

Identity and Performance in Paloma Pedrero's *La llamada de Lauren...*

Karla P. Zepeda¹

ABSTRACT

This article studies identity formation and performance in Paloma Pedrero's *La llamada de Lauren...* (1984). It explores the intersection of sex, gender, and sexuality in the intimate space of marriage. The private space of Pedro and Rosa's apartment reveals the challenges posed by societal norms and expectations which extend into private exchanges. This topic is discussed in the context of teaching Spanish as a second language to advanced students of the language. It also offers pedagogical exercises for implementing the play in intermediate to advanced courses of second language acquisition.

Keywords: Identity, stigma, drama pedagogy, Paloma Pedrero, *La llamada de Lauren...*

Identidad y performance en *La llamada de Lauren...*, de Paloma Pedrero

RESUMEN

Este ensayo estudia el tema de la identidad y performance en *La llamada de Lauren...* (1984), de Paloma Pedrero. Explora la intersección de sexo, género y sexualidad en el espacio íntimo del matrimonio de los protagonistas de la obra. El espacio privado del hogar de Pedro y Rosa revela los retos impuestos por las normas y las expectativas sociales, que se extienden a intercambios privados e íntimos. Este tema se discute en el contexto de la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera a estudiantes avanzados del idioma. El artículo también presenta ejercicios pedagógicos para implementar en las clases de español como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Identidad, estigma, pedagogía del teatro, Paloma Pedrero, *La llamada de Lauren...*

Recibido: 30 de noviembre de 2018

Aceptado: 10 de abril de 2019

¹ Ph.D., Associate Professor of Spanish, Department of International Language & Culture Studies de Purdue University at Fort Wayne, Indiana, U.S.A., zepak@ipfw.edu
<https://www.pfw.edu/departments/coas/depts/ilcs/about/faculty-zepeda.html>

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of Paloma Pedrero's play *La llamada de Lauren...* (1984²), Pedro is transforming himself into Lauren Bacall. He waits for his wife Rosa who will wear the costume of Humphrey Bogart. On this night, they are celebrating their third wedding anniversary and it is the eve of their town's carnival. Although the night is supposed to be joyful, disguise and performance provide an opportunity for playful interaction and uninhibited dialogue that prove otherwise. Resentment surfaces. The private space of the couple's apartment and the intimacy of marriage frame the characters' interactions; yet it does not provide a safe space for being because societal norms and expectations define interactions even in private settings. Social constructs extend into close personal exchanges, defining and regulating intimacy. When Pedro reveals to his wife the weight he feels due to having to enact masculinity, Rosa fails to hear her husband's most intimate burden as she herself tries to process the interconnections of gender, sex, and sexuality.

La llamada de Lauren... offers an opportunity to explore identity through the lens of gender. What does it mean to be male or female? How does biological sex become a gender performance defined by socio-cultural expectations and practice? Is gender performance defined by spaces? If the public sphere establishes expectations for expressions of gender, does the private sphere mitigate the impact of these demands? These questions are related to identity formation in the context of social interaction. How does identity develop? Is it imposed or is it a choice? How do stigmatized identities develop and function?

This article explores identity as presented in Paloma Pedrero's play, *La llamada de Lauren...* It discusses the topic and the play in the context of teaching Spanish as a second language to advanced students of Spanish. To this end, the essay contextualizes the play within Pedrero's literary production. It presents social theory on identity and offers ideas for pedagogical exercises. In the second language classroom, theater facilitates the production of realistic discourse and interaction that imitate aspects of natural communication; such as spontaneous expression and non-verbal expression. Further,

² Originally published by Premio Valladolid de Teatro Breve. The play premiered in 1985 under the direction of Alberto Wainer. In this article, we refer to the 1987 version published by Ediciones Machado.

theater situates the learner in diverse contexts for social interaction that stimulate speaking, active listening, creativity, and collaboration.

I teach this play to college students who are learning Spanish as a second language. The class titled, Hispanic Drama, is part of a required course for Spanish majors. Students learning Spanish as a second language read plays by Spanish and Latin American playwrights, who present in their literary production various aspects of identity formation. The focus on the genre of theater allows students to learn the multidimensional aspects of dramatic material, from text to performance. Theater also allows the enactment of a variety of exercises that allow the practice of the Spanish language within given contexts. It makes possible lighthearted interactions between students and builds an engaged classroom environment. In addition, I emphasize creative production in terms of assessment; students write creative essay assignments to practice aspects of writing exemplified by plays and develop a video animation as a final project.

