BEATING THE WINGS OF REBELLION

by

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Date October 17, 1994.
God is old and senile, and a band of female rebel angels are preparing to slay him. This is the setting for Marisol, José Rivera's 1992 play about the world gone mad, rebel angels packing Uzis, and the apocalypse.

Anthropologist Victor Turner specialized in performative genres that exude rebellion: rebellion against God and the everyday world of structured, established life. For Turner, the staged drama of religious ritual and secular theatre is inextricably linked to the social drama of our daily lives. Rebellion in one realm of drama, therefore, can reflect and lead to rebellion in the other.

The following is an analysis of Marisol, utilizing Turner's performance theory, most especially the ever reciprocal relationship between performance and society. The paper will embark on two journeys. The first is an analysis of Rivera's text, particularly his ingenious depiction of a female rebel angel. The second is an exploration of the reflections and revelations of the cast and crew who performed Marisol, at the University of British Columbia, in March 1994.

Both paths will merge to reveal Marisol as an immensely creative work, that challenges and enlightens its viewers and participants to the social tensions that plague their daily lives.
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Lucina, bony mother, laboring

Among the socketed white stars, your face
Of candor pares white flesh to the white bone,

Who drag our ancient father at the heel,
White-bearded, weary. The berries purple
And bleed. The white stomach may ripen yet.

THE UNVEILING

I first became aware of José Rivera’s Marisol, in February 1994, when I looked upon a poster of a female angel, lying dead on a wooden cross. Across the top of the poster in bold black letters was the name "MARISOL". The poster advertised a play to be directed by M.F.A. directing candidate, Richard Wolfe, at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

Marisol was written in 1992 by José Rivera, a Puerto Rican playwright, now a resident of Los Angeles. The UBC production of Marisol was the play’s Canadian premiere, and it debuted at the Dorothy Somerset Studio, from March 2nd to the 12th, 1994.

After being startled, but certainly intrigued, by the haunting image on the poster, I purchased a copy of Marisol and read the play in its entirety that evening. I will include here a synopsis of Marisol, included by the Dramatist’s Play Service on the back of the manuscript.

Marisol Perez, a young Latino woman, is a copy editor for a Manhattan publisher. Although she has elevated herself into the white-collar class, she continues to live alone in the dangerous Bronx neighbourhood of her childhood. As the play begins, Marisol narrowly escapes a vicious attack by a golf club-wielding madman while travelling home on the subway. Later that evening Marisol is visited by her guardian angel who informs her that she can no longer serve as Marisol’s protector because she has been called to join the revolution already in progress against an old and senile God who is "dying and taking the rest of us with him." The war in heaven spills over into New York City reducing it to a smouldering urban wasteland where giant fires send noxious smoke to darken the skies, where the moon has not been seen in months, where the food has been turned to salt, and water no longer seeks its own level. Alone, without her protector, Marisol begins a nightmare journey into this new war zone
where she finds herself on the streets, homeless, and where her many surreal encounters include a woman arrested for exceeding her credit card limit and a homeless burn victim in a wheelchair looking for his lost skin. With the apocalypse well under way, the angels have traded in their wings for Uzis and wear leather motorcycle jackets and fatigues. As the action builds to a crescendo, the masses of homeless and displaced people join the angels in the war to save the universe.

I found this to be a play rich in disturbing, yet captivating images. My desire to investigate Marisol further was utterly irresistible, and it soon became the topic for my Master’s thesis in Religious Studies.

With the director’s permission, I sat in on three of Marisol’s rehearsals before the play went up for public view. I chatted casually with the cast and crew, explored the set, the dressing rooms, and the lobby, writing down as many of my observations of the rehearsal process as I could.

Once the play opened, I attended six of its eight performances, observing not only the performances themselves, but how the audiences were responding to them. I chatted with various audience members and scheduled appointments with those who wished to volunteer their time to my project. Once the play closed, I scheduled a series of semi-structured interviews of all of the cast and crew of Marisol, each interview lasting approximately one and half hours.

Due to time restrictions and a need for parameters for the project, I focused the majority of my interviews on the cast and crew. For these individuals, Marisol was more than a one-night experience. For the two-week run, and the prior three week rehearsal period, this play had become their lives.
My theoretical orientation for the project refers primarily to the theories of Victor Turner who dedicated much of his work to the role of the participant in performance, rather than that of the spectator. Turner argues that the subjective experience of ritual performance is a vital spiritual endeavour and criticizes Western culture for becoming increasingly spectator-oriented, thereby divorcing the greater populace from a more intimate, tactile experience of the sacred in performance.

A more thorough investigation of audience reactions to Marisol would have been interesting, but was unfortunately beyond the resources of this particular research endeavour.

The age range of my respondents was limited. With the exception of Richard Wolfe, the play's director, and musician, David Epp, both of whom are in their early thirties, all of my respondents fell between the ages of 18 and 26 (with most of them in their early twenties). As well, all respondents came from Christian backgrounds - ranging from Roman Catholicism, to Greek Orthodox, and a variety of Protestant faiths.

With the exception of one of the actors, who belongs to the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, all of my respondents no longer practised their respective religious faiths. While being exposed to these traditions by their families in childhood, upon reaching adulthood, they were no longer practising members of their religious communities. All were "agnostic". They were extremely critical of the traditions of their heritage, and yet were not quite able to give up on "God", whoever or whatever God might me. It is not surprising that this is a central theme of the play, itself.

My literary research for this project has encompassed many disciplines - religious studies, anthropology, theatre, and feminist studies. My theoretical focus, however, is
based primarily on the work of anthropologist, Victor Turner, who specialized in the sacred in performance. Turner's work reveals that *Marisol* is a play that both mirrors and challenges contemporary notions of the sacred. Turner's theories combine religious ritual and secular theatre in a way that most fully unveils *Marisol* as a timely and creative agent for social commentary and rebellion.
Throughout the ages, many scholars — theologians, historians, psychologists, and anthropologists — have theorized about the nature and function of religious ritual in human society. Among these scholars, anthropologist Victor Turner has done the most comprehensive and innovative work in this field.

Turner was a strong advocate of cross-cultural analysis. His countless books and essays on ritual performance include examples from Africa, India, Europe, China, and Meso-America to name but a few. Turner's area of speciality, however, were the societies of central Africa, particularly the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia. During his field work with the Ndembu, in the late 1950's, Turner discovered that "decisions to perform ritual were connected with crises in the social life of villages". Turner detected a "close connection between social conflict and ritual...and that a multiplicity of conflict situations [was] correlated with a high frequency of ritual performance" (Turner 1969: 10).

This lead Turner to theorize that religious ritual plays a vital role in articulating and resolving social tensions in all human societies. It is this relationship between social crisis and ritual performance, that has formed the basis of Turner's "social drama" theory. Turner asserts that all public social life is a performance of some kind. Referring to the theories of anthropologist Erving Goffman (1959), Turner states that "ordinary life in a social structure is itself a performance. We play roles, occupy statuses, play games with one another, don and doff many masks, each a 'typification'" (1986: 107).
When there is tension or conflict in social life, it results in a "social drama". Turner defines social dramas as "sustained public actions" in which social conflicts [entailing both past and present events] are enacted in front of other social members (1984: 19). "These situations—arguments, combats, rites of passage—are inherently dramatic because participants not only do things, they try to show others what they are doing or have done; actions take on a "performed—for an audience aspect" (1986: 74).

These dramas do not simply restate or mirror underlying social conflicts and divisions. They also present possibilities for solutions. They articulate both "desire" and "hypothesis" (1984: 20).

Turner has organized social drama into four phases — breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or schism. In the first phase, there is a "breach of regular norm-governed social relations". A breach often results in a crisis "during which there is a tendency for the breach to widen". In an attempt to resolve the crisis, redress, "ranging from personal advice to...formal juridical and legal machinery, or other modes of resolution [such as] the performance of public ritual" are utilized. "The final phase, consists either of the reintegration of the disturbed social group, or the social recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between the contesting parties" (1979: 63-64).

Turner uses a broad definition of the term "crisis". Crisis includes unpredicted disturbances to social life, such as natural disasters, or the death of a loved one. However, it also embodies more subtle social tensions such as that which accompanies the transition from the status of child to adult, or the passage at the fall equinox, from the warmth of summer to the harsh winds of winter.
It is redress, the third phase in social drama, that most interests Turner. In this phase, society assesses the events leading up to crisis and attempts to pose solutions. Social drama often resorts to "cultural performance" as a vehicle in which redress can be more thoroughly investigated. Examples of cultural performances are courts of law, an assembly of elders, ritual, and theatre (1984: 19-20).

During redress, and its subsequent cultural performances, social norms, and the structures and institutions governing these norms, are often called into question "with lively possibilities of rejection" (Turner 1986: 22). As well, socially sanctioned authority figures can be accused of "vices, follies, stupidities, abuses" and last, but not least, "gross failures in commonsense" (102).

Social crisis often results from inadequacies in social structure. For Turner, social structure is the normative, everyday framework in which all social members live, and includes an interrelated set of institutions, statuses, and relations.

Turner observes that structure is a social necessity as it can organize society and provide systems for meeting material needs. It has the potential for being practical and efficient, and for bringing order and reason to a given community. However, Turner cautions that too much diligence to structure can be problematic. He observed that structure often results in differentiation among social status and roles, and by nature, creates alienation, distance, inequality, and exploitation (1974: 272).

While cultural performances, ie redressive mechanisms, are themselves structured, Turner contends that they all contain within them the possibilities to challenge and revolutionize structure. To expand on this point more clearly, I will examine the ritual process, in particular, as a redressive mechanism. It is in this genre of cultural
performance that Turner invested most of his work, and it forms the basis of the theories that he later applied to contemporary North American theatre (both sacred and secular). I will demonstrate that Turner’s ritual model transposes very neatly onto the play, *Marisol*, and can reveal the very active redressive potential of this creative work.
Turner criticizes those who limit a definition of ritual to "a standardized unit act, which may be secular as well as sacred" (1986: 75). Ritual for Turner is "the performance of a complex sequence of symbolic acts". It is a "transformative performance revealing major classifications, categories, and contradictions of cultural processes" (75). It is the experience of the ritual performance itself, the process, not the satisfaction of static rules and regulations, that contain the possibility for transformation of the greater social structure (1982: 79).

It is true that rituals, themselves, have a structure, and that this structure is often generated by firmly institutionalized norms and values. As a result, challenges to the structure of a particular ritual often result in challenges to the greater social networks they are based on.

Frameworks that can structure ritual experience include various symbolic genres such as texts, music, song, and dress, and may be pre-determined and carefully selected. However, such arrangements cannot utterly dictate the subjective experience of participants performing a given ritual. There is always an active dialogue between the subjective experience of ritual participants, and the frameworks instituted to guide that experience. Turner states:

...the rules may frame the performance, but the flow of action and interaction within that frame may conduce to hitherto unprecedented insights and even generate new symbols and meanings, which may be incorporated into subsequent performances. Traditional ritual framings may have to be reframed—new bottles made for new wine (1980: 160).
Turner concedes that at some "historic junctures" rituals cease to generate meaningful experience for ritual participants and an emphasis is placed on satisfying rules, rather than the more enriching gifts of process. Thus some rituals become "mere shells or husks", they are "mere empty form without true religious content" (1980: 161).

However, Turner insists that this is the pathology of ritual. This is a ritual that is ailing or, in some cases, dying. Structure must remain malleable to the ever-changing needs of ritual participants. Living ritual constitutes an active dialogue between the subjective experience of ritual and the external framework that guides this experience. In some cases, this dialogue may result in adjusting structure so that it may more actively generate a more meaningful performance for social members. If this does not happen, ritual loses its potency for ritual participants and will need to be reformed, or abandoned altogether (1980: 160-161).

Turner attributes the transformative potential of ritual, the ability to alter or abandon not only ritual structure, but the greater social structure from which it was generated, to the specific sequencing of ritual into three main stages. These stages, Turner borrowed from French folklorist, Arnold van Gennep, who studied "rites of passage" or "rites of transition" (1980: 160-161).

Van Gennep asserted that nearly all rituals are rites of passage, as rituals most often "accompany transition from one situation to another and from one cosmic or social world to another" (cited in Turner 1980: 160). Turner agrees, stating that "Practically all rituals of any length and complexity represent a passage from one position, constellation, or domain of structure to another" (1974: 238).
More specifically, Turner states that rites of passage function to assist individuals in making transitions between "states". Turner defines "state" as a "relatively fixed or stable condition." It includes social categories such as legal status, profession, rank, as well as life stages such as adolescence or motherhood. State, therefore, can include any psychological, mental or emotional condition. Not only individuals, but entire societies can go through rites of passage, such as the transition between peace and war, or between ecological states, such as winter and spring (1967: 93-95).

Both Turner and Van Gennep assert that the transformative potential of rites of passage is inherently due to the sequence of three stages — separation, liminality, and re-aggregation. Rituals, therefore, (1) separate "specified members of a group from everyday life", (2) place "them in a limbo [liminality] that was not any place that they were in before and not yet any place they would be in", (3) and "then returned them [re-aggregation], changed in some way, to mundane life." (Turner 1986: 25).

It is the second phase, "limbo" or "liminality" that interests Turner, as it is at this phase where the most actively transformative possibilities emerge. During the liminal phase, the ritual participant is "betwixt and between" states. The term liminality is derived from the word "limen" the Latin for "threshold" (1974: 232). Ritual participants, therefore, are on the threshold between what they once were and what they have yet to become. These individuals are "ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification; he [she] passes through a symbolic domain that has few or none of the attributes of his [her] past or coming state" (232). For example, when a woman is walking down the aisle to get married, she is no longer single, and yet not married. She is betwixt and between fixed categories of marital status.
As discussed earlier, ritual can serve as an opportunity to reinforce and instruct social members in the workings and initiatives of the greater social structure. In this sense, the liminal state can serve as "the scene and time for the emergence of a society's deepest values in the form of sacred dramas and objects". This may entail "the re-enactment periodically of cosmogonic narratives or deeds of saintly, godly, or heroic establishers of morality, basic institutions, or ways of approaching transcendent beings or powers" (1986: 102).

However, Turner strongly cautions that "liminality itself is a complex phase or condition". The liminal phase, therefore, may also become an opportunity for "the most radical scepticism...about cherished values and rules" (1986: 102).

As previously stated, ritual performance often entails the utilization of various symbolic genres such as dance, masks, costumes, make-up, and music. These are often used as a means for exaggerating or inverting familiar categories of social life. As a result, "The phenomena of liminality dissolve all factual and commonsense systems into their components and 'play' with them in ways never found in nature or in custom, at least at the level of direct perception" (1986: 25).

Liminality, therefore, is a realm in which "ambiguity reigns" (1986: 102). Familiar cultural images are present, and yet are simultaneously unfamiliar, as they are exaggerated or inverted by various symbolic media. By forcing a ritual participant to reflect on aspects of culture in an unfamiliar way, the outcome of this reflection cannot be predicted. As a result, "people and public policies may be judged sceptically in relation to deep values; the vices, follies, stupidities, and abuses of contemporary holders of high political, economic, or religious status may be scrutinized, ridiculed" (1986:}
Liminal symbols, therefore, are often characterized by ambiguity, as they can generate both appreciation and criticism of the greater social structure.

There is also an ambiguous nature to the ritual participants themselves: "in ritual liminality they are placed, so to speak, outside the total system and its conflicts; transiently, they become men [women] apart" (1974: 241). Turner states that notions of the sacred often include that which is "set apart" or "on one side" in various societies (241). The ambiguous nature of the ritual participant, therefore, permits the opportunity to reflect upon and scrutinize social life with a clarity that is not available when one is immersed in social structure. Social members, as Turner states:

...who are heavily involved in jural—political, overt, and conscious structure are not free to mediate and speculate on the combinations and oppositions of thought; they are themselves too crucially involved in the combinations and oppositions of social and political structure and stratification. They are in the heat of the battle, in the "arena" competing for office, participating in feuds, factions, and coalitions (1974: 241).

Simply put, it is a matter of not being able to see the forest for the trees.

The separation of the ritual participant from the rest of familiar social life is "a kind of veiling that paradoxically permits seeing" (Hall 1980: 24). Part of ritual's transformative potential is due to its ability to allow social members to more clearly see structure. As Turner states, "if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs" (1969: 167).
Through this process of separation, social members receive a more holistic vision of social structure; its strengths, as well as its weaknesses.

At the very least, social members are provided with the "temptation" to reconsider their culture with a critical awareness they do not have when immersed in structure. Consequently, during transitions of "persons, groups, sets of ideas etc" there is an "interval, the liminal state, however brief...when the past is momentarily negated, suspended, or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, an instant of pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance" (1982: 44).

The liminal phase, therefore, can be a period in which structural norms are pulled apart, recombined, and at times, left scattered in pieces. This gives liminality a certain unpredictable, spontaneous, and rather chaotic quality.

Not surprisingly, Turner asserts that liminality takes place in the realm of "anti-structure". For Turner, all of social life can be divided into two realms: structure and anti-structure. These realms overlap, with many social experiences containing elements of both. Turner contends that humans need both structure and anti-structure for a healthy social life. Humans need to structure their material and rational existence, and they also need time to step away from these structures; assess, reflect, and create. The liminal phase of ritual provides a perfect opportunity for social members to enter into this realm of anti-structure.

Put simply, anti-structure is the realm of social experience that is not accounted for in normative life. It is a chaotic, experimental realm which acknowledges possibilities that are not framed in the everyday world.
Turner criticizes that too often scholars present the "social" as synonymous with the "social-structural". Consequently, if there is a breakdown in the social system, if it is "unstructured it is nothing" (1974: 250). Less often is it considered that the dissolution of structural relationships can be a positive and creative opportunity (250).

When Turner uses the word "anti" he stresses that this is not to imply negativity. Social theory has far too often used structure as its "point of departure", and structure has thus "acquired a positive connotation" that Turner believes is inappropriate. Quoting Blake, Turner prefers to see structure as the "outward bound circumference" (1974: 273), rather than the center or substance of social life. Quite on the contrary, Turner regards anti-structure as a "generative center in which social beings can seek knowledge and communicate" (272-273).

Turner insists that anti-structure must not be defined merely as counter-structure, or the mirror opposite of structural life. The distinction between structure and anti-structure can not be watered down to a binary opposition. To state that anti-structure is exclusively "that which is not structural" is too restrictive. Where structural life is a realm of finite possibility, familiar established experience, anti-structure is an arena of infinite possibility. Anti-structure, therefore, can encompass all that has been, exists, and may be, in the future.

