# Renaissance Shakespeare: Shakespeare Renaissances

Proceedings of the Ninth World Shakespeare Congress

Edited by Martin Procházka, Michael Dobson, Andreas Höfele, and Hanna Scolnicov

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# Shakespeare and American Bilingualism

### Borderland Productions of Romeo y Julieta

Carla Della Gatta

Over the past few years, several American Shakespeare companies and universities have produced bilingual Spanish-English productions of Romeo and Juliet. Each production fused Elizabethan English with modern-day Spanish, with varying degrees of Spanish incorporated. This chapter is part of a much larger work on the way Latinidad is represented dramaturgically, textually, and linguistically in American Shakespearean performance. It discusses how bilingual and interlingual productions of Romeo y Julieta represent, both explicitly and implicitly, the politics of intercultural relationships in the United States. More specifically, it assesses how Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2008 staged reading of Romeo y Julieta presented the linguistic tension within a bilingual society, whereas other productions of Romeo y Julieta used language difference to depict a polarized intercultural exchange. I contend that these productions provide insight into how Shakespearean dialogue can become more accessible when integrated with a modern-day language.

The portrayal of cultural differences and foreignness is textually prevalent in numerous Shakespearean plays, even through intralingual conversation. For example, when Bassanio inquires about the bond in The Merchant of Venice, he misunderstands Shylock's reply due to their cultural backgrounds and the disparity of their social/religious statuses.

BASSANIO Your answer to that.

SHYLOCK Antonio is a good man.

**BASSANIO** Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK Ho, no, no, no, no! My meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. (1.3.10-14)1

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In this instance, both characters reside in the same city (Venice) and converse in the same language (English). The word "good" is foreign to neither Shylock nor Bassanio, but clarification of its connotation is needed when using it to express an opinion about a member of accepted society. This exchange cements the lines of dissimilitude between Bassanio and Shylock through their lack of a shared signifier within the same vernacular. Intention and confusion become particularly conspicuous when languages are mixed *inter*lingually, such as in the wooing scene in *Henry V*. Henry and Catherine shift between their primary languages, English and French, and Henry tells Catherine, "But thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most truly-falsely, must needs be granted to be much at one" (5.2.180–82). For Henry, language differences between him and his desired bride are a further incentive for them to unite under one language, which is English.

Although Shakespeare's scripts offer such moments, a layer of complexity is added in contemporary productions when two languages from different centuries are mixed within the same dialogue. The purpose then shifts from a representation of plausible or possible conversation to a hybrid form of translation-adaptation in which dialogue can comment in a new way on cultural relationships. The interplay between languages depicts a tension that I will argue is an indelible mark of Latino-themed Shakespearean productions, and Chicago Shakespeare shifts this to an interlingual<sup>2</sup> rather than an intercultural portrayal.

Chicago Shakespeare's staged reading involved an integrated use of modern Spanish and Shakespearean English, and it depicted a fully bilingual society. Director Henry Godinez abridged the play, and playwright Karen Zacarías did the translation, using Pablo Neruda's 1964 translation of *Romeo y Julieta* as a reference. Renowned actress Elizabeth Peña played Lady Capulet, and playwright Tanya Saracho was the Nurse. Spanish and English were used almost equally throughout the script and often within the same lines; in some cases, Spanish was used either to repeat lines or to replace them in a different language. A few speeches were entirely in one language, such as the Prince's first speech and all of Queen Mab, both in English. An example of the interchange is seen from the prologue below.

