Writing Back to Spain: Constructing Latina/o Identities

Through Translation, Adaptation, and Staging of

Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s La vida es sueño

Dissertation

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Abstract

Adaptations of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s play *La vida es sueño* by Latino playwrights Nilo Cruz, José Rivera, and Octavio Solis establish a relationship between Spanish Golden Age *comedia* and contemporary Latina/o identity. Analysis of plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis suggest that there are distinctive ways in which Spanish Golden Age culture connects with *Latinidad* in the United States. Their work engages readers and audiences with issues involving *Latinidad*, a concept used to describe a shared, common identity among a wide variety of Hispanic peoples in the United States, or a means of claiming Latina/o identity. *Latinidad* provides a lens through which the Spanish Golden Age is viewed as an era that impacted life in the New World during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and remains relevant as a source of cultural heritage and identity, tension and anger, and even as a source for parody.

Three questions guide this research: First, to what extent do these three plays convey, or exist as, an echo, haunting, or nostalgic resonance of this historical era? Second, what does the history and politics of translating and adapting Pedro Calderón’s play *La vida es sueño* reveal about the formation of U.S. Latina/o identity? Finally, to what extent do these three plays and their productions contribute to a process of, or resistance to, cultural assimilation, defined as a process in which a minority group sacrifices or loses aspects of its own identity by integrating cultural characteristics from a more dominant population?
The theoretical framework used to analyze these plays involves a balance of Latina/o cultural theory, post-colonial theory, assimilation theory, and translation theory. This framework supports my argument that the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis establish a relationship with Spain that displays the range and complexity of Latina/o identity, and provide a means for readers and audiences to identify connections between Latinidad and Spanish cultural heritage.
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Fields of Study

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Wrighting Back to Spain: Constructing Latina/o Identities Through Translation, Adaptation, and Staging of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s La vida es sueño analyzes the ways in which adaptations of Spanish Golden Age plays reveal and construct Latina/o identity in the United States today. In particular, the plays by three Latino dramatists – Nilo Cruz, José Rivera, and Octavio Solis – establish a relationship between contemporary U.S. Latina/o identity and Spanish Golden Age comedia. Their work engages readers and audiences with issues involving Latinidad, a concept used to describe a shared, common identity among a wide variety of Hispanic peoples in the United States, or a means of claiming Latina/o identity.¹ Latinidad provides a lens through which I view Spanish Golden Age culture as a distinct historical era with a set of values or worldviews, yet also as a way of life that both impacted the New World and remains relevant today, and as a source of artistic, literary, and theatrical activity that has influenced Latina/o identity. These three playwrights’ shared cultural heritage offer

¹ Significant scholarship on the subject of Latinidad includes Felix Padilla’s Latino Ethnic Consciousness (1985), Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chavez-Silverman’s Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad (1997), Juana María Rodríguez’s Queer Latinidad (2003), Marta Caminero-Santangelo’s On Latinidad (2009), and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera’s Performing Queer Latinidad (2012). My definition, developed from research by these scholars, is used to discuss the work of three playwrights, each classified as a “Latino” yet originating from different Latin American ancestry, and to analyze the relationship of their work with imperial Spain and its legacy.
a point of departure for my comparison of how they define Latina/o identity through the act of adapting Spanish Golden Age comedía.²

My research focuses specifically on issues of Cuban-American identity in Nilo Cruz’s Life is a Dream (2008), Puerto Rican identity in José Rivera’s Sueño (1999), and Mexican-American identity in Octavio Solis’s Dreamlandia (2010). These three plays are all adaptations of the same Spanish Golden Age text, and thus allow for comparison. In addition, these plays were published and produced within the last fourteen years, and thus represent a tendency in American Latina/o theatre to focus on classical Spain, to understand the present by exploring the past, and to investigate the relationship between Latinidad and the Spanish Golden Age.³ Although these three plays are representative of

² According to Raymond Williams, “culture” is one of the most complicated words in the English language to define, due to its intricate historical development and the fact that it has come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought (87). Williams goes on to highlight three modern categories of usage for the word culture: to describe a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, to indicate a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general, and to describe the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity (90). Within the context of this dissertation, I use the term “culture” based on these three categories. More specifically, I use “culture” to describe a range of factors contributing to Latina/o identity, not limited to but including, literature, visual and performing arts, language, familial relationships, socio-economic class, and various interrelated social habits, customs, and traditions.