In clarifying his distinction between structure and anti-structure, Turner refers to a parallel distinction between "byss and abyss". In defining "byss", Turner refers to the Ionic variant of the Attic buthos, meaning "bottom," or, "depth," especially "of the sea." "BysS", therefore, is deep but "abyss" is beyond all depth. There is no bottom. It is completely unbounded. Turner states, "Many definitions of ritual contain the notion of
depth, but few of infinite depth. In the terminology I favor, such definitions are concerned with finite structural depth, not with infinite "antistructural" depth" (1982: 82).

It is the unbounded quality of anti-structure, that makes it such a focal point of creativity and transformation (1982: 26-27). As the liminal state in ritual is the doorway, the threshold into anti-structure, Turner asserts that liminality is a vitally important component of social life.

Another important characteristic of liminality is its ability to facilitate communitas. Along with structural life tends to come a sense of alienation, as all structures "tend to produce distance and inequality, often leading to exploitation between man and man, man and woman, and old and young" (1974: 272).

The liminal state relaxes the demands of social structure that separate social members in the everyday world (Alexander 1991: 27). This creates an ambiguity in social relations that can permit, albeit temporarily, a sense of connectedness and equality with social members that one is normally separated from and, in many cases, designated in a "superior" or "inferior" status.

Turner defines this phenomenon of connectedness as an experience of communitas. Turner defines communitas as "a relation between human individuals outside normative social structure... [which] assumes that human beings are concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals, and not in their basic humanity segmented into roles and statuses and divided by particularistic group loyalties" (1978: 287).

Turner stresses that communitas is not synonymous with Georges Gurvitch's notion of communion which occurs "when minds open out as widely as possible and the least accessible depths of the "I" are integrated in this fusion (which presupposes

While all rituals contain within them possibilities for *communitas*, this levelling quality of liminality is more overt in some rituals than in others. For example, *communitas* is quite explicit in rituals designated in anthropology as "rituals of rebellion". In a ritual of rebellion social members who usually occupy a low social status are temporarily made equal, or even superior, to those of whom they are an inferior in the everyday world. Halloween is a winter solstice ritual from the Celtic tradition, which allows anyone to become anything, if only for an evening. A construction worker can become a king (or a queen!). He can put on special clothes, change his voice and language, and prance about with great grandiosity that he is not permitted in his everyday life. Halloween is a socially sanctioned occasion in which one's identity is limited only by the imagination.

Turner contends that this experience of transcending one’s social status can be a transformative experience that can inspire individuals, or groups of individuals, to later contest the inevitably of their lower social status in the everyday world.

There have been many social theorists however, that do not believe rituals of rebellion can generate transformative possibilities. Quite on the contrary, they argue that rituals of rebellion merely allow social members to vent their frustrations at the greater structure. After this emotional catharsis, social members can then settle down and more
readily return to and accept their original status. By permitting this public vent of frustration rituals of rebellion in fact serve as a means for preserving the status quo.

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Emile Durkheim (1965) asserted that an essential role of ritual was to integrate individuals into a group, and maintain collective order and solidarity. Ritual performance, therefore, "expresses the collective unconscious of the social group" which results in "reinforcing conformity to collective values" (Furman 1981: 228).

Anthropologist Max Gluckman also saw ritual acts exclusively as social mirrors, reflecting normative social values, and thereby reinforcing structure. Gluckman maintained this stance, even when rituals appeared to rebel against the status quo. Rituals of rebellion, in this instance, functioned as a social catharsis, "purging their members of anti-social sentiments" (Alexander 1991: 28). They provide a means for venting frustration and anger at the social system. Acting as a mass social "steam-valve", rituals of rebellion preserve the existing social order by "draining off or deflecting hostility towards the status quo" (26).

Some of Turner’s work, particularly in his earlier case studies, focus on rituals that do seem to demonstrate this cathartic function. Turner concedes that in some instances, rituals of rebellion, and especially the experience of communitas, can be pressed into the service of structure, and therefore support the status quo. In this instance, Turner makes a distinction between "institutionalized" and "spontaneous" communitas. Institutionalized communitas is an experience that serves a cathartic function and validates normative life. Spontaneous communitas, however, is a far less predictable subjective experience and can instigate future challenges to structural classifications.
Turner asserts that when social members are only permitted to acknowledge and articulate institutionalized *communitas*, this is an experience of *communitas* that has been "perverted", as it has been enslaved by structure.

However, Turner states that in rituals of rebellion, even the most severe form of institutionalized *communitas*, albeit perverted, contains a core of potentially spontaneous *communitas*, that can become "the seed of cultural transformation". This is due to the inescapable fact that during rituals of rebellion social criticism is always implicit, as they are representations of "discontent with the way things are, culturally" (Turner 1982: 45).

Liminality can, therefore, create "new models, symbols, paradigms, etc.," and become "the seedbeds of cultural creativity". These new symbols and constructions can then feedback into the greater economic and political domains, and supply them with "goals", "incentives", and "raisons d’être" (1982: 28).
As Turner developed his theories concerning the relationship between everyday social life and ritual performance, he discovered that a similar relationship existed between society and theatre. Turner states that a variety of theories have been proposed for the specific genesis of theatre.

Some see drama coming out of religious rituals and myths which are a ritual’s charter. Others see it originating in choral hymns of praise sung at the tomb of a dead hero...Some see drama coming out of story-telling round the old campfire where hunting or raiding achievements were vividly and dramatically retold, with miming of the events and roles (1986: 27).

Turner proposes that ultimately, the specific origin of theatre, in terms of its form and content, varies from society to society. While its structure may vary, Turner theorizes that in most human societies, theatre likely fulfils a similar function. Turner asserts that "theatre owes its specific genesis to the third phase of social drama, a phase which is essentially an attempt to ascribe meaning to social dramatic events" (1982: 12). This is due to the fact that whatever its aesthetic origins, theatre can be a powerful cultural venue for "scrutinizing the quotidian world" (1986: 27).

"My contention is that social dramas are the 'raw stuff' out of which theatre comes to be created" (Turner 1986: 105). During the redress phase in a social drama, events leading up to crisis are enacted, that is, performed publicly. Theatre, therefore, is a "natural fit" as a redressive mechanism.
Theatre is "nothing less than "performed", in other words, "restored" experience, that moment in the experimental process—that often prolonged and eternally segmented "moment"—in which meaning emerges through "reliving" the original experience (often a social drama subjectively perceived), and is given an appropriate aesthetic form. This form then becomes a piece of communicable wisdom, assisting others...to understand better not only themselves but also the times and cultural conditions which compose their general "experience" of "reality" (1982: 18).

Turner does not propose that theatre and ritual are identical performance genres. There are differences between theatre and religious ritual, the most obvious being that theatre does not necessarily have a religious content (although it often does). Theatre tends to be more ludic and less culturally constrained, although "it nevertheless very often has a serious intent" (Turner 1978: 282). Finally, participation in theatre is often more voluntary than it is for religious ritual (282).

However, theatre parallels ritual and other performative genres, as they "are often orchestrations of media, not expressions in a single medium" (Turner 1986: 23).

Ritual...represents not an obsessional concern with repetitive acts, but an immense orchestration of genres in all available sensory codes: speech, music, singing, the presentation of elaborately worked objects, such as masks; wall-paintings; sculptured forms;...costumes; dance forms with complex grammars and vocabularies of bodily movements, gestures, and facial expressions (1986: 106).

These very same symbolic genres are also utilized in theatre and act similarly to widen perceptions of everyday reality for social members. Borrowing Eliade's words, Turner states that these symbolic genres can combine to create "a time of marvels" (1974: 239). Masked figures both grotesque and beautiful can enter and exit, defying
"known" reality and challenging social members to reconsider established modes of classification.

Unlike rituals, theatre in Western society tends to be associated with individual authors and directors. However, ultimately theatre, like ritual, is a "social performance involving many". Theatre "is never really complete...until it is performed, that is, acted on some kind of stage before an audience" (Turner 1986: 27). In order for a performance to take place there are often several individuals, or groups of individuals — actors, costume designers, musicians, lighting technicians, etc. — that contribute to the work, collaborating (and/or combatting) one another in order to create the final production. The script from a single playwright becomes:

...absorbed into a multigenred and multi-coded and collectively orchestrated finished product, the concentrated essence of all the processes that have acted upon the original unidimensional script. Perhaps we now speak of it as having a creative life of its own (Turner 1986: 31).

Theatre, therefore, is a "collaborative, social performative system". While playwrights and directors may portray the "dominant will and personality", ultimately, there has to be a "sympathy and shared attitude among all concerned in this work of public liminality and social creativeness" (Turner 1986: 32).¹

The redressive quality of theatre entails that theatre enact events of crisis, as well as offer up possibilities for solutions. Theatre, therefore, is not strictly a mirror of society.

¹ In reality, the process leading up to this "sympathy and shared attitude" can entail a great deal more scratching and biting than Turner reveals in his discussion. As with any "collaborative system", the road to the final theatrical work can be pitted with a series of social crises and redress measures onto themselves.
On the other hand, the events of social drama often determine the "raw material" on which theatre is based, so it also cannot be said that social life is strictly a mirror of theatre. There is a reciprocal relationship between theatre and society as social drama and aesthetic drama are constantly impacting and reacting to one another.

Turner states that social drama, "feeds into the...realm of stage drama" and through this process "unconsciously, or perhaps preconsciously, influences not only the form but also the content of the stage drama". At the same time, stage drama, "when it is meant to do more than entertain—though entertainment is one of its vital aims—is a metacommentary, explicit or implicit, witting or unwitting" on the major social events of the time, which can include "wars, revolutions, scandals, institutional changes". Not only that, "but its message and its rhetoric feed back" into the greater societal structure and partly account for its future organization (1982: 107-108).

Turner's theory, therefore, critiques any exclusive allegiance to art imitating life or "all the world's a stage".

Neither mutual mirroring, life by art, art by life, is exact,...as at each exchange something new is added, something old is lost or discarded. Human beings learn through experience, though all too often they repress painful experience, and perhaps the deepest experience is through drama; not through social drama or stage drama (or its equivalent) alone, but in the circulatory or oscillatory process of their mutual and incessant modification (1982: 108).
Performance anthropologist Richard Schechner (a former student of Turner's), has illustrated the relationship between social drama and theatre in the form of a horizontal figure eight, bisected through both hoops\(^2\) (cited in Turner 1980: 154).

![Diagram of social drama and stage drama relationship]

Turner finds this diagram extremely useful in articulating the relationship between theatre and the greater social structure. He cautions, however, that the specific size and shape of the model, as designed by Schechner, "though effective, is somewhat equilibrist in its implications" (1980: 154). In other words, as with any figure eight, both loops are not always the same size. For a variety of social and political reasons, if a particular play boldly challenges structure, this does not mean it will automatically be recognized by the greater society and facilitate reform. One play could be packed with social commentary and yet barely impact the greater social structure. On the other hand, a play with mere whispers or hints of social unrest can receive a great deal of public attention.

\(^2\) As a true devotee to his craft, Schechner believes theatre is essential for a healthy, thriving social life, and would never want to see it disappear from the repertoire of cultural performances. Of his diagram, Schechner muses, "The visual pun on the figure for infinity was not intended – but when I saw it, I was pleased" (Schechner 1985: 116).
While the reverse is also true, one cannot always assume, or predict, how a community will respond to a given cultural performance.

Schechner agrees, and makes a clarification with his distinction between "transportation" and "transformation". When a cultural performance does little to actually impact a given participant or audience member in a long-lasting way, Schechner maintains that they have experienced a transportation. They ventured into liminality, but returned in basically the same "state" as when they entered. Conversely, if a performer or audience member is, in fact, changed by a given performance then it can be said that this individual experienced a transformation. Schechner states that sometimes it takes a series of transportations to result in a transformation. That is, an individual or group of individuals need repeated exposure to a given theatrical event (or a variety of similar cultural performances) before they experience any long lasting influence.

The groundwork has now been laid for the creative potential of ritual, how this process extends to theatre, and how they both form a dynamic relationship with the greater society. I will now put theory into practice, and reveal how these discussions relate specifically to Marisol.
In this chapter, I will demonstrate how Marisol is both a rite of passage and, ultimately, a rite of rebellion, for not only the character of Marisol herself, but the greater society in which she lives. In succeeding chapters, I will also demonstrate how this play provides a window through which the "real-life" actors, crew and audience members can, themselves, experience "passage" and "rebellion", as Marisol’s world proves to be a haunting portrayal of the world all of us, not just the character of Marisol, live in everyday.

Before the play begins, audience members are given programs containing the names of the play’s characters, cast, and crew. At the very center of the program is the image of a brick wall, and inscribed on the wall, is the following poem:

The moon carries the souls
Of dead people up to heaven.
The new moon is dark and empty.
It fills up every month
with new glowing souls
then it carries its silent burden
to God. WAKE UP.

At the request of the playwright, the "WAKE UP" looks like it has been added to the poem by someone else.

Even before the play begins, the audience is made aware that something old and established is about to be challenged. They are to be witnesses to a "waking up".
When the play opens, Marisol and another woman are riding the New York City subway (the time is designated in the script simply as the "present"). The two women are wearing identical grey suits and both women sit side by side reading newspapers. The second character is acknowledged in the script only as "Young Woman". When an enraged man wielding a golf club enters the subway, Young Woman leaves, and the man known as "Golf Club" begins to speak to Marisol (Rivera 1992: 12-13).

GOLF CLUB. It was the shock that got me. I was so shocked all I could see was pain around me: little spinning starlights of pain 'cause of the shocking thing my angel just told me. (He waits for a reaction. Marisol refuses to look at him.) You see, she was always there for me. I could count on her. She was my very own godblessed little angel! My own gift from God! (No response. He makes a move toward Marisol. She looks at him quickly sizing him up.)

MARISOL. God help you, you get in my face!

GOLF CLUB. But last night she folded her hot silver angel wings under her leather jacket and crawled into the box I occupy on 180th street in the Bronx...She creeped in. Reordering the air. Waking me up with the shock, the bad news that she was gonna leave me forever ... Don't you see? She once stopped Nazi skinheads from setting me on fire in Van Cortlandt Park!...I live on the street! I'm dead meat without my guardian angel!...(The Man lunges at Marisol and rips the newspaper from her. She's on her feet, ready for a fight.)

MARISOL. Hey I didn't make your life! You made your life!

GOLF CLUB. (Truly worried.) That means you don't have any protection either. Your guardian angel is gonna leave you too. That means for the next four or five seconds, I could change the entire course of your life ...

MARISOL. (Getting freaked.) Man, why don't you just get a job?!

GOLF CLUB. (Calm, almost pitying.) ... I could fix it so every time you look in the mirror ... every time you dream ... or close your eyes in some
hopeless logic that closed eyes are a shield against nightmares ... you’re gonna think you turned into me ...\textsuperscript{3}

Swinging his golf club high, the stranger then lunges for Marisol. Marisol screams. Suddenly, a guardian angel appears. She is a Native American woman with white wings and a black leather jacket. Marisol and "Golf Club" fall to the floor. The stage goes black.

While the lights are out, one can barely see the subway walls in the dark, as they split in two, with each half rolling to opposite sides of the stage. When the lights come up, one wall is in Marisol’s apartment, to the far left of the stage, and the other wall is to the far right, in the apartment of Marisol’s best friend, June.

Recall that a rite of passage includes three phases: separation, liminality, and re-aggregation. The splitting of the walls is the first act of separation. It is the first signal that the norm-governed world is starting to crumble. Literally, walls, structures, are breaking down. Marisol and the audience are beginning to cross the threshold into liminality.

According to Turner, in ritual performance, separation, liminality, and re-aggregation, co-relate with themes of death, ambiguity, and rebirth.

Separation, therefore, is often expressed through symbols of "dying, death, invisibility, darkness, decomposition, eclipse, [and] the dark of the moon" (1978: 279).

\textsuperscript{3} When citing from Rivera’s text, I have included as much of the original dialogue as possible. However, in an effort to be concise to the present arguments, some phrases have been omitted.

As well, please note that phrases contained within round brackets are stage directions given by Rivera, and are inherent in the text, itself. If I include my own notes within Rivera’s text, I enclose them with square brackets.
After Golf Club’s assault, Marisol returns home, and diligently secures the three locks on her apartment door. Later that night, while Marisol is sleeping, she meets her guardian angel for the first time. This causes her to wonder whether she is dead or alive, and is Marisol’s first encounter with ambiguity.

Wait a minute – am I dead? Did I die tonight? How did I miss that? Was it the man with the golf club? Did he beat me to death? Oh my God. I’ve been dead all night. And when I look around I see that Death is my ugly apartment in the Bronx. No this can’t be Death! Death can’t have this kind of furniture! (17-18).

The audience, at this point, is also unsure whether or not Marisol is dead. As the stage lights went out when Golf Club attacked Marisol, one does not know what really happened. However, since Marisol is sleeping just before her angelic visit there is the possibility that she is alive and the angel is just a dream. She could be dreaming. She could be dead. Which is real? In the liminal world, Turner reminds us "ambiguity reigns".

During separation, symbols of death and decomposition are applied not only to ritual participants, but extend also to their environment, even the entire cosmos, including the eclipse or dark of the moon.

The angel informs Marisol that the world is on the rim of an apocalypse. Marisol recalls that her everyday world has recently been infected by terrifying, inexplicable disturbances. She takes the opportunity to ask her angel:

Why is there a war on children in this city? Why are apples extinct? Why are they planning to drop human insecticide on overpopulated areas of the Bronx? Why has the colour blue disappeared from the sky? Why does common rain water turn your skin bright red? Why do cows give salty
milk? Why did the Plague kill half my friends? AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MOON? Where did the moon go? How come nobody’s seen it in nearly nine months....? (18)

The angel explains that the increasing distress of the world is due to the fact that God is "senile". The angel informs Marisol that "God is old and dying, and taking the rest of us with Him" (19).

Throughout the play, the senile God is represented as a gold crown contained within a glass box. It is suspended from the ceiling, high above the actors and the audience for the duration of the play.

In spite of such an ineffectual God, the angel informs Marisol that for the duration of her life, she has always been there to protect her.

ANGEL. When you were six and your parents were fighting, I helped you pretend you were underwater: that you were a cold-blooded fish, in the bottom of the black ocean, far away and safe. When racist motherfuckers ran you out of school at ten, screaming...

MARISOL. (In her sleep.) ... "kill the spik ..."

ANGEL. ... I turned the monsters into little columns of salt. At last count, one plane crash, one collapsed elevator, one massacre at the hands of a right-wing fanatic with an Uzi, and sixty six thousand six hundred and three separate sexual assaults never happened because of me (19).

However, the dire situation in Heaven continues to worsen, and the result in human suffering is too much for the angel to bear.