As I teach Spanish as a second language, I am interested in helping students acquire language skills but believe that this can only be successfully achieved if students connect with the material. If we consider our current college student as part of the Selfie Generation, the self then is central to instruction if the aim is engagement. Students can connect with questions that relate to their reality. What is self-expression? Are there different types of self-expression? Do distinctive circumstances and audiences elicit different aspects of the self? The current student is a digital native, developed and matured in the digital age. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tumblr, and YouTube are some of most common social media platforms used today. All offer new ways of processing and documenting human experience. The digitally connected student watches videos, does live streaming, and views ephemeral content (content available for only a period of time). Given the popularity of social media and technology, innovative pedagogical exercises can improve engagement. In addition to writing compositions on literary analysis, students can create visual storytelling, social media narratives, and videos.

To provide some context to the discussion of the self, I rely upon the thoughts of social psychologist Roy Baumeister and sociologist Erving Goffman. In *Identity: Cultural*

Change and the Struggle for Self (1986), Baumeister views identity as “a definition, an interpretation, of the self” (Baumeister, 1986: 4). Several components create identity: some are assigned at birth, some are chosen through time. On his part, Goffman focuses on the study of human interactions and what happens when individuals are in the presence of each other. In “The Arrangement between the Sexes” (1977), Goffman discusses the manner that sex acts as the basis of social codes upon which social interactions and social structures function, “a code which also establishes the conceptions individuals have concerning their fundamental human nature” (Goffman, 1977: 301). In *La llamada de Lauren...*, Pedro lives with aspects of himself assigned at birth, particularly his gender. Because he is a male, he must act out masculinity per social expectation; yet aggression, competitiveness, sexual appetite, and protectiveness (among other traditional masculine traits) fail to fulfill him as a human being. What happens when imposed identity components prove unsuitable for definitions of the self? *La llamada de Lauren...* is a suitable play to explore questions of identity. A sociological approach to the play allows students to reflect upon the forces that shape identity and how they differ among cultures, historical periods, and religious practices.

1. Paloma Pedrero and her Literary Production

Paloma Pedrero (Madrid, 1957) is a Spanish playwright, actress and director. She has written numerous plays portraying the human condition of marginalization. Pedrero’s literary, theatrical, and NGO³ work reveal her educational background and experience. She studied Sociology at the Universidad de Complutense de Madrid, Theater in workshops with Zulema Katz, Dominic de Facio, John Strasberg, and Alberto Wainer⁴, and Gestalt Psychology at the Florence Institute. In her interview for UnirTV (from Universidad Internacional de la Rioja), she reflects upon her background and its effect on theater: “Al final estudié antropología, psicología y trabajo en un hospital y hago teatro, es decir tenía el camino muy claro: que es teatro para ayudar a los demás, teatro para cambiar el mundo, teatro para conocer al ser humano. . . . Teatro para explicar lo que no entiendo”

³ Since 1998 she has dedicated herself to non-profit work. In 2002, she formed Caídos del Cielo, an NGO dedicated to the use of theater to transform the lives of socially displaced people and people in sensitive life transitions. For more information, visit: caidosdelcielo.org

⁴ See “The Life & Works of Paloma Pedrero,” *Spanish Books*, <https://www.classicspanishbooks.com/contemporary-spanish-theatre-paloma-pedrero.html>, visited 25 November 2018.

(María Gray entrevista a Paloma Pedrero: 1:46-2:09). Pedrero creates drama with a social function: to know, to explain, to help, and to change. The objective of her art is clear: It is committed theater, one filled with social consciousness and responsibility. Although her work certainly entertains, its intention is to awaken involvement and reflection.

