

BOOK REVIEW

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Shakespeare and Latinidad. Trevor Boffone and Carla Della Gatta, eds. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021. 256 pp. \$105 (cloth and PDF); \$24.95 (paper); \$24.95 (ePub). ISBN 978-1-474-48848-8; 978-1-474-48850-1; ISBN 9781474488495; 978-1-474-48851-8.

“Shakespeare is too big,” the late Puerto Rican actor Raúl Juliá said, “to be put into one little way of doing it.”¹ *Shakespeare and Latinidad*, edited by Trevor Boffone and Carla Della Gatta, joins the capaciousness of the plays with diversity of Latinx identity, which here includes people in the United States who share Spanish and Anglo-American colonial legacies of political, linguistic, and cultural domination and resistance. Responding to the variation within *Latinidad*, the collection encompasses a range of approaches to contemporary performance. As “a conversation across regions, dramaturgies, national heritages, uses of Spanish and scholars and practitioners” (2), the volume articulates a vibrant form of theater scholarship that weaves art and advocacy together with critical work on performance.

Boffone and Della Gatta suggest two roadmaps for navigating the collection, by theme or by production element. The thematic breakdown includes essays on hybridity and borderlands, strategies for Latinx Shakespeares, pedagogy and community, and a case study on the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Play on! project. An alternative guide points to essays that might most pique the interest of actors, directors, voice and dialect coaches, performance scholars, and other theater professionals. As the first collection of essays devoted solely to Shakespearean drama and *Latinidad*, the volume has much ground to cover and succeeds in providing a portrait of the current field in both research and performance.

Each essay deserves a careful reading, but as I am a bilingual scholar of Shakespearean afterlives in contemporary performance and theater in service of migrant justice, I am especially drawn to the chapters on specific productions that make use of adaptation and appropriation to address the border, immigration, and the ongoing violence of Anglo-American and Spanish colonialism. Boffone writes, “the Shakespearean canon must be remixed through a Latinx lens” to challenge the “Eurocentricity of American theatre,

1 Quoted in Cynthia Santos De Cure, “La Voz de Shakespeare: Empowering Latinx Communities to Speak, Own and Embody Shakespeare’s Texts,” in *Shakespeare and Latinidad*, ed. Boffone and Della Gatta (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 95.

which has systematically disadvantaged Latinx theatre-makers and communities of color” (182). That work of remixing, the process of cutting and shaping a changing canon to center the linguistic and cultural elements of Latinx identity, carries an intrinsic political critique that extends beyond the space of the theater.

Essays by Della Gatta, Katherine Gillen and Adrianna M. Santos, and Micha Espinosa examine adaptations that address the broader consequences of the economic and military policy of the United States. Della Gatta examines how *Marqués: A Narco Macbeth*, by Stephen Richter and Monica Andrade, foregrounds Latinx subjectivity while presenting a diversity of voices and influences. The *brujas*—Shakespeare’s trio of weird sisters—bear the skull-painted faces of Day of the Dead masks and the characters drink Don Julio tequila, while the soundscape includes Louis Armstrong, the Eagles, Vicente Fernández, and Shakira. While the play stages less violence than its Shakespearean source, thus subverting a stereotypical portrayal of violence in Mexican culture, it follows the Scottish play in offering no redemption as the curtain closes. Della Gatta writes that the many deaths in the play “serve to maintain an economic system that dehumanises people south of the American border” and “depends on that subjugation to maintain a dominant subject position” (33). The drama opens with Donald Trump’s horrifying, anti-Mexican tirade on the announcement of his presidential candidacy and concludes with Shakira singing, “no hay más vida” (34). There is no more life.

In “The Power of Borderlands Shakespeare: Seres Jaime Magaña’s *The Tragic Corrido of Romeo and Lupe*,” Gillen and Santos articulate the ethical stakes of adaptation. While Magaña’s placing of the star-crossed lovers in the Rio Grande Valley and likening of their romance to the popular ballad form of the *corrido* provides a platform to critique racism and labor exploitation within a historically specific colonial dynamic, Gillen and Santos argue that the play ultimately reveals the limitations of using *Romeo and Juliet* to represent cultural division. They recount an overheard conversation between two actors before a performance of the show at the Pharr Community Theater. One asks the other if the audience is mostly *bolillos*, and the other responds that they are mostly *raza* (70). The former term, meaning a roll of bread, refers to white identity, while the latter suggests the shared history of Mexican Americans. While their conversation illustrates the cultural hybridity of Tejano life, the question also reveals the ongoing association of Shakespeare and whiteness. Shakespeare is a useful tool to address some histories, but is not equally suited to all, and Gillen and Santos remind the reader of the stakes of representation.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s *La Comedia of Errors*, a bilingual adaptation by Lydia G. Garcia and Bill Rauch from Christina Anderson’s modern translation for the Play on! initiative, likewise fills in the Shakespearean frame with a story of division and violence. The premise that Shakespeare’s sets of twins have been raised on opposite sides of the border allows the play to critique both immigration policy and an assumed English-first monolingualism in the United States. Approaching the play as a vocal coach, Espi-

nosa's essay explores the role of the voice in both performance and political action. At one point, Antifolo de Mexico says, "Este sueño Americano es una pesadilla" (231). This American dream is a nightmare.

La Comedia of Errors, Espinosa writes, produced the "cultural bumping" of "Puerto Rican, Guatemalan, Costa Rican, Mexicano, Gringo, Spanglish – as well as English speakers, with and without accents" (227). Such encounters are not, of course, rare. That is how tens of millions in the United States live, work, and make art, and *Shakespeare and Latinidad* articulates a theater that responds to the diversity and demands of the present. This useful and necessary collection also reminds us, as artists, scholars, and advocates, of the roles we might play to address the interlocking injustices of linguistic colonialism, economic exploitation, and immigration policy. A theater practice committed to social justice in research, performance, and pedagogy is too large, too expansive to accept narrow methodologies or fail to respond to the violence of borders.