God is old and dying, and taking the rest of us with Him. And for too long, much too long, I’ve been looking the other way. Trying to stop the massive haemorrhage with my little hands. But it didn’t work and I knew if I didn’t do something soon, it would be too late (19-20).
As a consequence, Marisol’s guardian angel is going to lead a band of rebel angels that are determined to slay the senile God. It may be a vicious and ugly battle as God is "...better armed. Better organized. And, well, a little omniscient" (20). The angel envisions, however, that the end result of the angelic rebellion will be the death of this already decaying and utterly ineffectual God. A new God will be crowned, and the earth will be restored to health and vigour.

Turner states that during rites of passage, ritual participants or "neophytes" are often "in the presence of forms established from the beginning of things" (1967: 108). These forms are "invisible or supernatural beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effects" (1980: 161). Similar to Marisol’s angel, they are often figures of "destruction...primarily because they personify an essential phase in an irreversible transformative process" (1982: 84).

Unfortunately, as foretold by Golf Club, the Angel informs Marisol that she cannot protect her anymore, as she must employ all of her attention to the angelic revolution.

ANGEL. ...I have to leave you. I can’t stay. I can’t protect you anymore.

MARISOL. (In her sleep.) What? You're leaving me...? I'm gonna be alone?

ANGEL. I don’t want to. I love you. I thought you had to know (20-21).

The angel warns Marisol that she has two options for survival. She can learn how to live on her own and defend herself or, with the words "join us," the angel informs Marisol that she can also join the rebel angelic army.

ANGEL. ...I have to go and fight. And so do you.
MARISOL. (In her sleep, terrified.) I don’t know how to fight!

ANGEL. You can’t endure anymore. You can’t trust luck or prayer or mercy or other people. When I drop my wings, all hell’s going to break loose and soon you’re not going to recognize the world — so get yourself some power, Marisol, whatever you do (21).

Unfortunately, the images of death and destruction do not end here. Ritual participants are considered to be structurally “invisible”. In so far as they are no longer classified, the neophyte is considered to be structurally "dead", and "the symbols that represent them are, in many societies, drawn from the biology of death, [and] decomposition" (1967: 96). The neophyte, therefore, "may be treated for a long or short period, as a corpse is customarily treated in his or her society" (96).

When Marisol goes to work the next morning, she learns that a woman, with her exact name, age, and address, was killed the night before. She also learns that this woman was beaten to death by a man with a golf club. As Marisol walks into her office, her best friend, June, runs to her saying:

You died! You died! It was all over the networks last night! You’re on the front page of the Post! (June shows Marisol the paper. On the cover is a close-up of a young woman’s battered corpse. June reads.) "Twenty-six year old Marisol Perez of 180th street in the Bronx was bludgeoned to death on the IRT Number Two last night. The attack occurred 11:00 p.m." (Marisol tries to remain clam as she looks at the hideous picture.) I thought it was you. And I tried to call you last night but do you have any idea how many Marisol Perez’s there are in the Bronx phone book? Only seven pages. I couldn’t sleep (22).

It is important to note that Turner uses death as a metaphor for the structurally dead. Neophytes are dead in the structural world, but alive in the liminal world. Neophytes are neither dead nor alive, and yet both. They hold a status of ambiguity. To
reinforce this betwixt and between status "often their very names are taken from them" (Turner 1967: 96). Marisol does not have her own individual name. She has now learned that she shares her name with seven phone book pages full of Marisol Perez’s.

The death imagery in Marisol’s personal life is paralleled by the decomposition and decay of the world and the cosmos. Again, one finds symbols that parallel Turner’s work with rites of passage. Turner states that these rites often use symbols of animals and biology to force the neophyte to see his or her culture in unfamiliar and innovative ways. In this way, neophytes can encounter "norms from novel perspectives" (1986: 25). The following is the angel’s description of the decaying cosmos:

The universal body is sick, Marisol. Constellations are wasting away the nauseous stars are full of blisters and scars, the infected earth is running a temperature, and everywhere the universal mind is wracked with amnesia, boredom and neurotic obsessions (19).

Cosmos has now turned to chaos, and the chaos is infectious. Images of biology are quite vivid in another passage, from a character named "Scar Tissue”:

It’s incredible there. Logic was executed by firing squad. People tell passionate horror stories and other people stuff their faces and go on. The street breeds new species. And new silence. No spoken language works there. There are no verbs to describe the cold air as it sucks on your hands. And if there were words to describe it, Marisol, you wouldn’t believe it anyway, because, in fact, it’s literally unbelievable, it’s another reality, and it’s actually happening right now. And that fact – the fact that it’s happening right now – compounds the unbelievable nature of the street, Marisol, adds to its lunacy, its permanent deniability. But I know it’s real. I’ve been bitten by it. I have its rabies (33).
The American government seems to mirror God's senility and abounds in "gross failures in commonsense". The government attempts to construct a massive chain to tie the moon back to the earth. A news report on the radio states:

One insider has been quoted as saying that the White House hopes to raise revenues for Operation Moon Rescue by taxing lunatics. Responding to allegations that cows are giving salty milk because grass is contaminated, government scientists are drafting plans to develop a new strain of cow that lives by eating Astroturf (22).

The American government is also described with symbols of "animals and biology". A character named, Lenny, informs Marisol of the location of the last existing apple tree, "Powers-that-be got the very last tree. It's in the Pentagon. The center of the five-sided beast" (51).

Marisol's world begins to turn very ugly. Marisol learns that June's brother, Lenny, is desperately in love with her. Unfortunately, Lenny is psychotic. At the age of five he became "a shrieking experiment in army medicine for six years" (29), and now has "turbulent sexual death fantasies" (27).

Lenny stalks Marisol to her apartment and enters carrying a bloodied golf club. Lenny makes romantic advances toward Marisol and when Marisol rejects him, he attempts to rape her. Marisol grabs hold of the golf club and strikes Lenny in the head. Not knowing if he is dead or unconscious, Marisol runs from her apartment in a panic and in search of June.

While Marisol searches the streets for June, her guardian angel appears. She is carrying her feathery, white wings of peace in her arms. The angel throws the wings to
the ground. Marisol fearfully looks up at her angel. Already knowing the answer, she asks, "War?"

The stage blackens. End of Act One.
SYMBOLIC INVERSION
YOU’RE TRYING TO DISLODGE ME

For the duration of the second act, Marisol is fully in the liminal state. Marisol’s world has now truly become "a place not a place, and a time not a time" (1978: 279). Marisol has entered the realm of anti-structure. She observes that it is eighty degrees outside, and yet it has begun to snow. As the character, "Scar Tissue" describes:

Word on the street is, water no longer seeks its low level, there are fourteen inches to a foot, and the French are polite. I also hear the sun rises in the north and sets in the south (47).

Celeste Munger, lighting designer for the UBC production, stated that in the second act, she wanted to create a sense of "chaos" and "unreality". In the first act, all the lighting was radiating from the crown, from one central point (this, I would add, symbolizes an adherence to structured, normative life). Celeste explains:

In the first act, all the light is coming from single source areas. In the second act, all the lights are from all directions, and that creates unreality because you can look from any direction and get different shadows and light. The second act is very haphazard because total chaos is breaking out.

On the stage, garbage is strewn everywhere and the set consists only of a road, a sidewalk, and brick walls covered in graffiti.

As Marisol searches the streets for June, she happens upon many strange and unusual characters that play a key role in Marisol’s eventual enlightenment and transformation.
Turner states that in the liminal phase, grotesque and monstrous images are used to startle participants out of the reality that they have come to take for granted. These images are "aimed not so much at terrorizing or bemusing neophytes into submission or out of their wits, as at making them vividly and rapidly aware of what may be called the "factors" of their culture" (1967: 105). Often these figures are familiar cultural images that are extremely exaggerated, or in some cases, inverted.

This leads ritual participants to reflect upon images and ideals taken for granted in the every day world, and can, in turn, lead to an understanding of one's culture that has never before been realized (recall that this understanding can lead to both an acceptance and/or rejection of perceptions previously taken for granted).

Ritual participants must reflect upon exaggerated and inverted figures, as their familiar categories of classification will not apply. This opens up a whole realm of possible interpretations that cannot always be predicted. As such, exaggerated and inverted symbols are multi-vocal, that is, they can possess a wide variety of possible interpretations.

...the factors or elements of culture may be recombined in numerous, often grotesque ways, grotesque because they are arrayed in terms of possible or fantasised rather than experienced combinations...In other words, in liminality people "play" with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements" (Turner 1982: 27).

Stephen Malloy, faculty supervisor for the UBC production, paralleled Marisol to the Wizard of Oz. Similar to Marisol, Dorothy travels to the unknown realm of Oz. She journeys along a road in which she encounters several characters who guide Dorothy
to a revelation (how important her friends and family are to her, and how much she needs them). Similar to the final stage of a rite of passage, it is only after this revelation that Dorothy is "returned, changed in some way, to mundane life" (Turner 1986: 25).

The presence of the road is very significant as it is the means through which both Marisol and Dorothy enter, and are guided through, liminality.

It is interesting to note that Marisol's liminal phase is very similar to popular notions of the underworld. The underworld is the realm of the dead and the un-dead. It is a dangerous place filled with powerful mystical beings. In cultures as wide ranging as Europe, Asia, West Africa, Melanesia, and Polynesia, the entrance to the underworld is often in the form of a road. The road can be dangerous, fraught with obstacles that the human traveller must overcome (Siikala 1987: 300-301).

While it can be terrifying, the underworld is also a place of wisdom and enlightenment. Shamans from various cultures often descend to the underworld to converse with its inhabitants and learn how to cure the ills of their communities.

So too, does Marisol descend to the streets, where she meets several bone-chilling characters, who enlighten her to untold realities.

Entrance to the underworld is characterized by an act of descending, a going underground. This is very similar to Turner's description of liminality. Liminality, he explains, is "a place of secret growth, a mediatory movement between what was and what will be, where the social process goes inward and underground for a time that is not profane time" (1978: 279). Turner thus describes liminality as a "place not a place, a time not a time" (279). It has all the makings of a ritual "Twilight Zone", utterly unpredictable and filled with possibility.
In a symbolically related tale, Alice in Wonderland falls down a dark hole, "Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end!" (Carroll 1865: 13). Alice’s fall leads her to a realm filled with "mad" unpredictable figures. It is a world similar to the liminal, in which there is a complete suspension of structured time and space (Hall: 24-25). Anything can happen. Alice’s perception of the world and her expectations of it are forever changed, "Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way" (Carroll: 20).

So, too, Marisol enters a realm, creatured with strange and unusual figures who forever alter her expectations of the everyday world.

The first character Marisol encounters on the street, is the "Woman With Furs". While Woman With Furs was once a member of the upper-middle class, her fur coat is now tattered, and her skin is soiled and burned. Woman With Furs informs Marisol that she was imprisoned and tortured by the government for defaulting on her Mastercard payments. This was an occurrence Marisol had only heard rumours of. Marisol is offered her first glimpse in to the gruesome realities that simmer beneath her everyday world.

The next character Marisol meets is "Scar Tissue". He is a homeless man who was set on fire by Nazi Skinheads. Once again, this was something Marisol had only heard about. When they were just a newspaper stories, people like Scar Tissue were easier to dismiss. However, story has now become reality for Marisol and she can no longer blind herself to its existence. Scar Tissue describes in graphic detail how he suffered at the hands of the Skinheads:
A flash of light. I exploded outward. My bubbling skin divorced my suffering nerves and ran away, looking for some coolness, some paradise, some other body to embrace! (Laughs bitterly.) Now I smell like a barbecue! I can eat myself! I can charge money for pieces of my broiled meat! (46).

When Scar Tissue removes the oven mitts he is wearing, Marisol can see with her own eyes what were once his hands, now fire-eaten and festering.

Not long after Scar Tissue’s speech, a Nazi Skinhead (who we later discover is June) enters the stage with a can of gasoline. Scar Tissue and Marisol watch in horror as the Skinhead sets another homeless man on fire, right before their very eyes.

To use William Styron’s words, darkness is now visible. There is a dark and dangerous world lying just beneath the mirage that was Marisol’s safe middle class life. It is becoming more difficult for Marisol to hide behind familiar structures and ideals, and still believe that these human horrors do not exist.

Turner states that ritual participants "may be forced to live for a while in the company of masked and monstrous mummers representing the dead, or worse still, the un-dead" (1967: 96).

A clear example of this phenomenon of the un-dead occurs when Marisol encounters "Young Woman". Young Woman appeared in the first scene, sitting next to Marisol on the subway. Both women wore identical clothes. They could be mistaken for twins. Young Woman is the character one assumes was the "Marisol Perez" pictured, bludgeoned to death, in the newspaper article June read at the beginning of the play.

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4 "Darkness Visible" is the title of Styron’s 1990 autobiographical account of his battle with depression, the unveiling, if you will, of his own inner demons.
When she appears in the second act, Young Woman is a walking corpse; her face ghastly white. Young Woman insists that she is the real Marisol Perez and that she is dead. Marisol counters that she, in fact, is the real Marisol Perez and she is very much alive. Marisol’s face to face encounter with Young Woman forces her to reconsider her identity. Who is she really? What part of her is dead and what part of her is alive?

Young Woman becomes symbolic of Marisol’s psyche, particularly those aspects she has ignored and "amputated". As Marisol tries to articulate who she is, she is forced to review her past. As a result, Marisol uncovers a part of herself she has long ignored - - her Latin-American heritage.

MARISOL. No — I’m me...(Holds her head and closes her eyes, trying hard to remember the facts of her life.)...I lived in the Bronx...I commuted light years to this other planet - - Manhattan! I learned new vocabularies...wore weird native dress...mastered arcane rituals...and amputated neat sections of my psyche, my cultural heritage...yeah, clean easy amputations...with no pain expressed at all — none! — but so much pain kept inside I almost choked on it...so far deep inside my Manhattan bosses and Manhattan friends and my broken Bronx consciousness never even suspected...(50).

Dawn Petten, the actor who played Young Woman in the UBC production, describes Marisol’s inner journey: "Marisol keeps searching into herself, cross-referencing the world to herself. She sees the destruction, but that’s happening in her soul. Her personal landscape, her "inscape", has been obliterated, too."

Enlightenment however can be painful, and throughout this process Marisol often tries to remain in a state of denial, and longs for her once structured world:
Okay, I just wanna go home! Just wanna live with June – want my boring nine-to-five back – my two-weeks-out-of-the year vacation – my intellectual detachment. – my ability to read about the misery of the world and not lose a moment outta my busy day. To believe you really knew what you were doing God – please, if the sun would just come up! (48)

Marisol’s hopes however, are not realized. Lenny shows up, not only alive, but nine months pregnant – a symbolic inversion, indeed! Lenny tells of how his life was transformed by his pregnancy, how he now views his life in a brand new light, and wishes other men could share in his revelation.

Every man should have this experience. There’d be fewer wars. This is power. This is energy. I guard my expanding womb greedily. I worship my new organs...the violent bloodstream sending food and oxygen...back and forth...between two hearts. One body. Two surging hearts! That’s a revolution! (52-53)

This is a staggering image for Marisol. "You’re trying to dislodge me," she cries. "Contradict all I know so I won’t be able to say my own name" (52). These are fitting words as this act of dislodging one from familiar structures, is precisely what symbolic inversions are supposed to do.

Marisol tries one last desperate attempt to cling to a normative worldview that is beginning to crumble. She says to Lenny:

...When the sun comes up in the morning, all this will be gone! The city will come back! People will go back to work. You’ll be a myth. A folktale. Maybe you should stop pretending you’re pregnant and find a job (52).

None of these things happen. Quite on the contrary, Lenny goes into labour. He falls to the ground in terrible pain and Marisol has no choice but to help Lenny in any
way she can. The audience cannot see what Marisol can, but after much moaning, panting and panic, the baby is delivered into Marisol’s arms. Marisol wraps the baby in her coat and cradles it lovingly. However, within seconds of this immediate and miraculous encounter with new life, the expression on Marisol’s face quickly turns to sorrow. The baby is dead.

Immediately following the birth scene is a burial scene. Lenny carries the baby over to the sidewalk, easily lifts a slab of cement and starts to bury the baby in the earth. Marisol discovers that this sidewalk is not merely a pathway for pedestrians. It is also a tomb. Each slab of cement covers a coffin waiting for the burial of a dead baby. Lenny explains:

The city provides these coffins. There are numbers on them. The city knows how we live. These are babies born on the street. Little girls of the twilight hours who never felt warm blankets around their bodies. Never drank their mothers’ holy milk. Little boys born with coke in their blood. This is where babies who die on the street are taken to rest (55).

As he is doing this, Marisol is reading the names scratched into the sidewalk. To her astonishment, some only have dates of birth and burial. Marisol says over and over to herself "no name...no name...no name". When Lenny finishes the burial, he kisses the ground and says "Night, little Marisol". It is after the burial scene that Marisol realizes a part of herself has died as well, and her final transformation is complete. The death of the baby Marisol, ushers forth a new Marisol Perez, a woman who is fully conscious, and who seeks to fight to end the suffering of humanity.

Marisol stands up and proclaims to Lenny and June, "I have a clear vision for us now. I know what I want to do". Marisol informs her friends that they must join the
rebel angelic army in the fight against the senile God. Marisol can no longer close her eyes to the horror that has manifested around her due to the ambivalence and passivity of not only God, but herself, as well. Marisol decides to take action.

Unfortunately, Woman With Furs reappears. She has sided with the corrupt American government against the angelic revolution, and kills Marisol with an Uzi. Although Marisol’s body dies quickly and violently, Marisol suddenly stands up and faces the audience. This is the liminal state. Anything goes.

Marisol informs the audience about the events of the cosmic battle. Despite their passion and conviction, the rebel angels begin to lose their fight, and they have no choice but to retreat.

Then, as if one body, one mind, the innocent of the earth take to the streets with anything they can find – rocks, sticks, fires – and aim their rage at the senile sky and fire into the tattered wind on the side of the rebels (spotlight on a single homeless person angrily throwing rocks at the sky. This vision lasts only seconds. The stage once again goes to black. A spotlight on Marisol)...billions of poor, of homeless, of peaceful, of silent, of angry ...standing and screaming and fighting as no species has ever fought before. Inspired by the earthly noise, the rebels advance! (58)

Marisol has entered the final stage of her rite of passage. Images of re-birth and renewal appear, as a small moon begins to poke light through the night sky. Marisol informs the audience:

New ideas rip the Heavens. New powers are created. New miracles are signed into Law. It’s the first day of the new history...(There’s a few seconds of tremendous noise as the war hits its climax. The glass box explodes and the crown falls to the ground. Then silence. The Angel appears next to Marisol, wingless, unarmed, holding the crown in her hands. The Angel holds the crown out to the audience as Marisol looks at her.) Oh God. What light. What possibilities. What hope. (lights begin
to shine on Marisol and the Angel — and they disappear in the wild light of the new millennium.) (58)

It is significant that it is the glass around the crown that shatters, not the crown, itself. God is not dead. As the angel prophesies at the beginning of the play, a new God will be crowned. God has not been slain. If this were the case, the crown would have shattered, as well. It is a destruction of a human perception of God, that has been purged. It is a perception of God that is static, not willing to adapt to the needs of his people.