Pedrero is a master observer, acutely capturing internal conflicts within their social origins. She lays bare human experience through plausible situations and realistic discourse. This is evident in her first play *La llamada de Lauren...*, where a couple begins to fall apart through an exchange of truth. After three years of marriage, Pedro and Rosa have grown distant. The emotional disconnection becomes evident in their intimate moments when their erotic games fail to reinforce closeness, instead revealing their estrangement and contempt. Rosa has difficulty with her husband's desire to cross-dress in order to engage in intimacy, while Pedro appears to need sexual exploration and risk. Similarly, *Resguardo personal* (1988) also focuses on a tense moment in a couple's life. Marta and Gonzalo are separating and fight over who can keep the family dog. As they argue over Nunca, it becomes obvious that their conflict is language itself. Marta and Gonzalo fail to communicate well. The husband has enjoyed his male social entitlement of prioritizing his work, neglecting and controlling his wife, and taking marriage for granted. Nonetheless, Marta is far from being an angel. She has cheated on her husband and lies to him in this final fight in which she anesthetizes their dog to keep her after their divorce. Pedrero masterfully crafts conflict out of private encounters and represents seemingly mundane exchanges to lead audiences to see, connect, question, and wonder about the characters, the situation, and themselves.

As a playwright, Pedrero examines human experience often in the context of interpersonal relations. Private interactions serve to unveil the characters as they search for personal truths, question societal expectations, and set their own personal life direction. Such is the case in *Besos de lobo* (1987), where the main character, Ana, negotiates her different life options with four men: Staying at home to live with her father; running away with her only friend, Luciano; continuing to wait for the arrival of her lover; or running away with her new-found love, Camilo. But when her father dies, and her friend Luciano chooses to stay at home alongside his mother, Ana's life path becomes clearer as her options narrow. She achieves an affirmation of self: An autonomy of life without ties to a male. She

sets her life direction in the train station as she stops waiting for Raúl and lets go of Camilo. In an open journey toward the unknown, Ana boards her new life: She abandons relationship as the focus of self-realization and fulfillment. In *El color de agosto* (1989), two friends meet after eight years of separation. The reunion is orchestrated by María, who fills her studio with paintings of her friend, Laura. The latter has returned from New York showing the burden of time and experience on her body. The friendship oscillates between tension and love. In their encounter, the women play, act, and paint, conveying the complexity of human connection. In her trilogy, *Noches de amor efímero* (1991), Pedrero explores the interpersonal in the context of intimate encounters between strangers. Night sets the stage for a female experience filled with risk as the feminine characters meet unknown men in various circumstances. Pedrero presents in her work the manner that interpersonal encounters unravel.

Human connection, disconnection, frustration, love and loneliness take the stage; yet the presentation of these themes come across as new and innovative thanks to her style. The language captures mundane oral exchanges with ingenuity. Pedrero manipulates idiomatic expressions and syntax to locate audiences in the world they know and recognize. Metatheatre, play-acting, disguise, and altered states of consciousness reveal human struggles (Harris, 2002: 464). In John P. Gabriele's views, Pedrero "representa una de las expresiones dramáticas más fascinantes del momento actual" (Gabriele, 1992: 158). Our playwright engages her audience through situations, themes, character and language that are relevant to current social realities. Carolyn Harris writes, "well constructed [sic] and succinct, her works create a dramatic tension that holds the spectator's attention until the final curtain. They often touch sensitive nerves, inspiring heated debates among theater goers and critics" (Harris, 2002: 464). Human experience is the material that inspires Pedrero's play and engages audiences.

2. Theoretical Approach to *La llamada de Lauren...*

La llamada de Lauren... can be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective when the aim of the discussion is identity. As discussed previously, the play introduces this theme in the opening scene. The stage directions allude to identity as an invention and a process: "Encima de la mesa vemos todo tipo de utensilios y maquillaje: coloretes, polvos, lápices, cajitas con sombras... En una silla hay una peluca castaña clara y ondulada"

(Pedrero, 1987: 25). Eyeshadows, face powders, and eyeliners are objects inscribed with femininity. In a moment that undermines the viewer's expectation, Pedro, a male character, enters the scene. Wearing a bathrobe, he goes to the closet: "saca un traje de mujer. . . . unas medias. . . . unas bragas sexy. Sin quitarse el albornoz se las pone y se mira al espejo" (Pedrero, 1987: 26). The accumulation of gendered objects (now with the addition of the pantyhose and panties) anticipates the making of a female. Pedro finds a bra, puts it on and fills it with cotton. He puts on the dress, tights and black high heels. The inventory of cosmetics and apparel communicate the altering of appearance. The character is enacting femininity. The process emphasizes a superficial method of putting on and taking off in order to become. Make-up enhances and improves. Wigs and costumes serve to cover, disguise, and create.