### SEVERAL VOICES

- 1 Two households,
- 2 Dos casas
- 3 both alike in dignity / ambas en nobleza iguales
- 4 En la bella / In fair
- 5 Verona
- 6 where we lay our scene,
- 7 Y un odio antiguo que engendra un nuevo odio
- 8 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny
- 9 Where civil
- 10 sangre tiñe sus civiles manos
- 11 Y aquí desde la oscura entraña de los dos enemigos

- 12 son nacidos dos amantes desdichados bajo estrella rival
- 13 A pair of star-cross-d lovers take their life;
- 14 Su lamentable fin, su desventura
- 15 Entierra con su muerte / (bury) their parents' strife.3

A reading of the prologue shows multiple forms of linguistic code switchings at work. The first is the example of repeating a phrase in Spanish after using it in English, as seen in the first two lines. This is also done in the reverse; phrases are translated into Spanish and then repeated in English. This tautological approach culminates in line 5, which brings the two languages to unity with "Verona," which is pronounced similarly and spelled exactly the same way in English and Spanish. This meeting point serves as an entrance for speakers of modern-day Spanish, speakers of modern-day English, and those savvy with Elizabethan English to connect with the script. The second form involves starting a line in one language and finishing it in another. It is first evident in lines 9 and 10 where the thought starts in one language, "Where civil," and finishes in another, "sangre tine sus civiles manos." The script repeats phrases to establish familiarity, pauses at a word understood in both languages, and then advances the aural complexity by using different languages without repetition. In this way, the prologue works toward a more fluid practice of linguistic code switching as it progresses, engaging a heterogeneous audience with interlingual dialogue through different forms of code switching.

A third form, realized numerous other places in the script, involves intermixing languages within the same sentence. When Mercutio tells Romeo to borrow Cupid's wings, Romeo replies, "I am too sore herido with his shaft / Under love's heavy burden me hundo." Here words are interwoven within a single phrase, engaging code switching at its most creative. The words chosen from each language are typically identifiable words in that language, and their selection also maintains regularity in the meter. Both lines contain five iambs, so they retain the rhythm of Shakespeare's script even though some words are in contemporary Spanish. This type of flexibility in interlingual dialogue is not consistently possible within a monolingual translation. Neruda translates these lines, "Estoy tan malherido por sus flechas / [. . .] / ¡El grave peso del amor me abruma!" Neruda's monolingual translation has eleven syllables in the first line and twelve in the following. This suggests that rhythm, more so than directly translated verse, is the priority in interlingual dialogue. As a result, Chicago Shakespeare's script privileges the sound of pentameter over accessibility for a monolingual speaker to interpret each word.

These three forms, the repetition of phrases in another language, the completion of a thought in a different language than the beginning of the line, and intermixing within one phrase, are examples of sign codes in bilingual speech patterns. This switching mid-sentence may seem confusing to many, especially those who do not have mastery of both languages. According to Ana Celia Zentella, "Spanish and English monolinguals are thrown off, or put off, by the rule-governed and rule-breaking switches alike, especially when in written form, but bilinguals always know where to

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rage, the completion : line, and intermixpeech patterns. This ly those who do not 1, "Spanish and Enged and rule-breaking ways know where to

laugh or cry."8 But Zentella's optimism is not wholly shared. Code switching is often referred to derogatorily as "Spanglish," and the OED defines Spanglish as "a type of Spanish contaminated by English words and forms of expression, spoken in Latin America,"9 suggesting that intermixing languages pollutes one of them. 10 Zentella feels that "bilingual dexterity" allows speakers to "poke fun at their own semantic and grammatical constraints,"11 while John M. Lipski claims that it will ultimately result "in the deterioration of the Spanish language." 12 Both points of view are relevant to current issues of language stability and legislation surrounding language preservation which is often associated with nationalistic identity.

The politics of immigration and national identity in the United States mark language, speech, and accents as opportunities for prejudice. Despite the ease of code switching among some bilinguals, the practice does not resonate with many monolingual speakers because of the perception that it is detrimental to a dominant culture and due to the feelings of exclusion of that monolingual group. Michael Holquist studies the ontological status of bilingualism and concludes that monolingualism "presumes a concept of the autonomous self and of the uniquely homogenous state."13 This idea of selfhood and nationhood is upset by another language, a different culture and identity, which is not the case in many countries around the world. According to Stephen Barbour, "In many parts of the world monolingualism has simply not developed; a high proportion of the world's population uses at least two languages."14 I am not equating monolingualism with monoculturalism, but in the case of the United States, there is a prevalent perception that the two go hand in hand.