The play’s director, Richard Wolfe, states that this is also an attack on the belief that God will always "accept our sins for us and then we can just go on sinning". As a species we must take responsibility for the world that lies before us.

The rebel angels won the war, but this did not happen until humanity became willing to sacrifice and join in the battle. God will not float down as a benevolent fat cherub or a kindly grandfather and magically take away the injustices and abuses that humans have perpetuated. Marisol advocates an active spirituality in which humans are responsible for cleaning up the messes they create. God will help us if we help ourselves.

It is important to note that the journey of Marisol, as well as her social and cosmic worlds, follows a path of death, chaos, and re-birth. This notion of apocalypse is one of both destruction and creation. The Greek "apokalypsis" means "unveiling", "uncovering". In its historical use apocalypse entailed revelation. This revelation revealed that there would be a final battle between the forces of good and evil, and, most importantly, no matter how vicious the battle, good would prevail over evil. However,
modern use of the word apocalypse has come to denote catastrophe and destruction, without the revelation that anything positive or creative will prevail (Fine 1987; Gruenwald 1987). *Marisol* delivers a more ancient use of the image of the apocalypse. However, it must be emphasized that "good" only prevailed when it was preceded by an "unveiling", by consciousness.

I do not believe that playwright, José Rivera, is claiming a violent catastrophic apocalypse is the best medicine to heal the ailments of humankind. I do submit however, that Rivera is displaying through extreme example, that only by facing and acknowledging that the dark side of social life does in fact exist, the violence, the rage, and the abuses, can we uncover the solutions that will cure these ills and transform our society into a better world. As Jungian analyst, Nor Hall states, "We must examine how we rot, before any reordering can be done" (1994: 60).

This transformational promise is revealed not only in the words of the angel at the beginning of the play, but in the symbol of the moon as well. We learn from Marisol that the moon has disappeared and has been gone for nine months. This is the same length of time it takes to create a human being. Even though there is darkness and loss of the moon, it is gestating, preparing to return. There is always the potential for re-birth.
Now that I have illustrated the overall journey and framework of Marisol, it is time to more fully access its liminal potential. An important key to unlocking Marisol’s liminal mysteries, is through symbolic inversion. Clearly the most significant and innovative of Rivera’s inversions, is Marisol’s guardian angel. She is the generative center from which the characters most fully understand themselves, and the world they live in. She is the doorway, the threshold to the abyss. Like alchemists it’s time to enter into the abyss; draw forth its mercurial, contradictory elements, and discover what dissipates, what merges, what is destroyed and what is created.

While I haven’t been able to locate a concrete definition of symbolic inversion, scholars such as Victor Turner and Barbara Babcock have used the following terms to describe inversion: "contradictions", "paradoxes", "role reversals", and "the world upside down" (Turner 1967, 1978; Babcock 1978). It is important to note that symbolic inversion does not solely refer to strict oppositions, in the sense of binary oppositions. They are not exclusively a negation of what we find in the everyday world. Symbolic inversions are multi-vocal. They emanate a wide range of interpretations that fall between categories of binary oppositions (Turner 1969: 41). Once again, the liminal state in which symbolic inversions are utilized, is characterized by anti-structure, which transcends mere counter structure. Symbolic inversions present not only negation but possibility. That which the structural world is not, as well as all that it could be.
Symbolic inversions operate in the abyss. One cannot always predict, therefore, what an individual may or may not take from them.

As a symbolic inversion, Marisol’s angel contains aspects of culture that are both familiar and unfamiliar, simultaneously. Let us first examine the ways in which she is familiar, that is, those aspects of the angel that can be easily recognized by historical precedent.

Angels are important figures in the Judeo-Christian tradition and appear in more than half the books of the Bible. Dionysius Areopagite and Thomas Aquinas have hierarchically ordered angels into nine categories or "choirs": Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. While the historical range for angelic figures is both rich and fascinating, for my purposes, I won’t be analyzing Marisol’s angel specifically in reference to this hierarchy. In Rivera’s text, Marisol’s angel is referred to only as a "guardian angel". Historically, guardian angels are considered to be a "sub-class" of ministering angels that can be found operating in several of the "choirs" (Godwin 1990: 23, 68).

In all the literary sources consulted, all endeavours to define angels have referred to the Greek etymology, aggelos, meaning messenger. The most universal emphasis in the definition of angels is that they are the messengers of God. Their primary function is to serve on behalf of God’s will.

As humans pray and plea with God to protect them from the evils around them, some angels have historically been appointed to protect humans on God’s behalf. In this service, angels protect humans not only from external harm, but harm they may cause
themselves. This protective service lead to the popular notion of the "guardian angel".

Theologian T.L. Fallon thus defines guardian angels as:

...intelligent spiritual creatures divinely deputed to exercise individual care and protection over men on this earth and assist them in their attainment of eternal salvation. Most frequently, guardian angel is taken to mean a single angel assisting an individual man or groups of persons or a single nation, parish, etc. (1967: 518-519).

St. Thomas Aquinas, who greatly influenced the Christian notion of the guardian angel, maintained that all people, whether or not they are Christians, have guardian angels who will never leave them, even if those in their charge become the worst of sinners. Aquinas argued that angels seek to enlighten and inspire humans to follow a devout Christian path, however they cannot prevent people from making use of their free will, even if this has the most evil consequences (cited in Giovetti 1993: 198-199).

It has not yet been defined as dogma that the guardian angel "as a distinct spiritual being has been sent by God to protect every individual person" (Fallon: 519). The guardian angel, however, is very much alive in Catholic theology and piety (519). There is even a liturgical feast of the Holy Guardian Angels in Catholic observances, which occurs on October 2 (Davidson 1967: 128).

My father’s family is French Roman Catholic, and had a firm belief in guardian angels. I clearly remember stories told to me by my great-grandmother of how my overly curious, and dangerously adventurous young father was saved from one catastrophe after another, thanks only to the diligence of his guardians angels.
When I was born, my great-grandmother bought me a shiny golden medallion. Painted on it, was a sleeping child, and above the child was a golden haired angel, watching and protecting.

While the guardian angel is not literally designated in the Bible, it has certainly been fostered by it (Fallon: 519). The figure of the angelic protector can be found in both the Old and New Testaments.

Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone (Psalm 91.9-13).

But he said to me, "The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and make your way successful" (Genesis 24.40).

In Matthew we find that every child has a protecting angel when Jesus says: "See that you never despise any of these little ones [members of his kingdom]; for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my father in heaven" (Matthew 18.10).

The guardian angel certainly has its precedent in Jewish belief. The Talmud says that every Jew is attended throughout his life by 11,000 guardian angels and "every blade of grass has over it an angel saying "grow" (cited in Davidson 1967: 127-128).

An interesting facet in the guardian angels’ history is they are not exclusively passive conduits of God’s love, loving shields to protect us from the cruel world and ourselves. Angels can, at times, more resemble the sword than the shield. Rather than
passively deflecting the evils that threaten humanity, guardian angels can most actively
and offensively charge forth to slay those evils so they cannot harm us again.

This is certainly the case for Marisol's angel. She decides that it is not enough to
simply shield Marisol from plane crashes, collapsed elevators, and thousands of sexual
assaults. She decides to pick up an Uzi and slay the very source of these evils: a corrupt
government that has become a devouring beast, and a senile God who decided to look
the other way.

The warrior guardian who battles evil in an effort to save all of humanity has its
most prominent Biblical parallel in the Archangel Michael. In the Judeo-Christian
tradition, there are four angels who are regularly given proper names: Michael, Gabriel,
Rapha-el, and Uri-el (Godwin: 36). Marisol's angel is never referred to with a proper
name, however she much resembles Michael.

Among all angels named in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic writings, the most
famous is Michael. Among his many posts and achievements noted throughout the ages,
Michael has been designated as the guardian of Jacob, the angel who stayed the hand
of Abraham, and, in Jewish lore, "the fire that Moses saw in the burning bush had the
appearance of Michael" (Davidson: 193-194).

In the Christian traditions of the East, Michaeline devotion was evidenced by the
4th century in churches and sanctuaries in and near Constantinople. Devotion to
Michael then spread to Italy and the rest of Europe. In the west, the feast of St. Michael
and the angels was celebrated as early as the 5th century in the church of the same
name outside Rome. Michael remained the only individual angel honoured in liturgical
feasts in the church before the 9th century (Bialas 1967: 514).
Michael has been titled *Princeps militiae angelorum* (Tsuji 1967: 516). His most noteworthy achievement is that of the warrior who conquered Satan.

The most detailed account of this endeavour can be found in the Revelation of John. Revelation predicts an apocalypse in which Satan, also identified as the "Dragon" and the "Beast", and his band of demon angels will rise up and attempt to conquer God's kingdom and rule humankind. In retaliation, the archangel Michael will lead an army of angels to defeat Satan. A giant cosmic battle will ensue and ultimately Michael will strike the decisive blow, conquering Satan by hurling him and his angels into a lake of fire.

Rivera quite explicitly draws a parallel between Marisol's angel and Michael, and their battle against the beast, in the dialogue between Marisol and her angel at the beginning of the play.

ANGEL. Soon we're going to take off our wings of peace, Marisol, and put on our wings of war. Then we're going to spread blood and vigor across the sky and reawaken the dwindling stars!

MARISOL. *(In her sleep, reciting fast.)* "And there was war in Heaven; Michael and his Angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought ---.

Marisol here is citing the initial phrases of Revelation 12.7. The complete quotation is as follows.

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him (Rev 12.7-9).
Marisol’s angel and Michael are both warrior angels who battle and defeat the evils of humankind which are metaphorically represented as a beast (recall that the Pentagon is referred to as the "five-sided beast").

As warrior guardians, there is another interesting parallel between Michael and Marisol’s angel. Both angels have inspired mortal women to physically defend themselves, and offensively combat those that threaten them. In the fifteenth century, St. Joan of Arc took up arms (an unusual feat for a woman at this time) against the English occupation of France. Her actions were inspired by three voices – St. Catharine of Alexandria, St. Margaret of Antioch, and the archangel Michael (Barstow 1987: 96-97).

There is however, a very distinct difference between Marisol’s angel and Michael. Michael saves humanity by killing an evil beast and defending God. Marisol’s angel saves humanity by killing an evil beast as well as killing God, as He is the one who allowed the beast to gain strength in the first place. Michael saves the world by defending God. Marisol’s angel saves the world by opposing God.

It is this very key difference that makes Marisol’s angel a symbol that is inverted. She is a figure that has a great deal of historical precedent and mirrors a well known angelic figure. However, she is both his mirror and his opposite, simultaneously. It is this unique quality that places Marisol’s angel on the threshold to a wide range of symbolic possibilities.
As stated earlier, to define an angel, all literary sources consulted refer to the Greek etymology, *aggelos*, meaning "messenger." From the Greek etymology, historian Allison Coudert concludes, "The literal meaning of the word indicates the primary function of angels as divine messengers" (Coudert 1987: 282).

Similarly, social historian S. Tsuji states, "As the original Greek word indicates, the most important function of angels is to bring messages from God to men" (1967: 516). Angels, therefore, function as divine vessels or conduits facilitating the will of God.

As Coudert states, angels "praise and serve God, reveal divine truth, and act as extensions of the divine will, rewarding the good and punishing the wicked. They help humans understand God and achieve a proper rapport with him" (283). Angels are divine chalices carrying forth that which God desires.

According to Scripture, while angels are spiritual beings, they are always to be understood as acting in complete subordination to God (Fallon: 507).

Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word. Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will. (Psalms 103.20-21).

As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting on my own will, but by the will of God. Bless him each and every day; sing his praises (Tobit 12.18).

Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1.14).

Marisol’s angel, however, bears the message that the relationship between God and humans is deteriorating and will soon sever. God has turned a blind eye to the
suffering of humanity and the angel refuses to play her traditional role as a devoted conduit for the will of God. The angel bears the message, not of God’s will, or even that he is listening. Hers is the message that God’s senility is severing the tie between God and humanity. The angel now acts as an intermediary for the collective band of angels who will overthrow the King of Heaven.

It is at this juncture that Marisol’s angel as a warrior distinctly contrasts with Michael. Michael fights on behalf of God to overthrow Satan, the embodiment of evil that threatens humanity, and all of the cosmos. However, in Marisol, the threat to humanity and the cosmos is not God’s adversary, it is God, Himself. Marisol’s angel endeavours therefore to slay God, not God’s enemy. As a result, Marisol’s angel is not only a warrior, she is a rebel.

It would be easy to explain this digression by simply referring to the story of the fall of Satan. There is, with Satan, scriptural precedent for the rebel angel. Thomas Aquinas asserted that angels, as well as humans, possess the gift of free will—and it is precisely because of this that some angels can fall into the sins of pride, arrogance, and envy, becoming "fallen" angels, capable of revolting against God (Giovetti: 198; Gratsch 1985: 44-45).

One explanation offered with regard to the origin of fallen angels goes back to Genesis 6.1-2, where the sons of god (angels) turned away from God and became infatuated with mortal women "and took them wives from among them" (Davidson: 112).

The cause of Satan’s downfall, however, has commonly been attributed to the sin of pride or ambition (Davidson: 112).
Initially Satan, also known as Lucifer, "the bearer of light", was the most perfect, most beautiful of the angels that God created. However, Lucifer became so enamoured with himself, that he completely lost sight of his responsibilities to God. Lucifer, tired of his role as God's servant. He committed the sin of pride and desired to rule the heavens himself and be the supreme authority (Giovetti: 53).

Giovetti (53), parallels Lucifer’s fate with a passage from Ezekiel:

Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; and every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold...Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so...By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned....Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness... (Ezekiel 28.12-17).

However, German theologian Johann Michl states that the Church has never declared authoritatively the "way in which the angels sinned to become the devil and demons" (Michl 1967: 513). There is no detailed account in the Bible of the angelic rebellion against God, although it is briefly referred to in both the Old and New Testaments (such as the Revelation of John) (Giovetti: 52).

While Marisol’s angel is also the leader of a rebel band of winged warriors, she cannot be viewed as simply a female embodiment of Satan. Satan acted for selfish purposes, while Marisol’s angel emulates Michael’s initiatives, that is, to save humanity and the universe.
Through this analysis of the similarities and differences between Rivera's angel and historical precedent, we are not only aware of the malleability and originality of Rivera's imagination, but we are also given pivotal insight into his theology.

When the angel warns Marisol of her impending leadership in the angelic rebellion, she does not simply announce an act of abandonment. She instructs Marisol that she must learn to fight for herself. Marisol is going to have to learn how to protect herself from sexual abuse and oppression, as the angel will not be there to fight off the 66,604th sexual assault. Also, the angel will no longer be around to turn racist "motherfuckers" into salt. Marisol is now going to have to take responsibility and not only uncover her sense of pride and dignity in her ethnic heritage, but learn how to fight against her Neo-Nazi racist world. When Marisol opens her eyes to her own oppression and begins to fight for herself, she begins to open her eyes to the suffering of others and fights for them, as well.

Marisol's journey is not just a tale of her suffering due to an angelic abandonment. It is also an initiation into her own power. It is this transformation of Marisol that is crucial for understanding Rivera's use of the inverted symbol of a warrior rebel angel.

In Rivera's script, Marisol's guardian angel is not only a warrior and a rebel, she is an African-American woman. It is unlikely that Rivera's choices in this instance were arbitrary. Both women and African-Americans have been, and still are, oppressed in American society, and this oppression has long been validated by Christian traditions. Viewed in this context, one can easily understand why this angel rebels so fiercely
against a Christian God. Unlike Lucifer, this is not a rebel fighting merely for selfish gain. She represents the oppression of an entire people and is fighting to end their suffering.

As noted, Rivera’s script calls for an African-American woman. When this play was produced at UBC however, Richard Wolfe cast the angel with a Native American actor. This was particularly appropriate considering that the UBC production was Marisol’s Canadian premiere. Considering most especially its West Coast location, it is made all the more clear to a Canadian audience that this angel is not a Satanic dictator wanna-be, but is a woman who truly knows what it is like to suffer from an oppressive god, and is just in her anger.

It was important to Stefany Mathias, the woman who played Marisol’s angel, that she was an active symbol who was a revolutionary. Stefany informed me that in most plays, Native American characters often support stereotypes of docility and indifference. Stefany’s family was pleased to see her in such a vital, active role, and gave her tips on how to communicate more fully to the audience that she was Native American. Stefany’s mother told her to wear thicker braids and wrap them in buckskin. Her father even suggested that she wear the symbol of a Native revolutionary — a red bandanna.

It is important to note, as well, that the angel does not rebel on her own personal behalf, like Lucifer, or strictly on behalf of women or Native Americans. The angels in Marisol are fighting on behalf of all humanity. Scar Tissue’s guardian angel is Japanese. The angels of Marisol are truly beings symbolic of communitas; fully realized in their own identities, and yet championing the rights of all.
Ultimately, the cosmic revolution is not victorious without the participation of mortals. Recall that the rebel forces are losing the battle until humans rise up in support. Heaven and earth must unite to create a better world.

What is truly slain in this play is human passivity. It is the notion that we can ignore our own wounds, our own oppression, as well as the oppression of others, with the blind hope that God will somehow, someday, just take it all away for us. This play actively advocates what social scientists have long theorized. Our notion of ourselves and our notion of God are not separate. If we are an oppressive society, we will find a God, or construct a perception of God, to support it. If we take responsibility and care for ourselves, and those we share this planet with, only then will we be capable of participating in a relationship with the divine that is truly life-affirming; a spirituality that enables us to become the best of who we are.
For the cast and crew of Marisol, the gender of Marisol's angel was an important issue. When I asked respondents about their conception of angels before reading Marisol, four of them quite explicitly stated that they had always associated angels with male figures: "You often think of a guardian angel as a man", "typically angels are male", "historically male", "angels were men".

In Rivera's text, however, all of the angels are explicitly female. When Golf Club describes his angel, he informs Marisol that "She creeped in. Reordering the air" (13). Marisol recognizes that Scar Tissue has had an angelic visitation similar to her own, when Scar Tissue says the word "She."

SCAR TISSUE. The angel was beautiful. She was Japanese.

MARISOL. (Can't believe it; wanting to.) She?

SCAR TISSUE. Kissed me. I kept hearing Jimi Hendrix in my middle ear as those lips, like two brands, nearly melted me. She was beautiful. Raw.

MARISOL and SCAR TISSUE. Fulgent5 (46).