In this scene, Pedro interacts with himself and demonstrates a dynamic redefinition of his body. The process conveys an idea about the self as a changing object given a particular situation. The perspective of symbolic interactionism can help to illuminate our discussion on identity. Symbolic interactionists view human beings as "an organism that interacts with others and with self; a dynamic being; a being that defines immediate situations according to perspectives developed and altered in ongoing social interactions" (Charon, 2010: 41). Rather than focus on the self in terms of personality or the transcendental, symbolic interactionism conceives the self as a "continuously changing object, one that we see and use in one way in one situation and in quite another in another situation, and these actions toward us are influenced by the social interaction that takes place on a continuing basis with other people" (Charon, 2010: 73). When Pedro enters the stage in the opening scene, he is alone; acting upon himself freely without reservation, he transforms his body through costume and make-up.

Pedro completes his costume and stands as Lauren Bacall. He seems happy and ecstatic. He plays one of the songs Lauren Bacall sings in the film *To Have and Have Not* (1944). He sings and dances. Suddenly his wife arrives and screams a sudden, "¡Ah!" Pedro, startled, answers: "Que soy yo, tranquila. Que soy yo" (Pedrero, 1987: 27). When Rosa arrives at the apartment and sees her husband, a misrecognition takes place. The make-up, the costume, and the wig alter Pedro, and his wife fails to recognize him for a moment. He must attest for his identity. In the midst of the confusion, Pedro asserts, "it's

me!” In his view, crossdressing (the act of wearing the apparel of the opposite gender) transforms, but it does not substantially reassign any component of his identity. He identifies as himself, thus he still feels as himself despite a change in appearance. Nonetheless, something happens in the exchange: The scene reveals that identity is defined in relation not only to the self, but to another. Pedro firmly claims an “I” that is recognizable and known to himself, an unchanged self, despite the costume. Rosa looks at him up and down, and after recovering from the “susto” (scare), she states: “¡Estás fenomenal!” (Pedrero, 1987: 27). Rosa accepts her husband’s disguise and offers a positive remark of his costume.

Although the couple works through the confusion, a conflict arises regarding Pedro’s identity. The song in the background foreshadows the struggle⁵. “How Little We Know” is a Hoagy Carmichael song performed by Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not*. It comments on love as a changing unknown:

Maybe it happens this way
Maybe we really belong together
But after all, how little we know

Maybe it’s just for a day
Love is as changeable as the weather
And after all, how little we know

Who knows why an April breeze never remains
Why stars in the trees hide when it rains
Love comes along, casting a spell
Will it sing you a song
Will it say a farewell
Who can tell

. . . .

The refrain, “how little we know,” resonates with the plot of *La llamada de Lauren*.... When a couple comes together, perhaps the relationship develops, perhaps change occurs, because “love is as changeable as the weather.” Will love say, “farewell”? These words foreshadow the ambiguous ending of the play at the same time that it alludes to the unresolved conflict. When Pedro and Rosa negotiate a difficult situation (trying to

⁵ Pedrero does not specify the song played in the background, she only states that it is the song that Lauren Bacall sings in the movie *To Have or Have Not*. The song that Lauren Bacall sings is “How Little We Know.”

understand what crossdressing means) as a married couple, they know very little about each other because this experience introduces something new to both of them. It requires a processing of new information that could lead to a revelation and a decision.

La llamada de Lauren... presents the theme of identity as central to the experience of the male character. Pedro reveals the performative aspect of identity as he enacts the opposite gender. However, identity performance does not happen in isolation. Pedro finds himself having to manage the stigma of cross-dressing and homosexuality in the interchange with his wife. The couple deals with the negatively encoded views regarding cross-dressing. Does cross-dressing signify a revelation about sexuality? Does it signal homosexuality? As Pedro explores his identity, he struggles to understand his own need to cross-dress. He faces confusion and discomfort. On her part, Rosa struggles with the implications of his actions.