Theatrically, when the two languages are from different time periods, any facility in contemporary code switching practiced or understood by audience members will not directly correspond to an understanding of the language on stage. Which, then, becomes the more foreign language: modern-day Spanish or Elizabethan English? While some might argue that shifting between two temporally distinct languages marginalizes viewers who do not have an equal command of both, Chicago Shakespeare's staged reading in fact normalizes both languages through well-constructed code switching. The accessibility of Shakespeare to a larger audience is generated within the text, without an explicit confrontation between modern-day Spanish and English, which would directly confront language politics. A close look at how code switching between languages from different centuries can clarify, not inhibit, both

Shakespeare's dialogue and Spanish for a modern audience follows.

Benvolio's first line to Romeo in Chicago Shakespeare's script is "Buenos dias, cousin."15 In this instance, the prevalence of Shakespeare's use of "cousin" (sixteen times) or "coz" (four times) within the original script ties "cousin" to a consistent and identifiable word in Romeo and Juliet. "Cousin" has a broader meaning other than a relative, and it can also be used "as a term of intimacy, friendship, or familiarity."16 The direct translation in Spanish, "primo," does not carry such multiplicative connotations. Therefore the use of "cousin" must be retained in English for the fuller meaning that the word conveys. By contrast, "Good-morrow," which "Buenos dias"

replaces rather simply, is only used three times in the original script. "Good-morrow" is an antiquated way of saying "Good morning," thus causing the morning greeting in contemporary Spanish to be more easily understood than the expression in Elizabethan English. In this way, using a current and common greeting in Spanish that is likely to be understood by audience members who are not bilingual replaces the foreignness of Shakespeare's English with a present-day language that may not be as alien to audience members.

Code switching also appears through "complex or compound sentences in which code switches occur between the individual clauses because, in effect, each full sentence is produced in a single language." An example of this is seen in Romeo's response to Benvolio later in that same conversation. Benvolio says, "Here's much to do with hate, but more with love. / Why, then ay, un amor odioso! Y, Ay, un odio amoroso!" The typological similarity within the two languages facilitates this process of switching. The ideas resonate in the second sentence, and the switching of "hate" and "love" in the English portion establishes contrast. The second portion in Spanish does not include antithetical concepts by simply reversing the word order. The lines juxtapose ideas and structure. Further, "hate" and "love" are stated once in English and then twice in Spanish, a repetition not found in Shakespeare's line, "Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate" (1.1.169). Replacing "brawling" with "odioso" (hateful) gives symmetry where it did not exist in the untranslated text. The repetition that Godinez creates facilitates understanding of the concepts to bilingual speakers while allowing them to be identifiable for monolingual speakers.

Whereas Chicago Shakespeare's staged reading depicted an interlingual society, Romeo and Juliet has also been staged with linguistic and cultural differences as a divisive mark between the two households. The prologue to Romeo and Juliet describes "Two households, both alike in dignity / In fair Verona, where we lay our scene" (prologue, 1-2), and thus designates no cultural or socio-economic difference between the Capulets and Montagues. Yet contemporary stagings of the play often establish differences to further the idea of warring households, such as in the popular adaptation, West Side Story. Arthur Laurents's 1957 musical adaptation of Romeo and Juliet, and the subsequent success of the 1961 film by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, grounded the depiction of the feuding groups as specific to U.S. Anglo-Latino dynamics. West Side Story depicts two gangs in New York, with the Jets (Montagues) as a white working-class gang and the Sharks (Capulets) as a gang of newly immigrated Puerto Ricans, with both groups speaking English in the book, film, and stage productions. Yet the recent semi-bilingual<sup>19</sup> Broadway revival of West Side Story (2009) incorporated Spanish as a key signifier of ethnic difference. The Sharks sang and spoke in Spanish to "at last elevate the Puerto Rican Sharks to their rightful place as equals to their deadly white rivals."20 This allowed cultural difference to be fused with linguistic difference, reflecting language discrimination that contributes to and results from intercultural tensions in society today.