The majority of those interviewed asserted that it was essential Marisol's angel be cast with a female actor, to dislodge any connection between the rebel angel and

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5 In Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1971), "fulgent" is defined as "dazzlingly bright: radiant". It is akin to the Latin fulgens, "to shine, flash", as well as the Latin flagrare, "to burn" (918).
Lucifer. These discussions revealed that this is a connection not only the result of
Lucifer’s precedent, but popular notions of male versus female behaviour.

Alex [the actor who played all the male roles]: I think it’s absolutely essential that the revolution is lead by a woman, because we’re constantly denying women power. The revolution was lead by a male angel and he failed. The revolution now lead by a woman is to save the sinking ship, we’re all going down. The other revolution occurred because a male angel got jealous. Her intention is to save.

Dawn: We talked about that on the first day of rehearsal, how important it was to all of us that she was a woman. That is essential. That’s no arbitrary choice...It would make me sceptical, uncomfortable and wary, if the angel was a man. I would me very unhappy if the play had a male angel. I would be looking for problems. I would be looking more at reasons why he would want to overpower God. He wants Marisol to join him. As what? Helper?

Nazgol [the actor who played Marisol]: I don’t know if I would have trusted the angel if it was a man. It would have been too typical for a man to want to go to war. It would be an instant reaction I think.

I found historic precedent for a warrior female angel difficult to trace. This was due in no small account to the fact that information on any female angelic figure (warrior, rebel, or otherwise) is scarce.

Historian Gustav Davidson has written A Dictionary of Angels, Including the Fallen Angels. In the category of "Female Angels", he writes, "In Jewish occult lore, female angels are rare" (1967: 112-113), and he makes no mention of any female Christian angels.

Social historian John Ronner (1985) more specifically states that while "Christian artists have often blurred sexual distinctions, showing angels as effeminate youths...before the 1200’s, angels were generally considered masculine" (150).
In the early Christian period, artists represented angels as wingless male youths. This was derived from scriptural precedent (Coudert 1987: 285). The angels described in Genesis 18-19 are indistinguishable from mortal young men. For example, Abraham was visited by three angels who promised him a son, "He looked up and saw three men standing near him" (Gn 18.2).

Using scriptural precedent, the other alternatives were "bizarre figures, impossible to depict" (Coudert: 285). The angels described by Ezekiel, for example, have four wings and four faces (lion, ox, eagle, and man), calves feet, and the appearance of burning coals of fire (Ezek 1.7-13).

Up to the thirteenth century, angels were generally thought of as adolescent males, although they were portrayed without sexual attributes. By the late Gothic period, angels came to embody ideals such as beauty, truth, love, justice, and compassion. These are qualities represented in Latin and Greek by feminine nouns, and lead to the development of a "feminine" image of angels. However, these portrayals resulted in an "extreme etherealization of angelic forms" (Coudert: 286). There was a placid, vaporous quality to these figures that differs quite dramatically from Marisol’s angel of war.

However, with the rediscovery of classical art in the Renaissance, angels became increasingly naturalistic. Cupid became the model for angels as pudgy infants, and the study of classical nudes led to the portrayal of angels as robust, titanic figures, as can be seen in Michelangelo’s Last Judgement (Coudert: 286). However, these more foreboding images retained a masculine appearance, having well developed biceps and pectorals (and a conspicuous absence of breasts).
During the Renaissance, artists found iconographic precedent for "robust, titanic" images, in the winged figures of greek victories such as Hermes, and, ironically, the Greek goddess of Victory, Nike. (Coudert 285; Tsuji 1967: 515).

It is interesting to note that both Nike and Marisol's angel act as winged guardians of mortals. Nike has her own temple on the Acropolis, in Athens, and it was here that "Nike's protection was sought by persons starting on hazardous missions" (Bell 1991: 323). As well, Nike and Marisol's angel instill in humans the courage to protect themselves and combat their fears. In one ancient Greek work, the Bacchylides Fragment XI, Nike's role is clearly stated: "Nike, dispenser of sweet gifts, standing beside Zeus on Olympus, bright with gold, allots to mortals and the immortals the prize of valor" (Mercatante 1988: 482).

In Nike's temple on the Acropolis, Athena, the Greek goddess of war, was also represented both in relief and by statue. To ensure that Athena was a goddess associated with victory in war, she was often strongly identified with Nike and came to be called Athena Nike (Bell: 323).

Nike, on her own, ensured victory in a more far reaching sense. She embodied victory in athletic and musical contests, as well as in battle (Mercatante: 482). Using Nike as a surname, therefore, entitles figures to victory, in whatever form their endeavours may take.

In Nike, Marisol's angel finally finds precedent, though not Christian, as a courageous woman, both winged and victorious.
Not surprisingly, on the subject of female rebel angels social historian, Malcolm Godwin (1990) states, "Both Hebrew and Christian sources are notably reticent on the subject and there is no mention of fallen females from the original rebels" (89).6

The iconography of female angels was of crucial importance to Camille Sullivan, the artist who designed the angelic image appearing on the poster and programs for Marisol. The image Camille designed was a nude female angel lying dead on a cross that had fallen to the ground.

For Camille, the portrait of a dead angel revealed that this was a woman brave enough to die for what she believed in. It was important, therefore, that this figure be a warrior. Camille searched through various paintings of angels to see if she could find a model for Marisol’s angel. Not surprisingly, she came up empty handed. Camille found a lot of paintings of angels battling devils, but all were male. There were no female angels in battle.

The only distinctly female angels Camille could find, were delicate, ethereal figures. When Camille described these paintings to me, she said, "all the female angels were addressing Venus or something, nothing important." Camille was insistent that Marisol’s angel not to be a figure who was "a little weak angel dancing around, really doing nothing".

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6 A worthy mention in this category of the "fallen female" is Lilith. In the Hebrew mystical tradition, she is a rebellious winged figure, although not considered to be an angel per se. While she can be traced back to a Babylonian goddess, in the Jewish tradition Lilith was the first woman created and the first wife of Adam. After refusing to lie beneath Adam during sex, Lilith left Adam and flew away to the Dead Sea, where she became a winged she-demon (Patai 1990). In the Judeo-Christian tradition, "Wings" and "rebellion" are the only parallels that can be made with Marisol’s angel, as Lilith was acting strictly on her own behalf, while Marisol’s angel has more far reaching concerns.
There were three versions made of Marisol’s poster. One was a stark black and white charcoal image, the second was produced on grey paper, and the third was framed by paper that looked like it had been crinkled up or burned at the edges.

Camille liked the "crinkled" version best: "I think it's very strong. There's more violence to it. The grey was too soft, too washed out. It took away from the strength of the figure".

To fully communicate that this angel was an image of a strong female warrior, Camille focused on three factors.

First, Camille was insistent that the angel be robust and muscular. She did not want an ethereal waif-like image.

Second, was the angel's nudity. Due to the strong image of the angel in the play, and the lack of precedent in angel iconography, it was important to Camille that this image be nude. Because of her nudity, to the observer, the angel is unquestionably female. As there are no clothes to cover this woman's obvious musculature, she is also unquestionably a strong female, indeed most capable of being a warrior. Camille states:

I find a naked body stronger than a clothed one. This is a woman. To have her in clothes would be covering up her strength, because I think women have been covering up their bodies, covering up their ideas for so long. The woman in this picture isn't hiding herself.

Third, it was important to Camille that this angelic figure be faceless. Richard, the play's director, liked this image as well, as it reminded him of the image of the tomb of the unknown soldier. Camille agrees: "in the play, the one angel we see, is one of
thousands that are all going to die, so many of them are going to die, it's not just one woman.

For Camille, this image can be applied, not only to the rebel female angels, but to all mortal women who seek to defend and fight for themselves:

It's all women who are trying to do this, trying to fight, trying to empower themselves, like Marisol. So really it's representative of all women in the play. They are willing to fight and take the consequences. Marisol is so weak at the beginning, and by the end, she's fighting. I think women need an image that they can look to which is a strong woman, but not one who's given up being a woman. The angel is the strong woman, where Marisol wants to be, and where she is, by the end of the play.

The angel, therefore, serves as a model for Marisol. She is a woman who not only fights for herself, but fights against the oppression of others, as well. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1979), long maintained that religious symbols function as models of and for human behaviour. As "models of" they represent who we desire to become, and as "models for" they represent how to achieve it.

This image of the angel as a role model mirrors a description given by David Epp, the musician who composed the original score for the UBC production. David describes Marisol's angel as "a woman of action and one who knows how to be a catalyst. She knows how to activate. That's the angel's job."
Let us now examine more closely how Marisol’s angel serves as a model of, and for, Marisol to develop more fully her spiritual and social responsibilities. Let us take a second journey through Marisol to elucidate more clearly how the angel serves as a catalyst for Marisol’s transformation; her rite of passage from a meek young woman, with little sense of her own identity, to a strong vibrant warrior for the liberation of all who suffer the binds of social oppression.

At the very beginning of the play, in the very first scene, Marisol is attacked by a man wielding a golf club. In this scene, Marisol is quite passive. She screams and falls to the floor, and almost seems to be giving in to the inevitability that she will be attacked. Marisol is fortunate she has an angel to save her.

Unfortunately, Marisol is informed by her guardian angel that she cannot rescue her anymore. The next time Marisol is attacked, it is by another stranger. A man charges into Marisol’s office mistaking her for Robert De Niro’s publicist. He complains that De Niro owes him money for his work in Taxi Driver. When Marisol explains that he has the wrong office, the stranger becomes enraged. He lunges for Marisol and smashes ice cream in her face. Again, Marisol remains quite passive. It is Marisol’s friend June, who charges to her rescue in the nick of time, and pummels the stranger until he leaves, groaning and in agony.

At the end of this scene, as the two women are leaving the office, Marisol catches a glimpse of her guardian angel, standing in the shadows, polishing her Uzi. She is preparing for battle.
Later that afternoon, Marisol witnesses June get attacked by her psychotic brother, Lenny. Marisol finally shows some backbone and is the one who disarms Lenny, demanding, "Give me that knife! Give me that fucking knife!" (30). As a result of the attack, June boots Lenny out of the apartment. The scene ends with June informing Marisol: "We’ve got to stick together. This town knows when you’re alone". Marisol is now beginning to realize that she has to start defending herself and those she cares for.

In the next scene, Marisol is packing her things and preparing to move in with June, when Lenny comes bolting in unannounced. He is carrying a bloodied golf club and a bouquet of flowers. Lenny, who is madly in love with Marisol, tries to convince her to marry him. He uses some intriguing arguments to persuade her.

LENNY. I want to offer you a deal. You controlled your life until now. But your life’s fucked up, honey! Big time! So I’m gonna let you give me control over your life. That means I’ll do everything for you. I’ll take total responsibility. I’ll get a job and make money. I’ll name our children. Okay? And what you get in return...is my protection...

MARISOL. You’re asking –

LENNY. A small price. Your faith. Your pretty Borinquen smile...I just want you to look up to me. Make me big. Make me central. Praise me, feed me, and believe everything I tell you (35).

Rivera once again, has utilized a rather ingenious inversion. We hear such arguments coming out of a psychotic person and immediately respond to how preposterous they are. How can Lenny justify such oppression with these ludicrous offerings? Then we remember these arguments were once considered common sense. This was once a very sane way of validating domestic oppression. By putting these
comments in the mouth of a demented and violent man, holding a bloodied golf club and a bouquet of flowers, Rivera reveals just how abusive these ideals truly are.

When Marisol refuses Lenny, he attempts to rape her. He strikes Marisol, pushes her onto the bed, and grabs at her clothes. In this moment, Marisol fights back in a way she never has before. She knees Lenny where it hurts, grabs the golf club, and swings at him. As Lenny lies cowering on the floor, Marisol holds the golf club above her head and makes the following speech:

...you will always find a way to be out there, hiding in stairwells, behind doors, under the blankets in my bed, in the cracks of every bad dream I've had since I've known there were savage differences between girls and boys. And I'll know you'll always be hunting for me. And I'll never be able to relax, or stop to look at the sky, or smile at something beautiful on the street (36).

In this scene, Rivera is making several social commentaries. The first, is that the insanely violent world Marisol seems to live in isn’t all that different from the world all people, and especially women, live in everyday. Women are constantly implored not to walk the streets alone at night, and to always be wary of strangers. They are certainly not able to “relax, or stop to look at the sky”. One of the female crew members empathized with this speech and stated, "When I’m walking alone, I’ll carry a knife, a pocket knife, or mace, because I’m so freaked out”.

Second, we are struck at the beginning of the play, by the number of locks Marisol has on her door. Ironically, the episode in which Marisol is most viciously attacked occurs inside her home, by someone she knows. While the situation is ironic, it is a frequent occurrence in the everyday world. Six days after Marisol opened, on
March 8, the *Ubyssey* carried a report by Statistics Canada that one-half of Canadian women have experienced an act of violence since the age of sixteen, and almost one half of these assaults were by men they knew. In the *Vancouver Sun* (March 18, 1994), Statistics Canada also revealed that married women are nine times more likely to be killed by a spouse than by a stranger.

Marie, an audience member at the UBC production, made an interesting observation. During her marriage, Marie was the recipient of physical and sexual abuse. Throughout her marriage, Marie was also obsessed with locking the door to their apartment. Marie focused all of her fears and trauma about the violence in her marriage on the apartment door, never stopping to consider that the danger and the violence was, in fact, inside the apartment. According to Marie, this is a very common pattern with women who suffer domestic abuse.

This is a central theme in *Marisol*. We cannot simply ignore or hide away from the violence and malaise that plagues our society. No matter how many locks we put on our doors, and insist it’s not in our neighbourhood, not in our beautiful West Coast city, Statistics Canada and events like the Canucks riots reveal the rage and the violence that is rumbling very near. Golf Club informs Marisol at the beginning of the play, we truly cannot close our eyes "in some hopeless logic that closed eyes are a shield against nightmares" (13). As any recipient of domestic violence will attest to, those nightmares can be right in our homes, drinking coffee with us in the morning.

In this scene with Lenny, Marisol finally begins to actively defend herself. As the next two encounters reveal, however, she still has one more lesson to learn.
When Marisol meets Scar Tissue, this is her first face to face encounter with a homeless person. Unfortunately, Scar Tissue isn’t just homeless, he is the victim of a vicious attack.

At the beginning of the play, the audience learns that groups of young Nazi Skinheads have decided to "clean up" the problem of homelessness in New York by setting homeless people on fire. Marisol, in her day to day life, would read about such occurrences in the newspaper. However they were so distanced from her middle class existence that she wouldn’t "lose a minute outta my busy day" (48).

Marisol has now been forced to the streets. Her home, her safe haven, is now a place of danger. After being forced to the street, Marisol comes to know Scar Tissue personally. He is kind and witty, and has had an encounter with his guardian angel just like hers. Scar Tissue is no longer a newspaper story. He is a flesh and blood human being who has comforted Marisol and showed her companionship.

Scar Tissue is also living, breathing, testimony to the horrors of the city, as he graphically describes the suffering he endured at the hands of the Skinheads: "My bubbling skin divorced my suffering nerves and ran away, looking for some coolness, some paradise, some other body to embrace! Now I smell like a barbecue! I can eat myself!" (46).

Finally, after the death of Lenny’s baby, Marisol once again meets face to face with the plight of the homeless. A baby lived and died in Marisol’s arms and during the burial Marisol comes to find that there is an entire sidewalk filled with the bodies of babies who have died on the street.
It is at this point that Marisol decides she will join the rebel angelic army. Marisol has learned to fight for herself, and she endeavours to fight for those who cannot help themselves, be they people she cares for, such as her best friend June, or the countless homeless that her middle class lifestyle has kept her separate from.

Unfortunately, Marisol is killed, but she rises again to perform the final monologue, which reveals the decisive victory of the angelic battle. One assumes, at this point, that Marisol has risen to become a rebel angel herself. The final teaching from her guardian angel is complete. Discover who you are, join forces with others, and don’t give up until the battle is won.

Rivera attacks the notion that humans can abdicate responsibility for the savage world they live in, in the hope that God will just float down one day and take it all away. He also attacks the notion that angels, similarly, will flutter about and erase the ugliness humans have perpetuated. Part of divine aid is to make mortals conscious of the suffering they have caused one another, and to teach humans how to end this suffering for themselves. Mortals must learn how to clean up after their own messes.

As the following discussion will reveal, Rivera’s angelology is timely and much needed, as current popular notions of angels, if not senile, are docile to the point of being utterly ineffectual as models for humans to band together, and actively seek to make their world a better place.
FLUFFY WHITE ANGEL WINGS

Currently, in the mass media, angels are exceptionally popular. In the U.S., a 1991 Gallop poll stated that 69% of Americans believed in angels, and 32% believe they have had direct angelic contact. Over the last year, a whole library of angel books have flooded the market. Book stores, such as Banyen in Vancouver, have had to establish special "angel" sections. Time Magazine (December 1993, 46) reported that on Publishers Weekly's religious best seller list, five of the ten paper back books are about angels. The same month, Newsweek (52-53) reported that angel book sales were approaching five million copies. While most books pay some attention to angels in history, the vast majority focus on contemporary stories of individuals who have had personal angelic encounters.

In addition to books, there is a deluge of angel merchandise, including angel cards, calendars, diaries, dolls, and watches. One of my respondents works at a Blackberry book store, in Vancouver, and noted the proliferation of angel books, cards and calendars. Another one of my respondents works in a Vancouver shoe store, where they are selling shoes that have "angel soles". The advertising slogan is that the soles of the shoes are "Satan resistant".

In December of 1993, both Time and Newsweek acknowledged this surge in angelic popularity, and devoted cover stories to the issue. Newsweek (53-54) reports that

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in the U.S. there are now more than thirty speciality stores and catalog houses devoted exclusively to angel ware.

Even Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman-Marcus are cashing in on the current popularity of angels. They have introduced a new "Angel" perfume from French clothing designer Thierry Mugler, "who believes everyone has a guardian angel, or can at least smell like one" (Newsweek, 52-53).

As there are so many angel devotees, people are starting to network:

The AngelWatch Network in Mountainside, N.J., monitors angelic comings and goings in its bimonthly journal, which has 1,800 subscribers. Through its headquarters in Golden, Colo., the 1,600 members of the Angel Collectors Club of America exchange information on everything from angel cookie jars and postage stamps to — of course — angel-food recipes. For the technoliterate, there are computerized angel conferences. And the devout can join prayer groups like "Philangeli," which means "Friends of the Angels" (Newsweek, 52-53).

In the spring of 1994, Phil Donahue and Oprah Winfrey noted this new wave of popularity, and devoted entire programs to angels. On May 24, 1994, Patti Duke Astin hosted a two hour documentary style film called, "Angels: The Mysterious Messengers". All three of these programs addressed the current popularity of angels and included interviews with people who have had direct angelic contact.