In *Identity: Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self* (1986), Roy Baumeister approaches identity from the discipline of social psychology. For Baumeister, the realization of self-definition happens through the acquisition of identity components; these building blocks of the self provide individuals with a sense of continuity through time and allow differentiation between the self and others. Self-definition can be attained through five different processes⁶: (1) Assigned components of identity happen at birth and relate to family, lineage, gender, and nation. (2) Single transformation components occur as a consequence of a single life experience. Motherhood, immigration, imprisonment and marriage constitute examples of single events causing a change in identity. (3) Identity components based on a hierarchy of criteria happen because of socially established requirements for attainment. For example, in order to be middle class, usually there is an expectation of education, homeownership and income. (4) Some identity components are based on an optional choice, thus they are non-compulsory. For example, defining identity in terms of religious or political affiliations is a choice. (5) Some identity components are based on a required choice, such as professions and choice of partner.

⁶ See Baumeister 18-28.

Pedro happens to cross-dress on the night of his anniversary because it is also carnival. But the play reveals that he is struggling with his definition of self. After his father hits him for playing dress-up with his sister when they were kids, Pedro tells Rosa that he promised himself to be a man: “me prometí a mí mismo demostrar que yo era más hombre que nadie. ¡No podía fallar! ¿Entiendes? Tenía que hacer lo que esperaban de mí” (Pedrero, 1987: 57). Pedro receives an assigned component of identity, his sex. Nevertheless, he realizes through his father’s teaching that being a man requires masculinity. It is an identity component with an optional choice; Pedro chose to be “más hombre que nadie.” He recalls the moment by telling Rosa, “mi padre me pegó una hostia... Llegó él y me dio una bofetada. Lo que más me jodió es que le pegara también a ella [sister]. Le dijo: ‘Vas a hacer de tu hermano un maricón’” (Pedrero, 1987: 57). Masculinity seems at risk, it can be lost, or worse, the male can permanently become “un maricón.” Pedro finds himself having to manage stigma (he is labeled a “maricón”) in his interaction with his father. To avoid shame, Pedro assimilates and passes by enacting masculinity. He surrenders to the social expectation imposed upon his gender. Nonetheless, after years of enacting masculinity, he tells his wife: “ahora ya no sé quién soy yo. No me conozco” (Pedrero, 1987: 57). He feels a discrepancy between the socially imposed components of identity and his own internal self-image. In Pedro’s case, identity components fail to make him the same across time, and this is causing an instability in his identity.

Canadian-American sociologist and social psychologist, Erving Goffman reflects upon sex and gender in “The Arrangement between the Sexes.” He writes, “in all societies, all infants at birth are placed in one or in the other of two sex *classes*, the placement accomplished by inspection of the infant’s naked person, specifically its genitalia, these being visibly dimorphic” (Goffman, 1977: 302). This classification by physical configuration makes possible a “sex-linked label of identification,” that is “exhaustive of the population and life-long” (Goffman, 1977: 302). This initial sorting process of female/male causes differential socialization among the members of the two groups. Every society develops a specific conception of the “essential” characteristic of the two sex classes (Goffman, 1977: 303). If the individual develops a sense of self by referring to ideals of masculinity or femininity, then this process conveys *gender identity* (Goffman, 1977: 304). However, this form of self-identification is different from “sexuality,” which Goffman defines as “patterns

of activity involving sexual stimulation, sexual experience, and the adumbration of inducement to these activities taking a culture-specific form of appearance, dress, style, gesture, and the like” (Goffman, 1977: 304). Sex and gender are the same in so far as their relation to the body; both are identifiers of the self focused on the body.