It is this notion of language as an equalizing force that motivated productions at Florida State University (2005), The Old Globe in San Diego (2008), and the New

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Brunswick Theater Festival in New Jersey (2010). In all three, Spanish was used to heighten the premise of conflict by incorporating language divisions into the families' acrimonious relationship. Roberta Wells-Famula, director of education at the Old Globe, said, "Most of the Spanish language was incorporated in scenes with the Capulets and went back and forth between Spanish and English so that the audience would understand what was going on."21 In the New Brunswick production, inspired by the recent West Side Story, Capulet only spoke Spanish, Lady Capulet fluctuated between Spanish and English, and Juliet was bilingual. Lady Capulet spoke to Juliet in English, "but when things got heated, they spoke Spanish."22 At Florida State, director Antonio Ocampo-Guzmán made the Montagues the Spanish-speaking family because he had a bilingual Romeo and "the Montagues have much less stage presence than the Capulets."23 Romeo's parents were Spanish speakers, some of Romeo's monologues were in Spanish, and the three Montague boys "used English for their bawdy jokes and returned to Spanish when arguments got serious. [. . .] Romeo would speak in Spanish to Juliet when he wanted to be especially attentive"24 since Juliet was not bilingual. The quantity and use of Spanish reflected generational shifts in language use as well as intimacy between certain characters.

Casting and staging choices advanced the cultural divide when incorporating ethnic and class differences to accompany language differences. In New Brunswick, Romeo was played by an African-American actor, and Julieta was portrayed by a Latina actress. These casting choices reflected the ethnic divide in the community, and to further accentuate difference in the households, Montague was portrayed as a successful businessman, but Capulet was portrayed as the most successful merchant in the community. Although the families were within the same class status, <sup>25</sup> Capulet's prosperity as a non-English-speaking businessman added to the tension between the families. At Florida State, Romeo was played by a Cuban-American actor, and Juliet by a bi-racial, half-Nicaraguan actress. The heterogeneous Latino backgrounds of the actors were not explicitly communicated or perceptible to the audience, and in this way, language, more so than ethnicity, became the demarcation of familial divide.

Accessibility to Shakespeare for a larger audience was not only generated textually through the intermixing of languages, but it was also generated outside of the text through the free productions at Chicago Shakespeare and New Brunswick. The price of tickets was low at Florida State University's production, and at the Old Globe all forty high school students admitted to the Summer Shakespeare Intensive received a full scholarship for the four-week session. The marketing discourse reached a broader audience as well; press releases in both Spanish and English were distributed for New Brunswick and Chicago Shakespeare, and the Old Globe facilitated understanding by handing out "a scene-by-scene plot synopsis so that people could keep up." 26

The advent of these productions suggests that Shakespeare, and more specifically, Romeo and Juliet, can offer a space for exploring cultural-linguistic dynamics. Romeo and Juliet is a love story between teenagers, and it is this Shakespearean play that 'Ppically engages young people with Shakespeare for the first time. Because this play is often taught in American secondary curricula and it is prevalent in pop culture,

with a story line depicted in successful films such as Baz Luhrmann's Romeo+Julier and Shakespeare in Love, the teenagers in Romeo and Juliet provide an exemplary model for theatrical representations of generational, cultural, and linguistic divisions Although the shift from Spanish to English among U.S. Latinos is typically complete in two generations,27 the younger generation is more apt to embrace linguistic code switching than the older generation. Ana Celia Zentella contends that language play "flourishes during teen years, when slipping in and out of two languages and several dialects enhances the multiple identities that Latin@ adolescents try on."28 Portraying multiple linguistic relationships produces a creativity in language on stage than reflects how identity is constructed and viewed in American society. According to Godinez, "[f]or many in the United States, growing up bilingual is a fact of life. [...] It cuts across the generations. Spanish at home, English at work or school, both with friends. Finding how these two headstrong teenagers fall for each other in a world divided not just by two households, but by two languages, is fascinating."29 This experience, while seemingly appealing to a niche bilingual minority, is in actuality a group on the rise. Not only is the young Latino population growing and shaping American culture, but the Latino population as a whole has grown significantly in the last decade. As of the 2010 U.S. Census, Latinos comprise 16.3 percent of the population, larger than any other minority group.30

