

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH INTERESTS

CURRENT RESEARCH

Dramaturgy in Performance

Since 2003, I have also served as a Dramaturg in the greater Seattle area. In my work as a Dramaturg, I have particularly enjoyed incorporating my research on trauma, death, and performance into my production assignments. Representative play-development dramaturgy projects have included two particular assignments: May Nazareno's new work *Dead Woman Home*, about Marilyn Manuel, the United Nations staffer declared dead in Iraq, but then found alive – in which I also explored the ethical dilemmas surrounding the necessary aesthetic choices of whose deaths to include and whose are excluded; and a new collaborative work entitled *The Central Project*, developed from the writings and performances of members of the Seattle Central Community College community, directed by Elena Hartwell. I am working to develop scholarship relating to ethics, pedagogy, and dramaturgical practice, based upon these two performances.

Performances of Death

My dissertation, "Mortality's Reverberating Embrace: The Resonance of Denial and Desire in Contemporary Performances of Death," demonstrates that the representation of death in performance has changed and developed, but rarely has been absent – largely because the traumatic experience of death remains a source of loss, uncertainty, and pain for many parts of human society. I define performances of death as performances whose content centers on the topic of death and whose formal aesthetic qualities include many of the characteristics of death elucidated by cultural theorists and scholars. I assert that the denial or repression of death continues to hold sway in U.S. culture, and that this denial is reflected in embodied actions characterized by Freud as "mania." In the next four chapters, I discuss four distinct performances of death: the Castillo Theatre's production of Heiner Müller's final play *Germania 3: Ghosts at Dead Man*, Robert Wilson's *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets*, Diamanda Galás's presentation of her *Plague Mass*, and the performance(s) entailed in contemporary goth subculture. I propose that the utilization of concepts of death in the staging and performance of each of these works illuminates political and social meaning that is often not overt in the narrative stories presented in these performances, and further, that the sensory experience on the part of the spectator of culturally-defined aspects of death may interrupt the denial of death. I argue that performances of death create an embodied, rather than narrative, testimony which utilizes the repetition inherent in both performance and trauma in order to enable an intervention into the repressed (death) and thereby make possible a *performing*, rather than a talking, cure.

I am currently working to transform my dissertation into a book on representations of death in performance.

FUTURE RESEARCH GOALS

I continue to be interested in representations of death in performances with which I became familiar, but did not study in depth, during the course of writing my dissertation. In particular, I would like to discern the ways in which these other performances challenge, augment, and/or confirm the initial conclusions of my dissertation, particularly in regarding to issues of ethics and the practice of testimony.

FUTURE RESEARCH GOALS (CONT'D)

These additional performances of death include:

- “Die-In’s” in 20th-Century America and Germany (tentative title “Dying in the Streets/ Dying for the Nation”);
- *Retorno* and *Hasta Cuando Corazon* by the Peruvian theatre group Yuyachkani
- *El Día de Los Muertos: The Mexican Day of the Dead*
- Tadeusz Kantor’s Theater of Death
- Spirit Possession and the Corpse as a Performing Object
- Funerals and Burial Space
- Additional performances by Robert Wilson

Further, I plan to study additional performances concerning traumatic events, testimony, and a “performing cure,” even when these performances do not specifically emphasize death in their content, form, representation, or staging.

I also plan to continue to serve as a practicing Dramaturg for selected theatre productions, and will develop scholarship based upon the observations and conclusions made in rehearsal and performance.