La llamada de Lauren... reveals the tension inherent in the interrelation of sex, gender and sexuality. Pedro is a male in terms of his sex classification, but he feels the weight of male gender characteristics assigned by his society. He tells his wife, “¡Que estoy harto! ¿Eso lo entiendes? Que estoy harto hasta los cojones de que me digan lo que tengo que hacer, cuando lo tengo que hacer, con quién lo tengo que hacer, cómo lo tengo que hacer...” (Pedrero, 1987: 58). He feels a burden by having to fulfill a series of social expectations that dehumanize and alienate as an effect of prescribing ways of being, acting, and relating. Social impositions begin in childhood, according to Pedro. He remembers being young and playing with other boys: “los niños de mi barrio jugaban a pelearse los de una calle con otra... A veces yo también iba, pero no te puedes imaginar el miedo que llevaba, ¡el pánico!” (Pedrero, 1987: 56). Aggression in males appears essential to male identity formation. As a boy confronts it, he must be brave and manly to fit-in and attain social acceptance. Pedro felt the pressure of social conformity, but also its loneliness. He recalls returning home alone, “a ver las estrellas” (Pedrero, 1987: 56). Pedro has a sensitive constitution that he cannot claim or accept; consequently, he suffers a disidentification with the prescribed components of gender. Even the moments of intimacy with his wife reveal a distancing and disconnection. Pedro and Rosa appear sexually off. When he presents her with a dildo and asks her to wear it, she says: “Esto es demasiado y no me lo pienso poner. No me podía imaginar que fueras tan... tan morboso” (Pedrero, 1987: 39). Once again, Rosa finds herself trying to decode the implications of Pedro’s actions. Does a desire for penetration signal homosexuality? What does desire reveal about a person? Pedro crosses the lines of normalcy from his wife’s perspective. Thus, she judges him and his desire as deviant.

In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963), Erving Goffman discusses the manner that stigma arises in social interaction. He writes, “society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories” (Goffman, 1963: 2). Society

offers settings and routines for social exchanges which “allow us to deal with anticipated others without special attention or thought,” thanks to internalized information about others (Goffman, 1963: 2). In social exchanges, people can anticipate information about the other based on these categories and attributes, or social identities. In these interactions, attributes can make an individual normal or deviant. In the latter, the person becomes “reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive” (Goffman, 1963: 3). It is important to note that attributes become stigma only in particular contexts, “therefore [it] is neither creditable nor discreditable as a thing in itself”; rather it depends on circumstances, space, and time periods (Goffman, 1963: 3). For example, cross-dressing is negative only in given circumstances and audiences. In theater, make-up, costumes, and performance are normal and not dictated by the sex of an actor or actress. Furthermore, sexual games and objects gain particular meanings given the context of intimate encounters. A dildo is simply an object. It becomes encoded with meaning in the private exchange between Pedro and Rosa. For Pedro, the object represents desire. For Rosa, the object represents aberrancy.

Goffman outlines three types of stigma: (1) marks of the body as in physical deformities, (2) blemishes of character arising from mental disorder, homosexuality, and imprisonment, among others, and (3) tribal stigmas constituted on the basis of lineage, race, nation and religion (Goffman, 1963: 4). Goffman terms people who possess stigma, “deviant” or “stigmatized”; he terms those “who do not depart negatively from the particular expectations” as “normals” (Goffman, 1963: 5). In normal-stigmatized social interactions, the latter may attempt to manage stigma in a variety of ways by accounting for themselves and who they are. The stigmatized person may try to educate, question and defy, shrink in fear, or simply pass inadvertently as a response to the situation.⁷

In *La llamada de Lauren...*, Pedrero delves into the manner that social stigma arises in intimate exchanges. When Pedro tells his wife, “quiero ir al carnaval así... contigo,” she considers the request unexpected (Pedrero, 1987: 31). She says, “como

⁷ For an in-depth view on identity negotiations, see Amir Marvesti, “Being Middle Eastern American: Identity Negotiation in the Context of the War on Terror,” *Symbolic Interaction* 28.4 (2006): 525-47.