It is the experience with the Spanish and English languages that is fundamental to the Latino experience and must be incorporated in representations of Latinidad. In 1987, Gloria Anzaldúa boldly stated that "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language." Ties to language, especially among immigrant, dispossessed, and historically marginalized peoples are an integral part of identification. Indeed, in Ngūgī wa Thiong'o's Decolonising the Mind, he writes, "[T]he choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe." For many young Latinos, code switching is a fundamental part of their experience and identity, and through it they challenge the dominant paradigm of English-language monolingualism that is seen in American education, legislation, and workplaces. Zentella argues that language play is a "defense against [...] marginalization, exploitation, and stigmatization," and productions of Romeo y Julieta argue for inclusion of the Spanish language and representations of Latinidad on the Shakespearean stage as means to widen accessibility.

These various productions that use Spanish to heighten the premise of cultural divide or with consistent code switching throughout point to a question of the role of the Spanish language in theatrical representations of Latinos. The term "Latinidad" is used to designate cohesion among Latinos, yet such a heterogeneous group of peoples does not share one common experience or culture. Although the mixture of Elizabethan English and modern Spanish does not explicitly reflect common code switching, it simultaneously addresses contemporary American cultural relationships as well as the elite status of Shakespeare in American society. Accessibility to Shakespeare performance, especially bilingual and interlingual productions, opens

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f cultural f the role "Latinius group mixture ion code relationibility to s, opens psychological, linguistic, and class divisions through theatre. This construct that supports two languages from different centuries allows for a hybrid form of adaptation and translation that is representative of the intercultural experience. Cristina Beltrán explains, "[R]ather than being defined in terms of some particular end, *Latinidad* 'is always in the middle, between things [. . .] *intermezzo.*"<sup>34</sup> It is my contention that this hybrid form of translation-adaptation is too "in the middle," and it makes possible a dramatization of the borderland space that is both figurative and literal, and inherent to the experience of many U.S. Latinos. Jon D. Rossini writes, "[T]hinking of the border as a theatre provides a site-specific frame for understanding theatricality as a spatial practice and explicating the relationship between space and the framing of ethnicity."<sup>35</sup> Rossini focuses on the space of the theatre as a construct that can expose how Latinidad is represented, <sup>36</sup> and it is in this space that a hybrid form can emerge. These productions create cross-century dialogue that challenges not only the border as spatial, but also as limited temporally.

The politics of intercultural relationships in the United States are illuminated and challenged through productions of *Romeo y Julieta*. M. S. Suárez Lafuente claims that "difference has to be reached precisely through language by deconstructing, by undoing the linguistic process, widening 'los intersticios,' the fissures, as the best way to subvert the patriarchal 'I.'"<sup>37</sup> Challenging the norm, the temporal space between languages in these productions enables racially marked choices in casting, language, and concepts that may otherwise have been considered essentializing. This shift advances strategies of translation, not only aesthetically, but also conceptually, since bilingual audience members most likely do not speak two languages from different time periods; this leads to a consideration of words, phrases, and rhythm in each language that is distinct from monolingual translation. It is through productions such as these *Romeo y Julietas* that accessibility to a wider audience will occur, and contemporary language politics can be explored.

#### NOTES

- 1. All quotations from Shakespeare follow *The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2008).
- 2. Martha J. Cutter cites Juan Bruce-Nova's definition that "bilingualism implies moving from one language code to another, while interlingualism implies the constant tension of two (or more) languages at once." Martha J. Cutter, Lost and Found in Translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the Politics of Language Diversity (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 177.
- 3. Henry Godinez and Karen Zacarías, Romeo y Julieta (unpublished manuscript, July 19, 2008), 2.
- 4. John M. Lipski defines code switching as "switching between two languages within the same discourse involving the same individuals." John M. Lipski, *Varieties of Spanish in the United States* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 234.
  - 5. Godinez and Zacarías, Romeo y Julieta, 11.