Currently running on Broadway, is the two-part Angels in America, and a big hit in the theatres this summer is Angels in the Outfield.

What is most noteworthy about the current dialogue on angels, is their kindness and gentleness. They are primarily beings of hope and comfort. Scanning through the popular literature, listening to testimony on Phil and Oprah, one is struck with images
of angels that embody light, serenity, and good tidings. Referring to my earlier classification, they are guardians that act as shields, rather than swords. They protect humanity, but do little to combat the sources of human suffering.

*Newsweek* (56) describes the current portrayal of angels as "celestial boy scouts or substitutes for the doting grandparents the visionaries never knew."

Nancy Gibbs, author of the *Time* article, describes them as "all fluff and meringue, kind, nonjudgmental. And they are available to everyone like aspirin" (46).

I have listened to the individual stories of those who have shared their angelic experiences with the popular media, and can see a purpose to these beings of light and comfort. The vast majority of angelic encounters currently described in books and on television programs, occurred during moments of personal trauma. For example, on "Oprah", a man was rescued by his angel when lost in a snow storm. Similarly, a girl who was lost mountain climbing, spoke of her angelic rescue on "Donahue".

On "Angels: The Mysterious Messengers," a man suffering from a severe illness, fearing he was going to die, was comforted by an angelic voice saying, "fear not, I am always with you". Another woman who was in emotional distress, felt a hand on her forehead and a voice saying "Be at peace, Helen".

Also on this program, a second man reported seeing angels while he was being stabbed, almost to death, by a psychotic house guest. A man and a little girl, both dying of cancer, reported having angelic visitors, who comforted them and helped them cope with terminal illness.

As well, there was testimony from a young U.S. Marine corporal, Tim Altizer, who saw an angel in 1991, when he was stationed in the Persian Gulf, during Operation
Desert Storm. This was a very frightening time for the young corporal: "I wasn't a very religious person, of course everybody kinda turned real religious when we got sent out there, to the Gulf War, because everybody was pretty much scared to death."

One night, while Tim’s battalion was being shot at, they received word over the radio, that they would be crossing over landmines. This was also the night Tim encountered a mysterious figure.

I seen something. I didn’t really know what it was. It was like a figure. It called my name. It said, "Tim, everything’s goin’ be all right," and I realized it was an angel...it wasn’t two or three hours after the angel told me everything was goin’ to be all right, that the war was over.

When Tim described his angel, images of "soft" and "white" came to his mind: "The feeling of it was soft. It made me feel soft. It felt white [and] soft like a marshmallow. It kinda put that feeling around me."

Being thousands of miles away from home, not knowing if death is imminent, one can certainly understand why an image of "soft" and "white" would be comforting and indeed a necessity. All humans have a need for comfort and peace, especially in moments of trauma. There are times when we just don’t have the emotional strength to persevere, and desperately need someone, or something, to carry us through. In such trying times, the peaceful, benevolent angel, who is there to carry our burdens, is a welcome sight indeed.

For some, there are moments when these images fulfil a psychological necessity, and the healing they bring cannot be disputed. However, there is currently, in the mass media, an exclusive approach to angels as benign and soft. Some writers propose that
angels exist solely to make humans happy and comfortable. These angels are quite
docile when it comes to making mortals confront anything unsavoury.

In her article, Gibbs quotes Eileen Freeman, who is the publisher of the newsletter
Angel Watch: "Each of us has a guardian angel. They’re nonthreatening, wise and loving
beings. They offer help whether we ask for it or not. But mostly we ignore them" (46).

Gibbs responds to this quote by saying, "Only in the New Age would it be
possible to invent an angel so mellow that it can be ignored" (46).

As I will demonstrate, an approach to angels as exclusively docile and benign,
can foster a spiritual passivity that begets social laziness. In some circles, angels have
become divine vessels, not for the will of God, but for the will of humans. Some writers
advocate that we need only meditate on an angel, in order to change ourselves and
society. Taken to an extreme, this can lead to a form of passivity, that may not support
the wrongs of society, but abdicates any responsibility for changing them. As a result,
benign smiling devotees, and benign smiling angels, keep hearth and home peaceful and
quiet, but do little to actively seek out and change what they are shielding from.

Daniel, Wyllie, and Ramer (psychotherapist, architect, and artist, respectively) are
authors of the very popular Ask Your Angels (1992). These writers describe a practice
called "Do Nothing," in which they advise an angel devotee to "Let go of control and
let the angels do all the work" (200). They name categories of angels that include "angels
as servants", and angels as "loving friends" (44-45). In their capacity as loving friends and
servants, angels will help devotees with their tax audits (there really is a section called,
"The Angels and the Tax Audit") (264). As well, "winged weight watchers" will keep the
devout from snacking between meals. If you have cravings simply "call up your angel buddy" (285-286).

On a card picturing golden-haired, rosy-cheeked cherubs, Bonnie Altenhein has written the following text. It is entitled, "All I need to know about life I learned from my Guardian Angel".

Angels are the guardians of hope and wonder, the keepers of magic and dreams... Your guardian angel knows you inside and out and loves you just the way you are. Angels keep it simple and always travel light. Remember to leave space in your relationships so the angels have room to play. Your guardian angel helps you find a place when you feel there is no where to go. Whenever you feel lonely, a special angel drops in for tea.

In startling contrast, Marisol's angel does not travel light. She packs an Uzi. This is an angel who is a force to be reckoned with. Will Altenhein's angel who drops in for tea, challenge humanity to face the human horror stories they have created? This is unlikely.

Sophy Burnham is author of what is perhaps the most popular angel book currently on the market, A Book of Angels. As a result, she appears on the talk show circuit, and in all the magazine articles dedicated to angels. On "The Mysterious Messengers" program, Burnham made the following statements about the nature of angels: "They don't like to be seen. They want disguise. They're not going to break in and intrude on our sense of reality, so they'll come as visions, as voices...So that little intuition is a little angel voice whispering".

In contrast to this notion, Gibbs writes:
According to the rest of history, anyone who invites an encounter with an angel should be prepared to be changed by it. By scriptural tradition...they issue a challenge to priorities and settled ways. One need only remember the modest girl from a poor family whose life was forever transformed by the message Gabriel brought—that she would bear a son and name him Jesus (46-48).

However, the new wave of angels is not about challenges to priorities and settled ways. There is an absurd notion that if we simply do not admit there is evil in ourselves, or in the world, then it will cease to exist. When Burnham instructs her readers on how to communicate with angels she writes:

...you must phrase your prayer in a positive sense. For, again, the universe does not understand the concept of "not." There is no absence or negative in the universe, and therefore it deletes all but the active voice and positive words.

Burnham states that if a mother prays to her angel "Don’t let my baby die", her request will not be answered because angels are not able to understand negative words such as "don’t" and "die". Burnham writes that an angel will only be able to respond if a mother pleas "Let my baby live!" (Burnham: 223-224).

Are we to imply from this that if a starving woman in Rowanda desperately pleas, "Don’t let my baby die", an angel will not, and cannot, respond because the starving woman chose the wrong words? How unfortunate for this woman, she didn’t have Burnham’s book on hand.

Such ludicrous notions encourage social members to dismiss the reality and depth of human suffering. In their book, Meeting The Shadow (1991), writer, Connie Zweig and, Jungian analyst, Jeremiah Abrams state:
To protect us from human evil...we have only one weapon: greater individual awareness. If we fail to learn or fail to act on what we learn from the spectacle of human behaviour, we forfeit our power as individuals to alter ourselves, and thus to save our world. Yes, evil will always be with us. But the consequences of unchecked evil do not need to be tolerated. (XXIV).

I would add, they must not be tolerated. Marisol's angel does not come to comfort or to tea. She comes unannounced, and forces Marisol onto the streets to see the devastated world for herself.

To be members of a just society, we must become aware of the dark, destructive side of human nature and the suffering it causes. From this awareness, we must take responsible social action. To be faced, almost daily, with graphic images from Rowanda, and then to advocate that to eliminate this human disaster, one must simply not acknowledge its existence, simply not use "negative" words, is not only naive, but wreaks of an ignorance that is utterly inexcusable.

The chubby infantile cherubs that have become the dominant motif of the current outcrop of angels, were once the terrifying Cherubim. In Genesis (3.24), they guard the east gates of Eden with flaming swords. In Revelation (7-8) they battle Satan.

Ezekiel (1.13) describes the cherubim as "burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lighting issued from the fire."

In response to popular images of cherubs, Malcolm Godwin writes, "How such magnificent and awesome beings shrunk to the size of tubby little winged babies, fluttering prettily in the corners of Baroque ceilings, remains one of the mysteries of existence" (28).
I would argue that this is not such a mystery. If we can utterly define angels – as winged babies, or loving servants – then we can predict them. If we can predict angels, then we can control them, and thus abdicate any responsibility for dealing with human unpleasantries, ourselves. Malcolm Warford, president of Bangor Theological Seminary stated, "When you trade mystery for security, you end up with trivialization" (cited in Gibbs 52-52).

At the back of *A Book of Angels*, in the section entitled "About the Author", one discovers:

Sophy Burnham, mother of two (now grown) daughters, grew up in Maryland and after many adventures now lives in Washington, D.C., where she derives her pleasures from her friendships, involvement with the arts, and avoidance of politics.

Burnham's avoidance of politics is no surprise, as her theology seems to advocate an avoidance of any social action at all. Lawrence Cunningham chairman of the theology department at Notre Dame has little use for a reliance on angels that promotes social blindness. In an interview with *Time* he states, "if people want to get in touch with their angels, they should help the poor. If they want to get in touch with their angels, they'd be a lot better off working at a soup kitchen" (53).

A spirituality devoted solely to meditations on benign, docile images would be permissible if we lived in a utopic world in which we were all as healthy and happy as the baby cherubs. Paradise, however, does not exist on the streets of *Marisol*. Most importantly, as the following interviews real, paradise cannot be found on the streets of the real New York City – nor on those of Vancouver.
Along this journey through Marisol, I have included observations and insights from the cast and crew of the UBC production, that expose the fictional world of Marisol, as perhaps not so fictional. Testimony, most especially from Marie, reveals that the staged drama of Marisol and the social drama of our everyday lives, is indeed connected.

Turner would not be surprised. He refers to the relationship between the staged and real worlds as an experience of "plural reflexivity". Singular reflexivity refers to the questions and revelations of particular characters, such as Marisol. Plural reflexivity refers to theatre’s capacity to allow characters, performers, and audience members, all to reflect upon themselves and their social worlds, simultaneously.

Plural reflexivity... differs from singular reflexivity in that it involves several persons in dramatic interaction. Prince Hamlet could brood on his own motives, but the play Hamlet reflects upon the rotteness not merely "in the state of Denmark" but in the early modern world, as old feudal values came to stink in new Renaissance nostrils" (Turner 1986: 106).

Without exception, everyone in the cast and crew of Marisol found the play disturbing, and at times bone-chilling, because of how closely it resembled the real world they lived in.

Morgan Carrier, properties supervisor for Marisol, cites gang uprisings in West Africa and L.A. as evidence that the real world is just as violent as Marisol’s: "The L.A. gang riots are just as bad as Marisol. When that white truck driver was bludgeoned..."
almost to death by eight people, that makes Marisol look tame. And it’s happening everywhere, not just the U.S. It’s happening in Africa, China, Thailand.

Dawn Petten, the actor who played "Young Woman," draws a similar parallel to the social tensions in Los Angeles.

I liked it when the homeless person throws rocks at the sky. It made me think a lot about the riots in L.A. The collective uprising. Things are brewing and will erupt. There’s this undercurrent of violence. It’s growing and the situation isn’t getting better. So that revolution is a very real possibility. L.A. riots are like slow fires starting.

Allison Jenkins, properties assistant, observed that the violence in Marisol startled her into seeing how violent her own society was. "I don’t like watching violence but I don’t think how else he [Rivera] could have indicted how degenerate our society is getting. So I didn’t find it gratuitous, it made me wince, but it was supposed to."

Nazgol stated, "I hate violence for the sake of violence. I will not sit through excessively violent movies. This script isn’t gratuitous. It has a message." Similarly, Alex observed, "The violence had a purpose in this play and that is what scared me."

Heidi Lingren, one of the stage managers stated, "Over half our cast has been to New York and has seen things like people getting beat up for being homeless. In Seattle, a woman honked at someone who cut her off and they shot her nine year old daughter. So there is a part of Marisol that is realistic."

The majority of respondents stated that the play made them "notice things more" in their everyday world. Unfortunately, most of what they noticed was violence.

Heidi: Reading the play made me feel depressed, dismal. I felt like crouching up and felt the world was so awful. I almost started crying at
the end, the first time I read it, because it made sense to me that this is what the world is like. The play isn’t glorifying violence. It’s very realistic, not exploiting it. That was what was most depressing.

The two stage managers, Heidi and Niki were responsible for putting together the lobby display. The director wanted to create a world that once the audience entered, they couldn’t leave. Using this request as their starting point, Heidi and Niki, decided to cover the walls of the lobby with the *New York Times*, as well as Vancouver newspapers. Their goal was to see if they could find newspaper stories that paralleled themes in *Marisol*, thus creating for the audience a blur between the staged and real worlds.

In putting together the display, itself, Heidi experienced this blur first-hand. She was startled by how easy it was to find stories that matched *Marisol’s* themes, "What scared me was every page had something violent – wars, child abuse, pictures of dead people”.

The piercing awareness of the parallels between the staged and real worlds did not remain in the rehearsal studio. It followed the cast and crew home with them and into their dreams. Many reported having nightmares during the play’s run. Several respondents volunteered that it became a regular occurrence during rehearsals for people to gather and share their nightmares. Heidi offered, "the cast and crew almost every day came in and said "I had a Marisol dream last night."" Nazgol stated, "I had nightmares, we all did, we would all come in and share our nightmares".
"GET YOURSELF SOME POWER, MARISOL"

BUT WHAT KIND OF POWER?

It is evident by now that Marisol, indeed, is a violent play. There are moments when the violence is abominable, like the torching of the homeless man by a Nazi. However, there are also scenes, perhaps even more disturbing, when the violence appears necessary for the preservation of life. As the play’s director states, "Unfortunately we are living under the circumstance where it’s necessary. That’s the great sadness of it all. That’s the great tragedy."

Seeing violence portrayed in a variety of contexts, made the cast and crew reflect on it in ways that were at times enlightening, while at other times deeply confusing.

Heidi: The play was positive about women, showed that women can fight for themselves, and have to be wary and knowledgable that they are vulnerable no matter how hard you try. You can’t say this can’t happen to me because it can happen to you. It’s relevant to the world today because women are starting to realize, with self-defence courses, that there’s a choice.

For some people however, this "choice" is not quite so cut and dried. Nazgol Deravian, the actor who played Marisol, despises guns, and any thought of having to use them. Nazgol was born in Iran, and spent part of her childhood there: "It could have given me more of a sensitivity to guns. I remember seeing bullets fired in the air and bombs, and we would have to put aluminum foil on the windows to block out lights during the bombing".
Marisol made Nazgol confront the issue of whether or not she could actually use a gun:

I just don't like guns, I don't like the implications. I understand there are times when they can come in handy, because if I was being attacked and there was a gun beside me, who knows what would happen. Right now, I would say I would never shoot at anybody. It's like that moment in Marisol when she swings the golf club at Lenny. She probably never thought that she would do that.

Nazgol, here, is articulating a sentiment shared by other members of the cast and crew. How to deal with the fact that there appears, at times, to be a necessity for violence. Allison stated, "Women being violent didn't bother me. What bothered me was that the violence was necessary. That was the creepiest part of the play for me, the really, really, brutal part."

As musician, David Epp stated, it is imperative that individuals have an "iota of self-preservation." However, where does one draw the line between "self-defense" and an inappropriate, deplorable use of violence and aggression?

Dawn: There are two sides to myself where sometimes I think I could kill someone who attacked me, and sometimes I don't.

Kirstn [the actor who played June]: I don't think things should be done with force. It's a contradiction, but there are occasions when you've got to stand up and fight. It's a tough issue. With Loreena Bobbit, some women were cheering, but there has to be a limit. You don't mutilate someone. That's wrong. But some women in the Bronx really do have to kill their husbands. That's another contradiction.
This is a complex issue. There are no easy answers. The pressing concern of rampant violence in our society is a social ill that needs to be pulled apart, and viewed from as many perspectives as possible.

To expand on this point, a paradox about violence and gender was revealed by my respondents in two stories they shared with me. Five people volunteered a story about the first day the guns were brought in for rehearsal. They were real guns, rented from a local armoury (unloaded of course). As soon as Ken Hollands, Marisol’s technical director, walked into the rehearsal space, several of the male crew members ran to the guns with excitement, and began to play with them. Not one woman participated.

When Alex described this story to me, he concluded:

I bought into it. In our society boys are trained to be killers. I was a TV baby, and it really influenced me in terms of training. That’s why I find it disgusting all the games of violence for kids. I don’t glorify guns. I know how destructive they are. I was wondering how to use them for effect. I didn’t point a gun at anyone. You don’t do that. But I have been moulded by my society. I bought into that. If you say you didn’t, that’s bullshit.

Another interesting story came from Kirstn Hawson. She played June, and observed the effect beating another character up every night (even though it was mocked) had on her consciousness.

Doing the fight with Ice Cream, the first time I did it, it really worked. I had a surge of adrenalin and it gave me a real insight into why people kill, and why people kill repeatedly. You get high off it and that’s scary. It’s like being a cocaine addict. You never get the same first high, but you’re struggling to recapture it. My heart was racing and I felt energized. People get addicted to adrenalin. If I was having a bad night, I would wait for the fight scene and then I would know the adrenalin would kick in, even if I didn’t want it to, and that’s scary.
Through this experience, the actor learned that regardless of her biology, violence can induce an illusion of power that is just as "addictive" and destructive as it is in males.

Inherent in the play, itself, Rivera’s characters elucidate that issues concerning gender and violence are in fact very complicated.

Most definitely a lot of violence is gendered. Similar to Marisol’s speech to Lenny, there really are male predators who "find a way to be out there, hiding in stairwells, behind doors, under the blankets". Statistics Canada revealed that between 1974 and 1992, "1,435 women were slain by a spouse" yet, during the same period, "451 men were killed by a spouse".\(^8\)

Niki, who walks the streets with a knife and mace for protection, mirrors Marisol’s statements, "And I know you’ll always be hunting for me. And I’ll never be able to relax, or stop to look at the sky, or smile at something beautiful on the street."

Perhaps as Lenny states, referring to his pregnancy, "Every man should have this experience. There’d be fewer wars" (52).

However, it cannot be forgotten that June becomes a Nazi. While this is a fictional character, there are women who support and participate in Hate Groups. It appears that despite their biology, not all women are peacekeepers and non-violent. The Nazi element also brings in racial issues that must be addressed when examining violence in our society.

