

Claire Phillips

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THEA 250-001: Intro to Set Design

Professor Michael Schweikardt

Script Analysis Blueprint: *Mojada* by Luis Alfaro

#### GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

- SETTING
  - Continent, country, city: A home in Queens, New York City, in the United States.
  - Physical area(s): Back yard of an old, run-down two-story building in Queens. Home is situated near train tracks, which are audible at various points in the show. Major pieces of furniture/decor are a large wooden table, a dying banana tree, several potted plants of herbs and vegetables, a rusted machete, and a small table with a sewing machine.
  - Environment: Dingy, but almost sacred. Extremely old-fashioned, which is mirrored by the actions of the characters, particularly at the beginning of the show.
  - Climate and light: Summertime outdoors in New York – presumably warm, natural lighting.
- TIME
  - Year, season, time of day: Presumably modern day at time of writing (2012), as implied by references to modern technology (cell phones), and pop culture icons such as Jennifer Lopez. The entire show except for the epilogue takes place over one summertime. Most scenes, except perhaps Scenes 6, 16 and 17, and the flashbacks to tell the story of the desert (Scenes 5 and 8) take place during the daytime. Scene 6 is post-dinnertime, most likely around twilight or early evening. Scenes 16 and 17 could be set during the daytime or in the evening. Scenes 5 and 8 cover multiple days.
  - Length of time period: Over one summer, excluding the epilogue. The epilogue occurs at least several months after the events of Scene 17, most likely the next spring or summer.
  - Logic of movement of time: Mostly chronological, with variations in the size of time passing between scenes. The overall story is climactic, but features several episodic scenes illustrating Medea and her family's journey to the US.
- CLASS STRUCTURE
  - Classes: Most of the characters are members of an extremely low class. Due to Medea and her family's undocumented immigrant status, they are very poor and struggle to keep afloat. Medea is forced to work as a seamstress and has her work bought for unfair prices by Mexican, Russian, and Chinese businessmen, who resell the garments with gigantic profit margins. She has no choice but to accept this work as it is the only kind of

work she can keep while staying under the radar. Tita is essentially the servant and nanny of the house and carries an even lower status than Medea. Jason has a stable job and is working hard to raise his own social status and create a better future for their child, Acan. Pilar, his boss, is a rich businesswoman and property owner. Luisa is a small business owner who makes her money selling churros from an illegal stand.

- Economic health: Seemingly good but does little to impact the characters considering their lack of legal involvement with the country.
- Characters within each class: Tita is in the lowest social and economic class as the family servant with no ability to create her own income. Medea is only slightly above her as she does have the ability to create an income but is still in an extremely low class as all of her work is under the table. Jason pushes to raise his class constantly by getting ahead at his job however he can, which he does by getting close to Pilar. Pilar came from the same low-class beginnings as Medea and Jason but has attended college and is now a successful and wealthy business owner. She is the highest-class character featured in the show. Luisa is slightly above Medea as she get out in the world and has a way to produce her own income without being manipulated, but her work is still technically illegal and does not provide her with much.
- **GOVERNMENT AND LAWS**
  - System: Modern American government, which is very anti-immigration (particularly from Mexico) and therefore works against the characters.
  - Relevant Laws: Anti-immigration laws preventing Medea and Jason from having citizenship and therefore makes it extremely difficult for them to find stable, legitimate jobs. This puts their entire existence in America in danger, but the laws back home in Mexico (particularly the abuse of power amongst soldiers) led to the abuse and rape of Medea and the murder of another girl on the journey with them, so they must stay in America for their safety. Medea is also guilty of murdering her twin brother by accident after he beat her in an attempt to make her stay in Mexico, so she cannot return home or she will likely be arrested. Jason and Medea are also not legally married, which Pilar manipulates both to ostracize Medea and to gain legal immigration status for Jason and Acan.
  - Restrictions/Freedoms: Due to their undocumented status, Jason has struggled to find reliable work to support his family and is therefore ready to jump on any opportunity to improve his life/social and legal status. Tita and Medea's undocumented statuses make them unable to leave the neighborhood, and Medea's fear of being caught by ICE prevents her from even leaving the house.
  - Participation/Environment: The government the characters exist in is actively working against them at all times, which creates an extremely tense environment for Medea and Jason. They are forced into participation as they must keep their heads down and not cause a stir, or they will be deported.
- **SOCIAL CIRCLES**
  - Family and Friends: Tita and Medea are the two closest friends in this group of characters, with Tita serving an almost motherly or aunt-like role in Medea's life, despite being essentially owned by her. Tita also becomes friends with Luisa and brings her to the home, and Luisa quickly befriends Medea despite Medea's initial apprehension.