³ In addition to Jonathan Thacker’s index of productions of Spanish Golden Age translations in England, found in The Spanish Golden Age in English, the website www.outofthewings.org provides a more comprehensive collection of translations and adaptations of Spanish Golden Age plays. Although this database does not include an index of translations and adaptations by date, a search of selected titles indicates that the majority of translations are from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and that the numbers of translations for each play increases dramatically after the 1980s. For instance, the database includes eight translations of Lope de Vega’s play Fuente Ovejuna: a 1961 translation by Jill Booty; a 1985 translation by Roy Campbell; two translations from 1989, one by Victor Dixon and the other by Adrian Mitchell; a 1999 translation by Gwynne Edwards; a 2002 translation by Stanley Appelbaum; and two translations from
a general movement to revitalize Spanish Golden Age *comedia*, it is important to note that each play, and each playwright, engages with text and performance in different ways and for different reasons. My analysis considers why Spanish Golden Age *comedias*, such as *La vida es sueño*, have drawn the interest of Latina/o playwrights, elucidates the nature and development of discourse between these playwrights and Spanish Golden Age culture, and explains connections between their plays and Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *La vida es sueño* (1636). Finally, my research demonstrates how choices involved with translation, adaptation, production, and reception help to construct Latina/o identity, as well as help preserve and revitalize a vibrant Golden Age dramatic genre and performance tradition.

Three questions guide this research. First, to what extent do the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis convey, or exist as, an echo, a haunting, or a nostalgic resonance of *comedia* from the Spanish Golden Age, a period that lasted roughly from the years 1580 to 1680? Second, what does the history and politics of translating and adapting *La vida es sueño* reveal about the formation of U.S. Latina/o identity? And finally, to what extent do these three plays and their productions contribute to a process of, or resistance to, cultural assimilation, defined as a process in which a minority group sacrifices or loses aspects of its own identity by integrating and absorbing cultural characteristics from a

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2009, one by Gregary Racz and the other by Laurence Boswell. Of the nineteen translations of *La vida es sueño* in the database, ten were written after 1989.

4 Other examples of contemporary Latina/o adaptations of Spanish Golden Age plays include Octavio Solis’ *Man of the Flesh* (1990), an adaptation of Tirso de Molina’s *El burlador de sevilla* (1630), Caridad Svič’s *The Labyrinth of Desire* (2006), an adaptation of Lope de Vega’s *La prueba de los ingenios* (1612-3), which was produced by The Ohio State University’s Department of Theatre in 2008, and Maria Irene Fornes’s *Life is a Dream* (1981), an adaptation of Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* (1636).
different, more dominant population? Besides studying the dramatic texts by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, my analysis also strives to provide greater understanding of how their work has been staged in theatrical productions and how these productions contribute to the development of contemporary Latina/o identity in the United States. Moreover, this research also encourages the teaching and production of Spanish Golden Age and Latina/o plays. As a genre, comedias from the Spanish Golden Age lack a continuous and sustained tradition of performance in mainstream U.S. culture, and are frequently ignored or glossed over by educators teaching theatre history courses.5

The nature of the relationship that Cruz, Rivera, and Solis establish with Spanish Golden Age comedia, through their translation and adaptation of La vida es sueño, involves two conflicting perspectives. On one hand, the fact that all three playwrights chose to work with the same seventeenth century classic suggests that they share an interest in Spanish Golden Age theatre. Yet, on the other hand, while these plays might seem to celebrate, or pay tribute to, a shared conception of heritage, further analysis reveals that each playwright has a different approach to connecting Latinidad with Spanish Golden Age comedia. Despite the fact that Cruz, Rivera, and Solis draw from La vida es sueño as a common source, their three respective versions reveal separate and

5 In the forward to Susan L. Fischer’s Reading Performance: Spanish Golden-Age Theatre and Shakespeare on the Modern Stage, Jonathan Thacker lends support to the idea that there is a lack of a continuous performance tradition for Spanish classical theatre. Thacker points out that because of the absence, until the late 1980s, of a major company dedicated to producing plays written in the Golden Age within Spain and educating the public about them, a practice-informed approach has been slow to emerge (xii). Despite the fact that many Spanish Golden Age plays have been translated into English in the last three decades, this work is not necessarily commissioned for theatrical production. However, many new translations are being produced, which has helped to revitalize a performance tradition that, unlike the Shakespearean canon, has not been staged continuously since it was first produced.
distinctive perspectives on Latina/o identity in the United States. To suggest that these plays and playwrights are similar simply because of their Hispanic origin would be a form of ethnic labeling. Rather than analyze how one dramatist might speak for a group of people, or a country, I argue that these contemporary versions of La vida es sueño provide a common ground from which to analyze and discuss the continual construction and development of complex and varied Latina/o identities.