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\(^8\) Vancouver Sun, March 18, 1994.
Then there is the issue of what is just violence? We cannot help but support Marisol for physically and aggressively defending herself against Lenny's attempted rape. We cannot help but champion an angel who will risk her life to stop a god from allowing the cosmos to self-destruct.

Yet we are also faced with Lenny's words. With his arms wrapped around his expanding belly he informs Marisol "This is power. This is energy...One body. Two surging hearts! That's a revolution!" (52-53). It is imperative that we focus attention on precious, fragile life; the very future of our species. The world would truly be a better place without wars and violence, and the death and destruction they bring.

In her book, *Fire With Fire* (1993), feminist scholar, Naomi Wolf, approaches this conundrum with her discussion of the 1991 film, *Thelma and Louise*. This film was criticized by some for its famous shotgun blast at the rapist, and the scene in which Thelma and Louise blow up the truck of a man who harasses them. Wolf asserts that this film was important for women on a metaphoric level. She states that many female audience members: "were not applauding the violence itself... They were cheering the public affirmation of the part of themselves that was not content to just take it, whatever "it" might be, in silence any longer" (38).

Wolf firmly asserts: "If you are a warrior for your rights, you must accept that some interests and people should lose. It's okay to harm a rapist in order to escape; it's okay to embarrass a discriminatory employer" (Wolf 288).9 Dawn had a similar reaction

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9 It is interesting to note that Wolf contrasts these statements with what she terms the "Angel in the House" ideology—a means for defining the ideal female as domestic, passive, and unconditionally accommodating (167).
to Marisol. She stated, "With pregnant Lenny, Rivera is saying fight back, not necessarily with violence. Use whatever you have. You can yell. That’s spoken violence. Get power how you can."

Inversions are a veiling that permit a certain seeing. They make certain factors stand out with a clarity that in the everyday world, they would not have.

When confronted with a Native female warrior, we cannot rely on Lucifer’s precedent. We must deal with the very real desire of the oppressed to refuse to allow themselves, and others, to be brutalized in the everyday world, time and time again.

However, when faced with a female Nazi, we cannot rely on our familiar categories of the male aggressor. We are forced to deal with the ugliness of racial violence itself.

When confronted with a pregnant man, we cannot drift dreamily into familiar notions of the maternal female. Instead we are faced squarely with the miracle and fragility of the new life that breathed its first and last breaths in Marisol’s arms, and how, if we are not careful, both men and women, life can be extinguished as quickly as it was created.

Turner states that the liminal phase can reveal the "same message," in this case, violence in our society, in a variety of guises. This creates "a set of subtly variant messages".

The result is something of a hall of mirrors—magic mirrors, each interpreting as well as reflecting the images beamed to it, and flashed from one to the others. The many-levelled or tiered structure of a major ritual or drama, each level having many sectors, makes of these genres flexible and nuanced instruments capable of carrying and communicating many messages at once (Turner 1986: 24).
Symbolic inversions may not give concrete answers, but at least they make us aware of the complexities involved. These are not simple issues, and they cannot be resolved with naive statements such as Marisol's to Golf Club, "Why don't you just get a job!" (13), and her similar remarks to Lenny, "Maybe you should stop pretending you're pregnant and find a job" (52).

To tackle our social ills, we must first be armed with awareness. Rivera is saying keep your eyes open; remain active and aware. These are not comfortable subjects, but we must keep tackling them; pulling them apart. We must keep trying to understand. They are unpleasant to confront, but they must be dealt with before we in fact create our own apocalypse.

What I found most disturbing about the newspaper articles displayed in the lobby, were how many of them combined violence and children:

"Just family planning, Hong Kong clinic claims."  
(New York Times, February 27, 1994.)

Headline: PLO Offers Israel Compromise Deal.  
"Palestinians propose joint control border crossings...Young Palestinians [who didn't look more than 10 or 11 years old] throw stones at Israeli soldiers posted on the roof on a building during clashes in Gaza City, yesterday, while negotiations continued in Oslo, to salvage peace accord."  
(Globe and Mail, December 20, 1993.)

Headline: 407 Squadron Members Head For Bosnia.  
"Playtime: children play with ball on street in Sarajevo Sunday, where Serbian shells landed recently."  
(Globe and Mail, December 20, 1993.)
Headline: Kurdish Refugees Safe Now, But Homeland Horrors Remain.
"Safe Shelter: Ibrahim Ali, 3, stares out the window from his home safe from his war-torn homeland of Iraq."
(Vancouver Sun, October 28, 1993.)

Humanity has created this reality for children. It is not until Lenny’s baby dies, and Marisol discovers that there is a whole sidewalk full of babies who have died on the street, that Marisol reaches her final revelation. It is not until she recognizes that our future as a species is in dire threat, that Marisol realizes she must join forces with all of the oppressed, thus bringing new metaphoric insight into Lenny’s words, "One body. Two surging hearts! That’s a revolution!" (53). As humans if we sit around waiting for someone, anyone, to simply eliminate our problems for us, an apocalypse will, in fact, eliminate us.
AT THE RIM OF THE APOCALYPSE

While they are troubled and confused by the complexities of the ills of society, it was unanimous among my respondents that humans must take their responsibility for allowing them to perpetuate. Niki stated, "Things are worsening—the environment, violence, kids with drugs and guns, we're killing ourselves".

Dawn: In a lot of the scenes the objective was to wake each other up. It was a call to action and a call to wake up, go out on the street and see this stuff, live it if you have to. I’ve worked at battered women’s shelters, so I have rage for that situation. It woke me up. It was the trumpet for me. The apocalypse is more likely to come if we keep pressing the lid down; if we don't admit that these things are happening.

Heidi stated that during the production, there were several "big philosophical discussions about God in the lighting booth." By the end of the production, everyone exonerated God from being the actual cause of the apocalypse.

Richard: We can’t blame God for the position that the world is existing in. And when he’s [Rivera] suggesting that we revolt against God, well obviously that’s not likely to happen. It’s to revolt against the idea of God as somehow accepting our sins for us, and then we go on sinning. He’s rejecting that. We have created our own nightmares, and we have to deal with them, ourselves. God is not going to come down and create the apocalypse. We’re already doing it.

Alex: You’ve got to be responsible in your religion, rather than let religion be responsible for you. Do unto others.

Dawn: The message of the play is a call to action, take your own faith, your own responsibility, don’t lay the guilt or blame on God.
Several respondents made the very insightful remark that they feel their generation, more than any other, must become conscious and active in their social responsibilities. World media coverage is more intensive than it ever used to be. We cannot claim ignorance when so many of the atrocities of our world are right under our fingertips.

Camille: Partly I think it’s getting worse and partly, it’s just more open. Stuff that’s been going on in women’s lives has been going on forever. Just now, it’s like a big new thing, women actually get beaten in marriage, like that’s never happened before. You hear about more violence. I don’t think it’s that people are getting worse. It’s all right there now in front of everyone to deal with.

David: This play dug deep and exposed things in many metaphors. There is a lot of violence. We live with violence, you hear about it on the news, in the paper, and we have to get out of denial.

Celeste: Today is a time of upheaval and change, so many civil wars. It’s the age of information. We know the atrocities of wars going on now. Whether we choose to do something about it or not is the revolution. Your eyes are open, now what will you do?

In *Meeting The Shadow*, Zweig and Abrams make similar comments:

Today we are confronted with the dark side of human nature each time we open a newspaper or watch the evening news. Our era has made forced witness of us all. The whole world is watching. There is no way to avoid the frightening spectre of .. conniving politicians, white-collar criminals and fanatic terrorists. Our inner desire to be whole – now made manifest in the machinery of global communication – forces us to face the conflicting hypocrisy that is everywhere today (Zweig & Abrams: XX).

This is one of the most striking themes in *Marisol* – opening our eyes to what is often right in front of us. More sophisticated media coverage has made "forced witnesses of us all", now what will we do? Unfortunately, as Alex states:
We all turn a blind eye when it’s convenient. When we don’t, it becomes very inconvenient. And it’s easier to turn a blind eye in a big city because you don’t know the people. There’s no connection with the people. *Marisol* made me realize when we can’t give change to a beggar on street, what do we mean when we say we’re sorry?

Human malaise is not only global, it is right in our "lotusland" Vancouver. Right under our very noses are human atrocities that do not fall into our tidied, structured social alignments. Vancouver’s streets are crowded with homeless, and many of them are very, very young. As Jung stated, "We have in all naïveté forgotten that beneath our world of reason another lies buried. I do not know what humanity will still have to undergo before it dares to admit this" (cited in Zweig & Abrams: XXIII). In liminality, we are often forced into realms that sanitized social policy does not always account for.

When I asked Nazgol if her life was impacted in any way by *Marisol*, her answer was a resounding "Yes."

Through her work as Marisol, Nazgol, similar to the character she played, developed a closer identity with her cultural heritage. Nazgol is Persian. She was born in Iran and spent her early childhood there. Nazgol’s Iranian ancestry was something she used to be quite inhibited about. She has memories of her early days in Canada in which children in the playground taunted her, and called her a "terrorist". Nazgol identified with Marisol’s amputation of her cultural heritage and, as a result of this play, has begun to feel more of a sense of pride and identity in her Persian roots. Of her scenes with "Young Woman," Nazgol affirmed, "those lines, every night, it meant a lot to me to say that."
Nazgol also used to have visions of her own personal guardian angel named "Margaret". During this play, Margaret informed Nazgol that she was leaving her. Margaret revealed that as Nazgol was developing a stronger sense of her own identity and individuality, she would no longer be needing the presence of her guardian angel in such an immediate sense. Nazgol confides, "I don’t know if that visitation was real. It could be my imagination. But if it is, that’s great. I have a great imagination! Even if it’s part of your imagination, it’s telling you something."

From her experience as Marisol, Nazgol has discovered her ability to protest. She’s not sure what form it will take – physical, verbal, psychological – but there is, however, to reiterate Wolf’s words, a sense with Nazgol that she isn’t "not going to take it anymore, whatever it may be".

Nazgol: As a person the image I am left with is the final revolution. I am much more aware that I am responsible too, that I can make a difference, I can make changes. I’ve gone through life thinking it’s not my problem. More than anything Marisol has reinforced that I can have a voice, that I don’t need to be quiet about it.

At first, Stefany Mathias, who played Marisol’s angel, was deeply troubled by her role. Stefany is a Native American from British Columbia. She found herself procrastinating from her work in the play, and not giving it her best effort. Stefany discovered that she had unconscious blocks, impeding her work. Stefany became aware, through the rehearsal process, that she was very distressed at the notion of having to slay God. This made Stefany deeply reflect upon her own sense of spirituality, something she had never done before: "I was surprised [slaying God] bothered me because I was not
a particularly religious person. The problem was that I didn’t acknowledge to myself that I was a spiritual person, and that this role was disturbing for me."

Stefany’s family participates in both Catholic and Native American religious traditions. Stefany has always been uncomfortable with Catholicism, particularly because it is lacking in opportunities for female leadership. Stefany asserts:

There are things in religion that need to be changed, that’s why I chose not to get baptized. In my family, women are powerful, so it’s hard to grasp the low status women have in the Church. In Native culture, there are medicine women and men, and often the women are more powerful. As a Native, it was hard to grasp Catholicism.

Through her work in the play, Stefany discovered the importance of a religious heritage that combines Roman Catholicism and traditional Native beliefs. She gave me an example of this by describing a dream she had before participating in Marisol. In the dream, Stefany saw her "guardian angel". It was a white thunderbird that transformed into an old woman when it landed on the ground. Stefany believes that the colour white was inspired by her Christian heritage, and the thunderbird and old woman came from her Native background.

Stefany concluded that as a result of her work in Marisol, she believes it is more likely that the Church is senile, rather than God.

The play really affected my life. It made me question religion and my spirituality a lot. Before the play, if someone asked me if I was spiritual, I would say "no". Now, I would say "yes". Until I did the play, I didn’t know this. It was like a spiritual awakening.
Marisol has proved to be a true rite of rebellion, as it resulted in challenges to "priorities and settled ways". Marisol's implicit social criticism lead the cast and crew through a series of transformations. For some, the play made them notice more clearly the greater concerns of the society they lived in, as well as their own responsibility for affecting social change. For others, such as Nazgol and Stefany, the play lead to a deep introspection, uncovering aspects of their culture and spirituality, they had left buried and unresolved.
In *Marisol*, angels are beings of transformation. They are catalysts. Angels ignite fires and are, themselves, firelike. All of the angels in *Marisol* are similar to beings of fire. When the angel first encounters Marisol, Rivera writes, "Marisol feels the tremendous heat given off by the Angel. The Angel backs away from Marisol so as not to burn her" (16).

When David composed the music that was to accompany Marisol’s angel, he was inspired by images of heat: "Heat was associated with the angel. Remember when the angel went up to Marisol, and touched her for the first time? The music changed, and that was heat. And the next day, when Marisol was recalling the angel, I had the same music come up again."

Golf Club and Scar Tissue have similar descriptions of their angels:

GOLF CLUB. ...she folded her hot silver angel wings (13).

SCAR TISSUE. I kept hearing Jimi Hendrix in my middle ear as those lips, like two brands, nearly melted me (46).

Recall that in the popular media, the current incarnation of angels are often described as beings of white and light. They have lost their ability to challenge humans so that they may grow beyond established and familiar ways, no matter how destructive they may be.

Historically, angels have not been so muted. Recall that in Genesis Cherubim guarded Eden with flaming swords. There was an unknowable, unpredictable aspect to
angels that made them terrifying, as they were not enslaved by the human will. This is as it should be. Human nature often prefers a path of comfort and oblivion to the path of truth.

It is easy to control and even escape from light. One need only put on a pair of sunglasses, or close the blinds. Fire, however, cannot be ignored. A wake up call can only be issued by a being of fire. We can close our eyes to the light, but it is useless to close our eyes to fire.

Rather than beings of white and light, historically, angels were often described as beings of fire.

Recall Ezekiel (1.13), where angels were described as "burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lighting issued from the fire."

The Seraphim, one of the nine choirs of angels, were popularly known as the "fiery, flying serpents of lightning" who "roar like lions" (cited in Godwin 25). Dionysius Areopagite asserted that the name, "Seraphim" means "those that burn" and "those that warm" (cited in Giovetti 47-48).

The prophet Isaiah saw flaming angels above the Throne of God (Godwin 25). Revelation (14.18) speaks of the angel of the heavenly altar "who has authority over fire."

It is interesting to note that while most scholars refer to the Greek etymology of "angel", it’s earliest etymological origin may be the sanskrit, Angiras. They were the divine descendants of Agni, the Hindu God of fire, who was considered to be the first Angiras. As descendants of Agni, the Angiras were "celestial phenomenon and fires
adapted to particular occasions, [such] as the full moon or change of the moon”\textsuperscript{10} (Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 2nd ed.).

In the Old Testament, Yahweh, as well, was considered to be firelike: "The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire." (Deuteronomy 5.4). Exodus recounts that "Yahweh went in front of them...in a pillar of fire by night" (13.21).

As they are like fire, angels are beings of transformation. Gustav Davidson thus describes a 1947 painting by Russian artist Marc Chagall: "One of Marc Chagall’s celebrated oils is his apocalyptic Angel of Fire or Flaming Angel (the canvas is titled "Descent of the Red Angel") that plunges from Heaven on a peaceful and unsuspecting world, and shatters it" (29).

This is an image reminiscent of Jeremiah (23.29), "Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?".

The angel of fire breaks us away from established structure, and plunges us into anti-structure. She forces us away from what is safe and familiar, so that we may delve into the unknown. In this capacity, the angel ignites our ability to create anew.

Fire, therefore, has the ability to both destroy and create. Fire can burn something to ashes, and yet the heat it releases is essential to the gestation of life. Eggs must be warmed before they hatch.

Likewise, in Marisol, fire is used to both destroy and create. When used in blindness, fire becomes a means through which mortals judge and punish one another.

\textsuperscript{10} The being of fire associated with the "change of the moon," certainly parallels nicely with Marisol’s angel.
There is a federally funded torture center for New Yorkers who have gone over on their credit card limit. Lenny testifies, "It happens late at night. But you can hear the screams. They cremate the bodies. That's why Brooklyn smells so funny" (27).

As well, Neo-Nazis have decided to "purify" the country by setting homeless people on fire. It is the New York version of ethnic cleansing. Rivera writes:

Skinhead crosses the stage again, with a can of gasoline, chasing the frightened Homeless Person...The Homeless Person falls. The Skinhead pours the gasoline on the Homeless Person and lights a match. There's a scream as the Homeless Person burns to death. Marisol covers her ears so she can't hear (47).

Scar Tissue was a homeless man who survived one such assault and describes it to Marisol, "Now I smell like a barbecue! I can eat myself! I can charge money for pieces of my broiled meat!" (46).

This is fire used in blindness; fire utilized in a vicious attempt to avoid facing what is uncomfortable, and what often forces us to grow as human beings.

SKINHEAD. (Furious, to Homeless Person.) I mean, why can't they just go AWAY? I mean okay, if you people want to kill yourselves, fine, do it: kill yourselves with your crack and your incest and your promiscuity and your homo anal intercourse ... just leave me to take care of myself and my own. Leave me to my gardens. I'm good on my acres of green grass. God distributes green grass in just the right way! Take care of your own. Take care of your family. If every body did that...I swear on my gold Citibank Mastercard...there wouldn't be any problems, anywhere, in the next millennium (47).

Fire represents a plague that is ravaging a society so corrupt, it has begun to self-destruct. At the beginning of the play, the angel warns, "The universal body is sick,
Marisol... the nauseous stars are full of blisters and sores, the infected earth is running a temperature."

MARISOL. It’s like the universe is senile, June. Like we’re at the part of history where everything breaks down. Do you smell the smoke? (The lights begin subtly to go down. June notices the darkness right away. She looks at her watch.)

JUNE. Wait! It’s nine-thirty! They’re expecting the smoke from that massive fire in Ohio to reach New York by nine-thirty. (June and Marisol look out the window. The lights go darker and darker.) Jesus! Those are a million trees burning! (24).

Seeing the death and destruction that the humans are waging on one another, and a God who does nothing about it, the angel believes that the only way to stop the madness is to burn everything down and start from the beginning.

ANGEL. A man is worshipping a fire hydrant on Taylor Avenue, Marisol. He’s draping rosaries on it, genuflecting hard... They’re setting another homeless man on fire in Van Cortlandt Park... I swear, best thing that could happen to this city is immediate evacuation followed by fire on a massive scale. Melt it all down. Consume the ruins. Then put the ashes of those evaporated dreams into a big urn and sit the urn on the desks of a few thousand oily politicians. Let them smell the disaster like we do (17).