Medea and Jason are together and serve the roles of man and wife, but are not technically married, which becomes a point of contention. Acan is their son, who Medea cares about deeply despite his apparent preference for Jason. Jason's main goal throughout the plot is based in love for his son, who he hopes to give the opportunity for a better life. Tita serves the role of nanny and grandmotherly figure to Acan, who seems ambivalent towards her in return. Pilar is Jason's superior but manipulates her power to steal him from Medea, marrying him supposedly for legal reasons but more likely for control. She also attempts to adopt Acan out from under Medea, and Acan loves Pilar for showering him with gifts and attention that Medea cannot afford.

- Community: Jason is involved in a highly competitive business community, and does everything he can to get ahead, including pursue a relationship with Pilar due to her ability to offer him security and money. Tita is involved in the local neighborhood community, which sparks her friendship with Luisa. Medea has essentially no community other than Tita and Luisa after Tita has her come to the house to meet Medea. This disconnect causes Medea to throw herself into her work in an attempt to ignore the warning signs of Jason's distancing, and may contribute to her irrational action at the end of the show (poisoning Pilar and killing Acan).
- Media: Jason is much more connected to the modern American world than the other characters of the neighborhood; he has a cell phone and stays in touch with Pilar in order to better his career, and spends lots of time in NYC while the other characters stay within the neighborhood or (in Medea's case) never even leave the house.
- Restrictions/privileges: Although some characters are extremely close-knit due to their shared struggles coming to America and constant state of anxiety due to their undocumented status, this also makes many of the characters (including Medea and Tita) untrusting of outsiders and afraid to leave their neighborhood. Jason is also technically bound to Medea by their husband-wife status, but their lack of an official marriage allows Pilar to manipulate Jason.
- RELIGION
  - Institutions: Although the specific religion is unclear, there is a distinct traditional belief system guiding the characters. This system involves spells, herbal medicines, blessings, and many other action-based spiritual beliefs.
  - Beliefs: There are multiple instances of Medea and Tita discussing or performing prayers, blessings, offerings, and curses. There is a clear belief in a system that links actions and ceremonies to events, such as the evil eye curse having the ability to harm Pilar or the four directions prayer to bless the space.
  - Restrictions: This system does include the ability to wish harm or actually induce harm on others, which could contribute to Medea's somewhat drastic decision to poison and kill Pilar through her herbs.

## PREVIOUS ACTION

- Jason, Tita, Medea, and Acan struggled to cross the border into the US, suffering many hardships along the way.

- This is a world in which immigrating to America is an incredibly risky and dangerous journey, but one that this family decided they must do for their safety and future.
- Medea accidentally killed her twin brother in an act of self-defence after he beat her for attempting to leave Mexico.
  - This is a world in which, especially back home in Mexico, problems and disagreements are often forcibly solved by violence.
- Tita was sold to Medea's family and became their personal servant/slave to raise Medea.
  - This is a world in which people (particularly men) feel as though they have ownership of the women in their lives, and where little value is placed on personal liberty of women.
- Medea was raped by Mexican soldiers after they were discovered trying to cross the border.
  - This is a world in which the people in government can abuse their power to do as they please.
- Pilar crossed into America by boat from Cuba, worked her way up to New York, attended Brooklyn College and became a secretary.
  - This is a world in which there is a possibility for immigrants to create a better life for themselves, although rare.

#### CHARACTER BLUEPRINT: Medea

- Physical
  - A beautiful young woman in her 30s. She is of indigenous descent and is from Mexico. Other than that, very little is specified. She is a seamstress, so she may have more well constructed clothing than the other characters, but she also never leaves the house so they're likely to be simple garments. She may have wounds on her hands from sewing ("And the needle got my finger."- Page 8). In Scene 6, when Pilar comes to dinner, she wears a simple traditional huipil.
- Psychological
  - Medea is an extremely neurotic and fearful character. She spends much of her time locked in her house due to her fear of being captured and deported by ICE. She has also suffered through many traumatic events, including being raped by Mexican soldiers and accidentally murdering her twin brother in self-defense while he was beating her. By the end of the show, she experiences some kind of psychotic break after she realizes that she has lost Jason to Pilar and will lose her home, her son, and will be forced to return to her home country where she is wanted for murder. During this psychotic break, she intentionally manipulates Tita into delivering a poisoned flan to Pilar, killing her. When Tita returns and Medea realizes that, even though Pilar is gone, Jason will not return and will keep Acan away from her, she kills Acan in their home. These events make it pretty clear that she is not a mentally stable individual.
- Intellectual
  - We can assume that Medea has little to no academic training, considering there is no discussion of schooling for her. It is detailed that Tita was bought by Medea's family to raise her "in the old ways", so she has been trained more along the lines of how to be a good housewife. She does, however, have extensive knowledge of sewing, and it's often

discussed how her work is some of the best in the area. Her craft of creating garments is clearly something that she's honed for many years.