My methodological approach involved a series of steps, beginning with analysis of textual elements such as stage directions, characterizations, tropes, motifs, structure, and dialogue for each play. I conducted a close reading of each play, focusing on elements of textual translation, adaptation, and staging, in order to ask four questions, derived from the principle questions used to guide my initial research: How are elements of the dramatic text (stage directions, characters, dialogue, themes) an echo or resonance of the Spanish Golden Age? What do these elements reveal about Latina/o identity? How might these elements contribute to, or resist, assimilation with contemporary United States culture? What factors are necessary to consider when staging and performing each play? I gathered other primary source material, such as costume design renderings, recorded performances, production photos, program notes, and theatre reviews to discuss selected productions for each play. The selected productions included:


As described by Suzanne Oboler, ethnic labels are reductive and limit understanding by suggesting the homogenization of Latina/o culture.
b. *Dreamlandia*, produced by the Dallas Theatre Center in Dallas, Texas, on 16 May 2000.

c. *Sueño*, produced by the Olney Theatre Center for the Arts at the Potomac Theatre Festival in Olney, Maryland, on 11 July 2000.

d. *Life is a Dream*, produced by the South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California, on 9 February 2007.


In order to discuss selected productions for each play, I secured interviews with directors, designers, and one of the three playwrights. I interviewed Solis, but was not able to interview Rivera or Cruz. For information concerning the production of *Dreamlandia* at the Dallas Theatre Center, I interviewed director Richard Hamburger, and for the production of *Dreamlandia* by Teatro Vista, I interviewed director Cecil Keenan. For information concerning the production of Cruz’s play at South Coast Repertory, I interviewed Alex Boyles, an MFA Acting graduate student at the Ohio State University, who attended a performance of the show and agreed to share his experience as an audience member. I also interviewed four artists involved with the production of *Life is a Dream* at Seton Hill University: director Kellee Van Aken, set designer Karen Glass, costume designer Sue O’Neill, and undergraduate actor Brendan Duffy, who played the role of Basilio. Unfortunately, I was not able to secure interviews with any
artists involved with productions of Rivera’s play *Sueño*, but the reviews and DVD recording were sufficient to gain an understanding of staging and reception.

In addition to my primary research on theatrical productions, my secondary sources focus on Spanish Golden Age *comedia*, translation and adaptation theory, post-colonial theory, and assimilation and Latina/o identity. My research on Spanish Golden Age *comedia* provides a context in order to understand the world from which the contemporary playwrights draw. Research on translation theory helps explain how Golden Age plays have been developed for an English-speaking audience. Issues concerning the visibility of the translator, and whether to foreignize or domesticize a text, impact the relationship between the translator and the translated text. This led to an exploration of Linda Hutcheon’s theories of adaptation and parody, which helped to distinguish a translation from an adaptation, as well as inform my reading of Solis’s play *Dreamlandia* as a parody. My research on assimilation theory provides a means to discuss markers of ethnicity and identity, and is expanded upon to incorporate readings on acculturation and transculturation, while additional research on *Latinidad* helped me to understand the formation of Latina/o identity as an alternative to assimilation. Finally, my research on post-colonial theory led me to discover how dramatic literature is written, performed, and remembered, which enhanced my understanding of how each of the playwrights creates his own version of *Latinidad*. Having explored the above-mentioned secondary research, I was able to discern the effect and impact of each play on Latina/o identity. Each theoretical concept helped to facilitate the development of a framework for my thesis that the work by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis establish a connection between contemporary Latina/o identity and Spanish Golden Age *comedia* through a process of
reconsidering existing conceptions of Latinidad. In particular, this process suggests that evolving notions of Latina/o identity are currently shaped by Spanish heritage and interpretation of *comedia*.