- 6. "I am too sore empiercèd with his shaft"; "Under love's heavy burden do I sink" (1.4.19, 22).
- 7. William Shakespeare, Romeo y Julieta, trans. Pablo Neruda (Madrid: Vitae Ediciones, 1964), 61.
- 8. Ana Celia Zentella, "'José, Can You See?': Latin@ Responses to Racist Discourse," in Bilingual Games: Some Literary Investigations, ed. Doris Sommer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 58.
- 9. Oxford English Dictionary, "Spanglish," def. 1, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/185565?redirectedFrom=Spanglish& (accessed April 10, 2012).
- 10. To note, the *OED*'s definition states that Spanglish is spoken in Latin America, yet this term is also used to describe code switching within the United States and elsewhere. The general usage also implies a degradation of English due to the integration of Spanish, thus reversing the paradigm of "pollution" that the *OED* claims.

11. Zentella, "'José, Can You See?'" 58.

- 12. John M. Lipski, "Spanish, English, or Spanglish? Truth and Consequences of U.S. Latino Bilingualism," in *Spanish and Empire*, ed. Nelsy Echávez-Solano and Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007), 198.
- 13. Michael Holquist, "What Is the Ontological Status of Bilingualism?," in *Bilingual Games: Some Literary Investigations*, ed. Doris Sommer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 25.
- 14. Stephen Barbour, "Do English Speakers Really Need Other Languages?," in *Translation in Undergraduate Degree Programs*, ed. Kirsten Malmkjaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 187–88.

15. Godinez and Zacarías, Romeo y Julieta, 3.

- 16. Oxford English Dictionary, "Cousin," def. 5, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/43267?rskey=4KUadj&result=1#eid (accessed April 10, 2012). The OED dates this meaning back to 1418 and twice cites Shakespeare for this usage in about 1616 (documented in F1) for 3 Henry VI and All's Well That Ends Well.
  - 17. Lipski, Varieties of Spanish, 234.
  - 18. Godinez and Zacarías, Romeo y Julieta, 4.
- 19. To note, some of the songs were changed back to English after six months of the show's run.
- 20. Ed Pilkington, "Latino Liberation: Sharks Sing in the Language of Their Streets as West Side Story Goes Bilingual on Broadway," The Guardian, March 19, 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/mar/20/west-side-story-on-broadway (accessed March 25, 2009).
  - 21. Roberta Wells-Famula, personal communication, February 7, 2011.
  - 22. John Keller, personal communication, November 11, 2011.
- 23. Antonio Ocampo-Guzmán, "My Own Private Shakespeare; or, Am I Deluding Myself?," in *Colorblind Shakespeare: New Perspectives on Race and Performance*, ed. Ayanna Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 129.
  - 24. Ocampo-Guzmán, "My Own Private Shakespeare," 129.
  - 25. Keller, personal communication.
  - 26. Wells-Famula, personal communication.
- 27. See Lipski, *Varieties of Spanish*, 5. See also Alejandro Portes and Lingxin Hao, "E Pluribus Unum: Bilingualism and Language Loss in the Second Generation," *Sociology of Education* 71 (1998): 269–94.
  - 28. Zentella, "'José, Can You See?" 58-59.

29. Broadway' 15, 2011).

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36. Rosaura S counterculture, tl Rosaura Sánchez Border," Aztlán: . 37. M. S. Suá

in English," in L María Manzanas 's heavy burden do I sink"

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- 34. Cristina Beltrán, The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167.
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- 37. M. S. Suárez Lafuente, "M/other Tongues in Borderlands in Contemporary Literature in English," in *Literature and Ethnicity in the Cultural Borderlands*, ed. Jesús Benito and Ana María Manzanas (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 138.