- Social class and job
  - Medea is within the lowest social class. As an undocumented immigrant, she is unable to find legitimate work, and is underpaid by businessmen who hire her to make garments for them to resell. She has no option but to accept this work despite its many pitfalls, as they have the ability to threaten her with bringing their business elsewhere and then she'd have no income at all. This vicious cycle keeps her from being able to progress her career, hence why she remains poor and unable to fully provide for herself. Her immigration status also affects her social class, as she is afraid of going anywhere in case she is captured and deported by ICE agents.
- Family and friends
  - Medea's family consists of Tita, Jason, and Acan, although Acan is the only member of her family related to her by blood as her son. Tita is not related to Medea, but serves a motherly/aunt-like role in her life as one of her closest confidantes. However, this relationship is an unbalanced one, as Medea technically owns Tita; Tita was sold to Medea's family to take care of her and raise her from a young age, which Tita has devoted her life to, partially by choice and partially because she has no other option. Jason is Medea's husband, although they are not technically married, and he leaves Medea for Pilar towards the end of the show as Pilar can provide for him and Acan and offer them both a better life. Medea's only friend is Luisa, who is originally Tita's friend and tries to help Medea by hinting to Pilar's manipulation, but in the end is too afraid of the consequences to let Medea hide with her.

#### RELATIONSHIP BLUEPRINT: Medea and Jason, Scene 4

- What is the type of relationship?
  - Husband and Wife
- What are the character's social positions?
  - Medea is the stay at home wife and works as a seamstress for a side income. In this traditional culture, her main job is to stay home and care for their son. Jason is the husband and therefore is supposed to be the main breadwinner and is pushing hard to get a promotion by getting close to his boss.
- How does the location of the scene affect their relationship?
  - They are in the backyard of their home, which is a safe space for both of them, particularly Medea as she spends much of her time there. Medea tries to manipulate the location to seduce Jason with the added thrill of having sex outside, but is unable to go through with it (likely due to her trauma from rape). The location being outside heightens the stakes of them having sex, and adds to the disappointment when she shys away.
- What is the relationship between the characters at the start of the scene?
  - Medea and Jason are husband and wife, but Medea is nervous that Jason is growing distant due to his immense involvement in his work. She is therefore trying to use sex to

bring them closer. Jason still cares deeply about Medea, but is tired after work and feeling torn between his commitment to his job and obeying his boss and sustaining his connection to Medea.

- What is the primary subject matter of the scene, and how does that affect the relationship?
  - The main subject matter of this scene is Medea's concerns about the closeness of Jason and Pilar's relationship, and Jason trying to reassure her that everything is fine. However, he does so by clarifying that he's only doing everything he has to in order to support Medea and their son, and pushes her to try and assimilate more to ease the process. Despite the intimacy of this scene, there is still a clear block in communication; Medea remains uncertain about Jason's relationship to Pilar and resistant to assimilation at the end of the scene, despite Jason's attempts to comfort her.

## ENVIRONMENT

- Whose space is it?
  - At the beginning of the play, the space belongs to Jason and Medea, and is the backyard of their home. It is predominantly occupied by Medea and Tita, who spend most of their time in the backyard, Medea sewing and Tita tending to the banana tree while Jason is at work. Medea, in fact, never leaves the house. However, over the course of the play, it is revealed that Pilar owns the property and is only lending it to Jason and Medea, and once she decides to take Jason, she tells Medea that she has one day to leave her own home, and the only place that she feels safe.
- How does the environment affect relationships?
  - The backyard is Medea's safe space, and the only place that she feels comfortable interacting with others. She shows extreme fear anytime another character suggests she leave the home. She is the dominant character in this space for the first half of the play. Tita also spends lots of time in the backyard but appears to feel a bit more trapped there as she frequently leaves to pick up Acan from school or go to the market. Later, Pilar takes back control of the home, souring her relationship with Medea and contributing to Medea's decision to lash out and poison her.
- How does the environment define the pattern created by the structure of scenes?
  - The entrances and exits of Jason, Acan, Luisa, and Pilar introduce the beginnings and ends of most scenes; Medea and Tita remain largely stationary throughout the show.
- How does the environment raise the stakes of the action?
  - The environment is initially Medea's only safe space in the world, hence why she never leaves it. Later in the play it is revealed that Pilar is the owner of the home, which raises the stakes as Pilar threatens to kick Medea out of her own home and the only space she feels is truly her own.

**\*\*Unit Breakdowns are attached as separate PDFs.\*\***