The purpose of elucidating a connection, or relationship, between Spanish Golden Age *comedia* and Latina/o identity is twofold. First, the relationship helps to move towards revitalizing and cultivating a contemporary tradition of Spanish Golden Age *comedia* and contemporary Latina/o theatre performance. Second, this connection provides Latina/o and non-Latino audiences with a means to observe and discuss feelings of hostility that some U.S. Latina/os may have towards Spain. The hostility described in this dissertation focuses on possible sources of Puerto Rican anger towards Spain, rather than hostility derived from negative stereotypes of Spaniards, anger towards racism from other Latina/os in the U.S. southwest who claim superiority based on a genetic lineage to Spain, or feelings of antipathy and resentment due to violence committed during the Spanish conquest and the colonization of the New World during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to Mexican historian Marco Antonio Landavazo, “Mexican Hispanophobia has been nourished by a series of collective images based on the ideas of the Spanish conquest as savage and as a bloody period, the colonial epoch as a period of injustice and suffering, Spaniards as intrinsically perverse beings, and a view of the extermination and expulsion of all *gachupines* (Spanish) as a historical necessity” (37). It is important not to confuse hostility derived from Mexican Hispanophobia with
the type of anger or hostility felt by Puerto Ricans towards Spanish and U.S. colonialism.\(^7\)

In order to explain the influence of the Spanish Golden Age on U.S. Latina/o identity, it is important to consider how the cultures from imperial Spain and the United States today influence Latinidad. A direct comparison may seem difficult, or even impossible, given the extent of socio-political changes that have transpired over four hundred years, as well as the fact that not all people that claim a Latina/o identity share the same culture, lived experience, or sense of national history. However, I propose a model that may be used to encourage reflection upon the relationship between imperial Spain, the United States, and Latinidad. My goal is not to impose a collective Latina/o identity based on a sense of shared history, but instead to open up dialogue concerning the specific similarities and connections that do exist. According to literary scholar Marta Caminero-Santangelo: “The latent possibility of identifying as Latin American and of conceiving of a ‘common’ continental history vis-à-vis both Spain and the United States – also a ‘previous construction of identity,’ even if not the primary one – can nonetheless be given new life under the right (or, perhaps, the wrong) set of circumstances within the United States” (20). Although the United States may be considered a colonial power in a similar way as England or Spain have been in the past, it was the Spanish that colonized Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. At the same time, some scholars feel that contemporary Latinidad is much more heavily influenced by the United States than by contemporary Spain. As theatre scholar Deborah Paredez points out: “One

\(^7\) For more information on the violence and conquest involved with Spanish colonization of Latin America, see *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and The Postcolonial Debate*, edited by Walter D. Mignolo, Irene Silverblatt, and Sonia Saldívar-Hull.
becomes Latina/o only within the geographical and political economic borders of the United States” (23). Based on my analysis of the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, I use a Venn diagram to suggest that each adaptation constructs *Latinidad* through the intersection and influence of Early Modern Spain and the contemporary United States.\(^8\)

This model shows *Latinidad* to be both independent of, as well as influenced by, the hegemony responsible for labeling and limiting aspects of Latina/o identity.

![Venn Diagram](image)

**Figure 1. Venn diagram for Latinidad**

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\(^8\) As a visual model, this diagram does not purport a specific theory of *Latinidad*, but instead suggests that ideas concerning the claiming of Latina/o identity require consideration of cultural influences from both the past and present. This model should not be confused with representing the concept of *mestizaje*, or the mixing of cultural identity through encounters between Spanish Europeans, African slaves, and Amerindian tribes during Spanish colonization of the New World. Jorge J. E. Gracia’s *Hispanic/Latino Identity* suggests that *mestizo* refers to a mixture of Iberian and Amerindian, does not necessarily entail homogeneity or amalgamation, and that *mestizaje* should be distinguished from assimilation in that *mestizos* preserve cultural differences (108-110).
This diagram illustrates the connections between Spanish cultural heritage and *Latinidad*, as well as relationships that contribute to the formation of a varied and complex U.S. Latina/o identity in the texts and staging of works by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis.