siempre has dicho que los que hacían esto eran todos maricones...” (Pedrero, 1987: 31). Rosa uses the word that Pedro’s father had used in order to elicit obedience and compliance to the social prescription of the male gender. Unknowingly, she brings back a shame and thus discredits her husband in an intimate exchange. Furthermore, the insinuation that cross-dressing makes him a *maricón* designates him as a deviant. In this moment, she recognizes a blemish in his character because his gender performance has entered the forbidden space of femininity. Additionally, Pedro desires to be the object of penetration: A forbidden sexual act for a “normal” male. This exchange positions Rosa as normal and Pedro as deviant. In order to manage his position, Pedro tries to continue to play the part, but his wife ultimately feels disgust with the game. In addition, Pedro tries to explain that he has tried to pass as male, but the weight of masculinity has left him dissatisfied. The information does not elicit understanding or compassion from Rosa. Finally, Pedro says: “a veces es tan duro ser una persona normal” (Pedrero, 1987: 55). Pedro feels like a deviant because he cannot align with social norms, he continues: “Es como si lo que esperan de ti estuviera en contradicción con..., o sea, rompiera tu lógica... tu lógica interna” (Pedrero, 1987: 55). He exposes the violence perpetrated by gender norms. Pedro is trying to find and validate his identity; the person hidden under the social expectation and practice. But marriage and the private space of home does not escape conventional social norms and practices. He states, “eras la única persona que lo podía comprender... Eso creía yo” (Pedrero, 1987: 59). In Pedro’s view, the intimate space of marriage fails to provide understanding; private exchanges replicate the social expectation for gender and sexuality that burden him. He continues, “dicen que cuando se ama se comprende todo... Pues es mentira... ¡Es una puta mentira! Yo no me puedo mirar y tú no me quieres ver” (Pedrero, 1987: 59). In this scene, Pedro links understanding to love. He feels like those that have loved him have failed to understand him. He can sense a lie at the core of love because it does not encompass acceptance. He cannot “look at himself” and his wife “does not want to see him.” Pedro deals with a double stigma: The external one perpetrated by those he loves, and the internal one perpetrated by himself.

3. *La llamada de Lauren in the Classroom*

Baumeister and Goffman provide a framework for discussion by offering clear definitions for terms such as identity, sex, gender, sexuality, and stigma. But to reach this level of critical analysis, students in my classes need preliminary pedagogical exercises to

set the foundation for this advanced level of literary interpretation. In addition, it is important to engage them by bringing theater to life so that they can understand the unique aspects of the genre.

In the second language classroom, students can benefit from a drama-based approach to learning Spanish. The genre of theater allows for the possibility of language production at different levels of language acquisition, from basic to advance. Students can develop various skills: reading, listening, speaking, writing, reading comprehension, literary interpretation, and interpersonal aspects of communication. In addition, students can learn and practice the performative elements of the genre; the use of voice, gestures, costume and stage design. Furthermore, the genre facilitates a student-centered classroom that considers the different abilities and dispositions of learners. In the classroom, a series of exercises can be implemented to guide students from basic to advance uses of the language. This section offers a series of didactic exercises divided into five categories: (1) Preliminary Activities, (2) Understanding the Story, (3) Staging the Play, (4) Cultural Connections, and (5) Topics for Writing.

3.1. Preliminary Activities

A. Checking for Reading Comprehension.

1. Take a selfie. Imagine the facial expression that would accompany a feeling experienced by a character in the play, practice it, and capture it in a selfie. Share it with the class in small groups. Whom did you represent? What moment of the play? Why did you choose this moment?
2. Design the front cover. Using a free illustration or graphic design software or app, design the front cover that would accompany the play. What image best captures the story, the character, and the main theme? In class, be ready to present your design to the class or to small groups.

B. Preparing for the themes.

1. Bring a prop to class that exemplifies gender performance to you. Explain the manner that the prop serves to enact a particular gender. What gender does your prop embody? Does it capture a particular characteristic of the gender? How does this prop exemplify gender performance?
2. Reflect upon marriage. Write a short excerpt on this relationship. What is

marriage? What ideals does marriage signify socially? What realities do you think married couples encounter?

3.2. Understanding the Story

A. Summarize the Story

1. Quick Summary: Choose one of the prompts below to retell the story. In small groups, take turns of twenty seconds to retell the story. The first person starts, the next continues the story line, and so consecutively.
 - a. Pedro está feliz pues...
 - b. Rosa encuentra a su marido...
 - c. La obra se inicia mostrando una serie de objetos femeninos...