The angel’s frustration is reminiscent of Luke (12.49) who reports Jesus saying: "I have come to bring the fire down to earth, and how I wish it were kindled already."

Fire is often utilized in Scripture as a means for divine punishment: "The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment; he will send fire and worms into their flesh; they shall weep in pain forever" (Judith 16.17). The same theme appears in Malachi (3.19): "See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up."
While fire can be a means of punishment, it can also unleash intense creative possibilities. Fire can be a means of purification, destroying what is corrupt, and making clear what is whole and precious. Historian James Latham states, "the fire of the Lord does not only destroy, it also tests and purifies. Just as precious metals must be purified by fire, so must man" (1982: 235).

Everything that can withstand fire, shall be passed through fire, and it shall be clean (Numbers 31.23).

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire (Malachi 3.2).

And I will put this third into the fire, refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested (Zechariah 13.9).

In I Corinthians, Paul says fire will test the quality of everyone’s work.

the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Cor 3.13-15).

Latham states that symbols such as fire not only have an ambivalent quality, but their capacity for good or evil is often derived from one and the same practical use: "Burning fire will destroy impurities, either to leave true gold, or nothing, if the whole is evil" (Latham: 74). Thus, in Marisol, awareness and responsible social action must be kindled; ignorance and oppression must be burned.

Latham concludes that the dual quality of fire is an inherent characteristic of the "sacred".
There are thus two poles, which belong to most sacred substances, the pessimum and optimum. A symbol can be dangerous as well as salvic; a notion corresponding to the double aspect of the sacred: fear and divine aid. This is particularly true of such dynamic vehicles as fire and salt, both of which produce change (240).

Latham mentions salt in conjunction with fire as a vehicle for the sacred. It is interesting to note that salt is also a pervasive symbol in Marisol. Excerpts from the following two scenes reveal that both angels and mortals use salt as a means of punishment:

ANGEL. When racist motherfuckers ran you out of school at ten, screaming...

MARISOL. *(In her sleep.)* "kill the spik ..."

ANGEL. ...I turned the monsters into little columns of salt (19).

When June forces Lenny to move out of their apartment, she threatens to curse him with salt.

JUNE. This is not a transition, Leonard. This is a break. A severing. So get up. Collect your mutant trash. Give me your fucking keys. Leave right now. And don’t look back at me or I’ll turn you to salt right where you stand with my eyes, so help me God (31).

All of the food and water in New York has been infested by salt, symbolizing the moral sterility of the world. Marisol asks her angel, "Why do cows give salty milk?" (18). Later in the play, Marisol learns that milk isn’t the only once nourishing substance that has been vanquished by salt:

MARISOL. It’s just salt inside there...just salt...It’s not an apple! It’s not food!
LENNY. *(Devours the apple and tries to keep from crying.)* There isn’t a single food group in the world that isn’t pure salt anymore! Where the fuck have you been?! (52).

As excerpts from the following three scenes reveal, moral sterility is combined with spiritual barrenness, as salt also represents the death of angels.

[Marisol reads from a manuscript on her desk] "...salt is in the food and mythology of cultures old and new. Ancient writers believed that angels in heaven turned into salt when they died. Popular mythology holds that during the Fall of Satan, angels who were killed in battle fell into the primordial ocean, which was then fresh water. Today, the oceans are salted by the decomposed bodies of fallen angels..." (25).

JUNE. I hear the water in the Central Park reservoir is salty ’cause angels are falling outta the sky, Marisol (54).

MARISOL. The oceans are salty with rebel blood (58).

Salt and fire can combine as symbols of transformation. Having salt rubbed in a wound produces pain (often a burning sensation). Pain leads to consciousness; it keeps us aware of our wounds and our suffering. To use Marisol’s words, salt in our wounds makes it more difficult to "amputate neat sections" of our psyches. As well, due its capacity to soak up blood, salt can speed the healing of wounds and help prevent infection. Salt is a symbol of both healing and destruction. Either way, it is transformative.

**ANGELS IN AMERICA**

There is, indeed, historical precedent for angels as beings of transformation. In their contemporary manifestation, however, Marisol’s angel is truly rare.
It is interesting to note that in 1993, *Marisol* and Tony Kushner's play, *Angels In America: Millennium Approaches*\(^1\), were both in production in New York (*Angels In America* was making its Broadway debut). While both plays have similar themes, the role played by the angels, is decidedly different.

*Angels In America* also takes place in New York City. There is a central angelic figure who announces to a mortal, Prior Walter, that the apocalypse is near. She reveals that God has abandoned humankind. Mortals have been weaving a web of corruption, and God has vacated the heavens, leaving humanity to self-destruct.

Similar to *Marisol*, the human species is held responsible for the apocalypse, and Kushner explicitly attacks the major social ills of our time — homophobia, environmental degradation, racism, sexism. "I'll show you America," one character concludes. "Terminal, crazy and mean" (p.96).

Kushner further blurs the staged and real worlds with the following dialogue:

Prior: Imagination is a dangerous thing.

Harper: In certain circumstances, fatal. It can blow up in your face. If it turns out to be true. Threshold...

Prior and Harper: ...of revelation (70-71 b).

New York City is the boiling point, the center of American chaos and destruction.

Joe. I'm going to hell for doing this.

Louis. Big deal. You think it could be any worse than New York City?

\(^1\) *Angels In America* is a combination of two plays: *Millennium Approaches*, and its sequel, *Perestroika.*
As a result, the apocalypse is near. A character by the name of Ethel Rosenberg, observes, "History is about to crack wide open. Millennium approaches" (112a). This is very similar to Marisol who warns June, "We're at the part of history where everything breaks down" (24). Later, Marisol states, "I'm against the wall. I'm at the rim of the apocalypse" (48).

In Kushner's play, there is a sense that the world is so hopeless, it will need to be torn down before anything vital can be created. One character mourns, "I pray for God to crush me, break me up into little pieces and start all over again." (49a).

This play also utilizes similar images of salt and fire.

CALEB. Will the desert flow with milk and honey? Will there be water there?

HARPER. Oh, there's a big lake but it's salt, that's the joke...

FATHER. The Lord will provide for us, son, he always has.

ORRIN. Well, not always...

HARPER. ...they drag you on your knees through hell and when you get there the water of course is undrinkable. Salt. It's a Promised Land, but what a disappointing promise! (66b).

Fire will be the vehicle to finally purge America of its ills, and force mortals to face the disasters they have created.

Harper. Water won't ever accomplish the end. No matter how much you cry. Flood's not the answer, people just float...Fire's the answer. The Great and Terrible Day. At Last (101b).
Revelation is painful and there is a tendency for humans to try as much as possible to avoid or sugarcoat that which makes them uncomfortable. There is a sense that humanity has become so used to closing its eyes to the problems of society, that it will take drastic cosmic measures to make them do otherwise.

MORMON MOTHER. God splits the skin with a jagged thumbnail from throat to belly and then plunges a huge filthy hand in, he grabs hold of your bloody tubes and they slip to evade his grasp but he squeezes hard, he insists, he pulls and pulls till all your innards are yanked out and the pain! We can’t even talk about that. And then he stuffs them back, dirty, tangled and torn. It’s up to you to do the stitching.

HARPER. And then get up. And walk around.

MORMON MOTHER. Just mangled guts pretending.

HARPER. That’s how people change.

MORMON MOTHER. I smell a salt wind.

HARPER. From the ocean.

MORMON MOTHER. Means he’s coming back. Then you’ll know. Then you’ll eat fire (79b).

Unfortunately, God, in this play, isn’t coming back. The cosmos is going to have to learn how to look after itself. The message of Angels In America is that people must stop running away from their problems. Just as God abandoned humankind, humans are continually abandoning each other in the name of race, class, sex, and sexual orientation. Running away from problems is a form of blinding oneself to them. Kushner attacks the notion that if you run from something you can’t see it, and if you can’t see it, it isn’t there. This is similar to Marisol’s theme of holding each individual responsible for “waking up” and facing the disasters that plague humankind.
The one significant difference between the two plays, is the role of the angels. In both plays, angels deliver similar revelations to specific mortals. However, in *Angels In America*, the angels are docile, ineffectual beings. They make pleas to humanity to bring God back because they have no idea how to do it, themselves. Angels can only act if they are given orders. Kushner’s angels mirror the popular image of angels as mere conduits for other people’s desires. They are utterly controllable, with no threat of forcing anyone to wake up to untold realities, be they glorious or terrifying. When character, Prior Walter, describes the angels to himself, it is uncanny how much they much resemble current portraits of angels in the popular media.

Prior. ...they’re basically powerful bureaucrats, they have no imagination, they can do anything but they can’t invent, create, they’re sort of fabulous and dull all at once.

[to this the angel responds]

Angel. Made for His Pleasure, We can only ADORE (49b).

Having to live with such docile, flaccid creatures is one of the reasons God left.

The Angel explains:

He began to leave us!
Bored with His Angels, Bewitched by Humanity,
In Mortifying Imitation of You, his least creation,
He would sail off on Voyages, no knowing where.
Quake follows quake,
Absence follows Absence (50-51b).

In Kushner’s play, there is a total abandonment of the divine. God has abandoned humankind and humans have no desire to see him return, or replace him with anyone
else. God is a juvenile clone of humankind, and angels are empty (very empty) vessels. Without someone to tell them what to do, they are nothing.

Rivera, on the contrary, has a far more sophisticated angelology. Rivera does not advocate that the woes of humanity will be obliterated if we likewise abandon God, or literally venture up to Heaven and kill him. If this was the case, the final scene of *Marisol* would have depicted a white-haired character suffering from an advanced case of Altziemer's, slain mercilessly in his sick bed. This, however, was not the case.

We hear of an angelic revolution won only when heaven and earth unite. The final image, is Marisol and her angel standing together, holding the crown out to the audience, symbolizing this union. The final words we hear are "What possibilities. What hope." (58).

Rivera acknowledges that humanity creates religious traditions in its own likeness. Outmoded, senile social policy validates a weary, ineffectual god. However, Rivera also leaves wide open the possibility that the divine in fact transcends our limited structural awareness. The angel of fire and transformation reveals that there is an active dialogue between humans and the divine. We may not always listen, we may try to impose our rational egoistic ideas on the sacred, but the lines of communication are never broken.

If we have the courage to enter into realms that are uncomfortable, realms of the unknown; if we attempt to pull back the curtain on that which we do not understand, we may happen upon the creative fire – and indeed find wisdom.
In Rivera’s text, it is significant to note that while Marisol is sleeping, the angel enters her room on a ladder. This is reminiscent of the story of Jacob’s ladder in Genesis (28.10-17).

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac...Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place — and I did not know it!...How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gateway of heaven."

In A Gathering of Angels (1994), Rabbi Morris B. Margolies states: "The angels ascending and descending is at the core of Jacob’s vision, telling him that life is two-directional...that even when you hit the bottom rung of the ladder, you are still in the company of angels" (26).

The ladder is an important symbol. As we journey through Marisol’s rite of passage we learn that the angel does not in fact abandon her. She provides a model for Marisol to become a stronger more aware person, and teaches ultimately with her words, "join us," that it is only through the union of humans and the divine that a better world can be created.

Recall Psalms (91.11-13) in which the role of guardian angels is described:

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12 Due to structural and economic complications, the UBC production used a vertical steel pipe, with three steel rungs.
For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

While angels are there to guide and enlighten humanity, they can also inspire our species to combat our evils for ourselves, the lions and the serpents that torment us. Unlike the fluttering, wimpy angels of the popular media, Marisol’s angel most completely fulfils this Psalm.
"Lily"

A song by Kate Bush, 1993.

Oh thou, who givest sustenance to the universe
From whom all things proceed
To whom all things return
Unveil to us the face of the true spiritual sun
Hidden by a disc of golden light
That we may know the truth
And do our whole duty
As we journey to thy sacred feet

Well I said
"Lily, Oh Lily I don’t feel safe
I feel that life has blown a great big hole Through me"
And she said
"Child, you must protect yourself
I’ll show you how with fire"

Gabriel before me
Raphael behind me
Michael to my right
Uriel on my left side
In the circle of fire

I said
"Lily, Oh Lily I’m so afraid
I fear I am walking in the veil of Darkness"
And she said
"Child take what I say
With a pinch of salt
And protect yourself with fire"

Gabriel before me
Raphael behind me
Michael to my right
Uriel on my left side
In the circle of fire
DARKNESS VISIBLE

With this song, Kate Bush offers a beautifully written work that synthesizes several themes – angels, fire, salt, and empowerment. The song also proposes that our "true" relationship with the Divine must entail lifting the "veil of Darkness".

We must have the courage to enter into the darkness, become conscious of human evil, and claim responsibility.

It is often when we face the squalid shadows of what we fear the most, that we encounter revelation. As Nor Hall states, "...it is not as important to look at our modes of growth and development as it is to consider how we rot...The decomposition of matter precedes any reordering...have the courage to face into the dark" (1994: 18-19).

If we keep our focus solely on fluffy white wings or, as one audience member stated, the "crown held up high," it keeps us "from seeing the grime beneath, the callousness and dirt."

We must acknowledge that beneath our sanitized structured ideals, lie macabre realities that the everyday world chooses not to see. If we do not admit to the darker, more unpleasant sides to human existence, like wounds they will fester and worsen. Lenny informs the audience:

And if there were words to describe it, Marisol, you wouldn’t believe it anyway, because, in fact, it’s literally unbelievable, it’s another reality, and it’s actually happening right now. And that fact – the fact that it’s happening right now – compounds the unbelievable nature of the street, Marisol, adds to its lunacy, it’s permanent deniability. But I know it’s real. I’ve been bitten by it. I have its rabies (33).
It is only through coming out of denial; it is only through awareness, that a revelation can take place. Jung stated in 1945, "One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular" (cited in Zweig & Abrams: 4).

Darkness is "disagreeable" and unpopular, not only because it represents danger and destruction, but also because darkness often represents the unknown; that which cannot be seen clearly. Darkness is most fully characterized by mystery.

When faced with the unknown, we are faced with what we cannot predict or control, and that, in itself, can be terrifying.

Earlier, I likened the liminal state to going underground. When we go underground, we not only descend, but we enter into darkness. Liminality is characterized by "limen," the threshold between what is known and unknown, between structured familiar categories and anti-structure, infinite possibility.

In liminal darkness what used to be clear is now unclear, what used to be familiar, is made unfamiliar. Jungian analyst, D. Patrick Miller (1991), states that "in bright sunlight; this is this and that is that", while "in the moonlight; things kind of blend together, and they’re not so distinct from one another. The whole matter of the shadow is very subtle and complex; it’s not nearly as simple as the subject of good-and-evil may appear to be" (20).

This very phenomenon occurred with the issue of violence in Marisol. Through a series of events such as Marisol’s attempted rape and the torching of the homeless, as well as a series of symbolic inversions such as a rebel female angel, a pregnant man, and
a female Nazi, a single issue, "violence in our society", becomes a myriad of reflections, questions, and concerns.

When we're in the dark, we have to squint and peer more closely at what is before us. We apply more effort to see things we take for granted when there is light. However, when something is unfamiliar, when we struggle to see it, sometimes we come across new possibilities never before considered. In darkness, we are pushed into the realm of the unknown, the realm of unrealized possibility.

The location of the UBC production of *Marisol*, in the Dorothy Somerset Studio, was fitting. The studio is located in the basement of the Frederick Wood Theatre. One must descend stairs and go underground to reach the studio. There are no windows inside; the studio never sees the light of day.

My respondents informed me that above ground, in the Frederick Wood theatre, plays are performed that tend to have a greater mass appeal. Several respondents stated that plays performed in the theatre are often "conservative", "safe" and, in some cases, "anaemic". As a certain amount of subscription tickets need to be sold each year to fund the theatre, fewer risks, fewer challenges to the norm-governed world may be taken.

Underground in the studio, however, the graduate directing students produce their plays. One can take more creative risks in the studio, more rebellion may be sought.

When we enter into the darkness, we are made vulnerable. We are exposed to the unknown, that which lies beyond our established norms. Scar Tissue described his angel as "raw". She is a being who exposes. By making darkness visible, she brings consciousness to realms, in our everyday world we cannot, and sometimes will not, see.
She makes us aware of our destruction, how we "rot", and she also makes us aware of creation, untold possibilities never before realized.
I sometimes think I see civilizations originate in the disclosure of some mystery, some secret, and expand with the progressive publication of that secret and end in exhaustion when there is no longer any secret, when the mystery has been divulged that is to say, profaned. There comes a time when civilization has to be renewed by the discovery of new mysteries, by the undemocratic but sovereign power of the imagination.

—Norman O. Brown, "Apocalypse"

Marisol unveils the vital and creative power of liminality, in the form of theatre. Our intellects and imaginations are forced to work in tandem, to better understand our social lives, as well as to consider whether we want to preserve or transform those lives. Liminality does not necessarily offer concrete solutions. It rather offers up a myriad of possibilities. It poses multitudes of questions, multi-vocal images; the contrasts of black and white, as well as the grey areas. It is a crucial stage that must precede decision-making. We are forced to look before we leap.

A hundred and forty years ago, factory worker, Charlotte Woodward, wrote of her time: "I do not believe that there was any community anywhere in which the souls of women were not beating their wings in rebellion" (cited in Wolf 320-321). The same is
true today, and applies to all people who are oppressed by their societies for defying outmoded social categories that imprison the spirit.

Human potentiality can be envisioned as a flame. This flame can be used to destroy or create. Revolution can be violent or non-violent, depending on how seriously we take our liminal endeavours. We have the choice to listen to the messages of these creative realms, or we can wait for our needs and desires as a species explode in our faces in an effort to be heard. Turner asserted that all cultural performances, no matter how subservient to structure, contain within them the seeds for transformation. I see these seeds as eternal sparks or embers that are always ready to be fanned or breathed upon.

By displaying complex and contradictory images, Marisol provides temptations. Temptations to think, discuss, and reflect upon the normative structures we have created. The courage to face our nightmares, as well as our utopian daydreams.

The liminal power of theatre is one such breath that can fan the spark of human potential, making it grow ever brighter. This creative ember must always be tended to. A spark may take a series of breaths, many visitations, successes and failures in the liminal world, before it has the oxygen to ignite into a flame.

Of Victor Turner, Schechner once wrote: "Turner, who specialized in the liminal, the in-between, lived in a house that was all doors: every idea lead to new ideas, every proposition was a network of possibilities" (1986: 8).

The very same can be said of José Rivera. What is truly exciting about Marisol, is that each time one approaches this play, new images and interpretations come bounding up from the text, the performance, and the stories of those who gave it social
life. All great art is infinite and unbounded in this way. Whether one calls the liminal power of theatre God, angels, or acts of human imagination, it cannot be disputed that it is transcendant, unpredictable and, indeed, mysterious.
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