**SPANISH GOLDEN AGE COMEDIA**

Instead of simply celebrating dramatic work written during the Spanish Golden Age, contemporary adaptations based on Golden Age *comedia* may be analyzed and more fully understood as contributing to the development of dramatic literature today. A preponderance of current research on Spanish Golden Age adaptations focuses on staging issues, the depiction of honor, performance traditions, and arguments concerning translation. An exceptional and comprehensive guide to the development of Spanish Golden Age *comedia* may be found in Melveena McKendrick’s *Theatre in Spain 1490-1700*. McKendrick’s work provides detailed information regarding theatre traditions, controversies, and theatre spaces during the Spanish Golden Age, along with a critical evaluation of Calderón’s *La vida es sueño*. Another excellent source is Matthew Stroud’s “Defining the *Comedia*.” This article explores how Spanish Golden Age *comedias* have been defined over the last thirty years, examines generalizations that have been taught and accepted concerning the *comedia*, and describes important advances in *comedia* scholarship. For example, the number of plays, especially those by women, which are now considered part of the canon has increased; it is more common for scholars to discuss staging and performance of the plays; and there are now many varied approaches to reading a text (Stroud 286). Jonathan Thacker’s *A Companion to Golden Age Theatre*, and his articles on Golden Age drama, provide a useful reference for the history of *comedia* adaptations in the United States. Thacker analyzes possibilities for modern
staging of Spanish Golden Age performances, discusses sixteenth and seventeenth-century production traditions in comparison with modern performance issues, and examines assumptions about how artists think about Spanish Golden Age texts. According to Thacker, not only is there a need for additional comedia scholarship, but modern theory should be brought to bear on comedia research. Thacker’s work serves as a guidepost to direct further research on comedias, such as La vida es sueño. Altogether, McKendrick, Stroud, and Thacker offer a contextual background for Spanish Golden Age comedia scholarship, and provide a foundation for viewing comedia as adaptations.

Despite the lack of a continuous tradition of producing comedias outside of Spain, there has been a number of Spanish Golden Age comedias translated and adapted in English. However, many of these plays were written to be read rather than to be performed, or use language considered outdated for a contemporary audience. As a result, artists and scholars are now returning to the source texts in an attempt to re-invigorate and stage theatrical texts from the Spanish Golden Age. This inquiry is motivated by the need to revitalize comedia performance traditions, increase the number of contemporary, English-language translations for theatrical production in the United States, challenge research paradigms, and argue for the inclusion of Spanish Golden Age comedias in the anthologized, translated canon. A variety of sources contribute to the re-investigation of Spanish Golden Age comedias in the late twentieth century, when companies began actively translating and performing comedia in England and the United States. These sources emphasize the necessity for additional translations of Spanish Golden Age plays in English, offer multiple rationales for adapting a text, and argue for justification of production choices within an appropriate context.
First, in *Reading Performance: Spanish Golden Age Theatre and Shakespeare on the Modern Stage*, Susan L. Fischer argues that readings of Spanish Golden Age productions must “interrogate the appropriation of female characters” (164). Fischer points out that *La vida es sueño* is the most frequently produced of Calderón’s plays, and goes on to describe significant English-language productions in the late twentieth century, including John Barton’s *Life’s a Dream* (1993-4), translated by Adrian Mitchell and John Barton; JoAnne Akalaitis’s *Life’s a Dream* (1999), which utilized the same translation by Mitchell and Barton; and Calixto Bieito’s *Life’s a Dream* (1998-9, 2000), translated by John Clifford, and adapted by Calixto Bieito. Fischer’s analysis highlights the degree with which these productions succeeded in subverting Calderón, and creating a set of alternative motivations for characterization, staging, and design (178). Fischer’s work demonstrates the value and efficacy of interpreting translations of *La vida es sueño*, and promotes a process of translating and producing *comedia* in English.

Second, *The Comedia in English: Translation and Performance*, edited by Susan Paun de García and Donald Larson, provides numerous articles on adapting, viewing, and contextualizing Spanish Golden Age *comedia*, including a detailed analysis of Maria Irene Fornes’s production of *La vida es sueño* (1981). The Fornes production is important because it serves as an additional example of an adaptation by a Latina playwright.9 In addition, Fornes has played a significant role with the INTAR

