas, el asfalto roto hacia un premio nobel” ‘to be called Junot is currently a symbol of national pride, progress of artistic growth in our country, and without doubt, the broken asphalt towards a nobel prize’ (sec. La Vida).

6 Manuel Chapuseaux describes and summarizes the theatrical tendencies in the Dominican Republic in an article entitled “Corrientes escénicas y libertad creadora en República Dominicana” (2005). He identifies five tendencies: 1) the traditional theatre school, which emphasizes formal realism; 2) a theatre inspired by the naturalism of the Stanislavski school of acting; 3) a popular theatre inspired by Brecht 4) a highly physical form of theatre, described as “acrobático-guerrero”; and, 5) a theatre of the Vanguard inspired by Grotowsky’s theories and Eugenio Barba. As Waddys Jáquez himself has recognized, these different tendencies inform his theatre

practice, but he cannot be aligned with any of these, and he introduced elements, some of which I mentioned earlier, that were radically new to the Dominican stage.

7 Lissette Rojas from the Dominican daily newspaper *El Caribe* reports that additional shows were scheduled for the Waddys Jáquez's retrospective "Resurrección" because "todas las funciones ... resultaron un lleno total y la gente pidió más" 'all shows ... were completely sold out and people asked for more.'

8 I prefer to describe these characters as marginal rather than abject. While they are certainly on the fringes of society (both in the Dominican Republic and the U.S.), they are not, as Kristeva's term "abjection" implies, presented as an almost monstrous outside that society must keep apart.

9 Flores asserts that "cultural remittances from below" often tend to "clash head-on with elite and paternalistic versions of the national culture as purveyed by the guardians of established traditions and historical narratives" (Flores, "Diaspora" 4).

10 Quite appropriately, the re-staging of several of Jáquez's plays in Santo Domingo this past October was entitled "Resurrección/Resurrection," featuring Jáquez himself as a campy angel who resuscitates the apparently dead.

11 Dara Goldman detects in cultural discourses of the Caribbean diaspora an ongoing investment in the island as "the principal location of self-definition" and as "the lost home that must be mourned" (419).

12 Teresita Martínez-Vergne, in *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic 1880-1916*, offers a suggestive historical perspective on the current emphasis on progress in Dominican political discourse. She shows how the intellectuals who "actively shaped Dominican turn-of-the-century nationalism" did so "by launching a comprehensive and forward-looking discourse" (xv). Her argument is that this discourse of progress, commonly attributed to the Trujillo regime (1930-1961) in fact predates it and shaped Dominican nationalism from its earliest stages.

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