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Shakespeare in/on the Borderlands

***Romeo and Juliet* en la Frontera: The Colonial and Decolonial Potentials of Borderlands Shakespeare**

Employing decolonial methodologies drawn from Chicana studies, this essay examines *Romeo and Juliet* productions in the Texas-Mexico borderlands to explore how theater makers negotiate, resist, or replicate the colonial dynamics shaping Shakespeare reception and the region more broadly. In particular, I look at Shakespeare on the Rocks' *Romeo and Julieta* (El Paso, 2015) and The Classic Theater's *Romeo & Juliet* (San Antonio, 2019) to demonstrate the ways in which Shakespeare productions can reinscribe coloniality even when attempting to engage with borderlands communities and issues. I then turn to Seres Jaime Magaña's *The Tragic Corrido of Romeo and Lupe*, a bilingual appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet* performed by the Pharr Community Theater (2018). In contrast to productions that either valorize the Spanish colonial period or use *Romeo and Juliet*'s structure to promote superficial solutions to complex structural crises, *The Tragic Corrido* performs decolonial work, appropriating *Romeo and Juliet* to foreground questions of colonialism, labor exploitation, and mestizaje. As such, Magaña acknowledges Shakespeare's role as an agent of colonization, but also transforms Shakespeare's play to empower local communities, infusing it with the region's hybrid cultures, languages, and genres to create a production of and for la frontera.

Border Crossings and Geopolitical Integrity in *As You Like It*
Christine E. Hutchins

In sixteenth-century England commemorating boundaries and borders had long been an annual holiday. Perambulation or "beating" of boundaries during Rogation week was one of five holidays celebrated with an official homily, with Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and Whitsunday. Rather than "good fences," the Rogation week homily encourages "maintenance of our corporall necessities," duty to care for the land, maintain walkways and roads, and distribute profits. "It is lamentable . . . how covetous men now adayes plow up so nigh the common balkes and walkes, which good men before time made the greater & broader, partly for the commodious walke of his neighbor, partly for the better shackle in harvest time, to the more comfort of his poore neighbours cattell?" The homily treats crossing borders as expected, above all profitable, and therefore identifies them as sites of corporate responsibility rather than separation. Elizabethan policy-makers monitored movements of possibly recusant citizens, and engaged in some trade protectionism, but overall endorsed trade, including, in the 1563 Navigation Act, establishment of fish days to expand shipping (D. M. Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, p. 266-298). Perhaps because travel and communication were arduous, and empire-building remunerative, for Elizabethan policy-makers the benefits of interborder cooperation and exchange largely surpassed those of disengagement and exclusivity.

Thus, in *As You Like It* (c. 1598-1599) that urban and rural characters live, it seems, in states apart is a problem, dividing courtly government from country populace,

cosmopolitan consumers from agrarian suppliers. Travelling in the play—perambulating borders and naturalizing the alienated—is as necessary to its comic end as restoring frayed families and reuniting lost loves. Familial and marital integrity figure the geopolitical. Critics since at least Northrop Frye and C. L. Barber have recognized friction between court and country as a central theme in the play. Friction is heightened by the implicitly geopolitical borders that characters cross when travelling across spaces. Banished and exiled, deposed Duke Senior openly lives in a neighboring forest, demarcating court and country as separate geopolitical entities. In the play's source, Lodge's *Rosalind* (1590), the court in Bordeaux and the forest of Ardenne may be geopolitically distinct, since both historically had been duchys. However, *As You Like It* is among Shakespeare's most English of French plays. French Ardenne blurs into English Arden, Bordeaux's outlaw Duke into England's Robin Hood (1.1.113-116). The play and its source *Rosalind* fundamentally occupy themselves with anatomizing differences while healing divisions. *As You Like It*'s harmonious end redistributes characters and land, fostering court-country cooperation and exchange. Erstwhile Robin Hood Duke Senior and his attendants disband for court; courtly Duke Frederick and academic Jaques embrace country living; Celia and Oliver maintain the farmlands she purchased on Corin's advice; both presumably host and visit Rosalind and Orlando at the Rowland estate; urbane Touchstone and rustic Audrey negotiate their tumultuous nuptials.

Making travel a means by which divisions heal, humors balance, and geopolitical states coalesce and expand, Shakespeare recontextualizes popular travel motifs of Lyly's Euphues, *Rosalind*'s fictive author, wherein naïve travellers lose themselves in pursuit of things new or different. Rosalind, herself travelling, rehearses these motifs, wincing at Jaques's travelling past: "A traveller! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's.... Look you lisp, and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country . . . or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola" (4.1.20-36). In *As You Like It*, on the contrary, travelling away is also travelling to, and by it what was apart is either brought or forced together.

"An Homilie for the Dayes of Rogation Weeke." Ed. Ian Lancashire. Anglican Library, 1999, <http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/homilies/>.