B. Reading Comprehension

1. Where does the play take place? Describe the stage and props to accompany the story.
2. At the beginning, the audience sees Pedro before he speaks. What is he doing? If you think of body movement and gesture as a form of communication, what movements and gestures is he performing? Why?
3. Why is Pedro the first person on the stage?
4. When Rosa enters the stage, what is her first word? Why is this her first word? The first word of a play is important. Why did Pedrero choose this to begin the play?
5. Describe Pedro and Rosa. What are they like? What characteristics seem to define their personalities?
6. Describe Pedro and Rosa as a married couple. What strengths and weaknesses do they have as a couple? What challenges do they face?
7. In relationships, sometimes there is a disparity of power. Who seems to control the situation? Does the power dynamic change through the play?
8. The theme of identity is central to this play. Where does the theme arise? And how?
9. Pedro feels a series of feelings throughout the play, among them is a strong sense of rejection and alienation. Why does Pedro feel estrangement?

10. In this play, Pedro is a stigmatized character. What stigma does he carry? Who imposes the stigma? How is this stigma maintained?
11. How does the play conclude? Why?
12. How are sex, gender, and sexuality present in the play? Why?

3.3. Staging the Play

1. Story Enactment: In groups of two, choose a moment in the play that you consider important. Act the scene out. Explain why you consider this moment important.
2. Silent Scene: Choose a moment in the play that has much expression or emotion. Act out the scene using only body language and gestures. Record the scene using your phone if available.
3. In Therapy: Imagine that Pedro and Rosa decide to go to marriage counseling. Write a 2-4 minutes skit and act it out in class.

3.4. Cultural Connections

1. What challenges does the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community face in your city and country today?
2. Research the legal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in your country and Spain. Compare the legal rights of these groups. Are the rights similar? Are they different? Why?

3.5. Topics for Writing

1. Rewrite the story from another point of view. You may choose the perspective of Rosa, the walls in their home, or the make-up. How would the story change given the new perspective?
2. Reflect upon the theme of identity as presented in the play. How is the theme present? How is it developed? And why?
3. The play presents the experience of stigma through the character of Pedro, who feels social isolation and rejection. What is stigma? How does stigma function in social encounters and intimate relationships?
4. Create the missing scene. Imagine that the play is missing a scene, what

questions do you have? Could they be explained with another scene? Write the scene that is missing.

5. The play is written as a dialogue between Pedro and Rosa. Imagine one of the scenes as a monologue and rewrite it. What would Rosa or Pedro say?

CONCLUSION

In *La llamada de Lauren...*, Paloma Pedrero presents a protagonist in the fringes of society. Pedro feels alienated from his wife and himself. This experience arises due to a sense of estrangement in identity. Pedro is a male who must perform masculinity as part of social intercourse, but his inner identity does not align with social prescription. This conflict emerges in the private interchange between Pedro and Rosa, husband and wife. The private space of home and the intimate relation of marriage do not curtail the expectations of societal norms, but rather it is another space of social negotiation and compromise. Pedro tells Rosa toward the end, "somos dos anormales" (Pedrero, 1987: 64). He claims his displaced social identity and leaves the home to the open promise of carnival.

WORKS CITED

- Baumeister, Roy F.** 1986. *Identity: Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self*. New York, USA: Oxford.
- Carmichael, Hoagy.** "How Little We Know." Lyrics. [en línea]. Disponible en <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/1186638/Hoagy+Carmichael/How+Little+We+Know> [Consulta 28/11/2018]
- Gabriele, John P.** 1992. "Metateatro y feminismo en *El color de agosto*, de Paloma Pedrero." AIH. Actas XI. 158-164.
- Goffman, Erving.** 1977. "The Arrangement between the Sexes." *Theory and Society* 4.3: 301-331.
- . 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Harris, Carolyn J.** 1994. "La experiencia femenina en escena: *Besos de lobo* y *El color de agosto* de Paloma Pedrero." *Confluencia* 10.1: 118-124.
- . 2002. Pedrero, Paloma. *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature, N-Z*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Marvasti, Amir.** 2006. "Being Middle Eastern American: Identity Negotiation in the Context of the War on Terror." *Symbolic Interaction* 28.4: 525-47
- Pedrero, Paloma.** 1987. *La llamada de Lauren...* Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Machado.
- . "María Gray entrevista a Paloma Pedrero." *UnirTV*, uploaded by UnirTV, <http://tv.unir.net/videos/11750/0/Entrevista-a-Paloma-Pedrero>