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9 My decision to compare these three translations was because they were written within a few years of each other, and because Cruz, Rivera, and Solis are all of the same generation. The Fornes translation, by contrast, was written much earlier. However, Cruz and Rivera studied with Fornes, making her a possible influence on them. I attempted to locate a copy of Fornes’ translation, which does not appear to have been published, but was not successful in locating a copy. Despite the fact that my analysis
organization, which has helped to develop the work of Cruz, Rivera, and Solis at various points in time. In the introduction, García and Larson argue that in a changing world, a performance text will also change: “The success of recent English-language productions of the comedia must be due in part to the increasing number of playable translations and adaptations aimed at performance” (31). Third, a thorough discussion of honor and the Spanish Golden Age honor code is presented in Henry Kamen’s *Golden Age Spain*, which is valuable for its comparison of how honor is depicted in contemporary adaptations, an issue that will figure prominently in my analysis of Rivera’s adaptation *Sueño*. Finally, an index of modern productions of *La vida es sueño* in England, along with articles on historicizing Spanish Golden Age theatre may be found in *The Spanish Golden Age in English*, edited by Catherine Boyle and David Johnston. Boyle and Johnston’s research focuses on issues affecting the performance and reception of comedia translated or adapted into English, with special attention to Spanish Golden Age history and performance traditions. This work provides a context for understanding the popularity of *La vida es sueño* in translation by giving detailed information on

would benefit from a comparison with other translations of *La vida es sueño*, the focus of my dissertation is on the individual *Latinidades* of Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, a concept that is explained in greater detail in Chapter Two. The inclusion of adaptations by female playwrights would have provided additional perspective, but I do not attempt to argue that any one play, whether it be written by a male or female playwright, speaks for all Latinas and Latinos. Instead, I suggest that each of the three playwrights in this dissertation creates his own *Latinidad*, which speaks for itself, and may also contribute to the construction of an identity for other Latinas or Latinos.

10 For a brief explanation of the background and significance of Fornes’ contribution to Latina/o theatre and the development of work by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, see Caridad Svich’s introduction to *Out of the Fringe: Contemporary Latina/Latino Theatre and Performance*, which also includes a reflection by Cruz on the nature of his work.
productions of Life is a Dream, or Life’s a Dream as it is titled in some translations, in the period immediately preceding that of the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis.

TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION

By comparing the work of different translators of the same text, it is possible to expose individual translators’ contrasting perspectives, ideologies, and methodologies, as well as the effect that various translation choices have on source and target cultures, and use this information to differentiate between a translation and an adaptation. This requires consideration of how the term translation has been defined. According to David Johnston, “every act of translation for the stage is an act of transformation” (66). However, there is a difference between thinking of translation in terms of what works best on the stage, or how audiences might respond to a performed text, and thinking of translation in terms of a written act, where a writer decides between translating word-for-word, or transforming the text using creative, adaptive techniques. Defining translation also involves the way in which translators view themselves and their work, because not all translators share the same background or experience. Some artists and scholars refer to translation as a metaphor to represent what a designer or director does when creating a production concept. Others view translation as a form of communication, which leads to further complications regarding interpretations and meaning. Translation may also be used to describe any number of actions or theories: “The reason critics often refer to the term translation as a synonym for transculturation is that it lends itself better to use as a verb: ‘to translate’ is less awkward than ‘to transculturate.’ Translation also etymologically implies the carrying over, dis-placing, and transferring of meaning from one language into another and is therefore particularly appropriate in referring to
geographical, linguistic dis-place-ments” (Spitta 164). The difficulty in delineating a clear definition of translation is that the act of translating words changes when dealing with creative texts, like plays. Translation theorist Jenny Spencer argues, “the very productivity associated with performance and translation as metaphors, and the speed with which they are taken up in both popular and critical discourse, tends to undermine their specific theoretical utility” (390). For the purpose of this dissertation, I define translation as the act of rendering a text from one language into another language for the purpose of creating a new text that exists in its own right.

With an understanding of this definition, it is possible to interpret and compare various translations in order to distinguish a translation from an adaptation. Research by André Lefevere provides a theoretical approach to assist in the process of comparing translated texts. Lefevere challenges the role played by linguistic codes in the act of translating by contending that people who translate texts do not think on the linguistic level, the level of translating words and phrases, but rather they think in terms of conceptual and textual grids, which result from a process of socialization, and contain markers designed to elicit certain reactions on the reader’s part (75-76). Very often the difficulty in translating a text depends on a concept or idea rather than a word. Lefevere’s notion that problems in translating are caused by discrepancies in conceptual and textual grids helps to explain confusion in translating between Western and non-Western cultures (76-77). Because conceptual and textual grids are intertwined, the efficacy of a translated text depends on the alignment of grids between source and target cultures. With this in mind, it is possible to envision how additional grids, including aesthetic, personal, and socio-political grids, may align to locate a play along a spectrum
leading closer or farther away from an idealized notion of translation. By using a qualitative assessment that measures the frequency of grid alignment for a particular text, a translation may be described as poor, fair, better, or best. It is important to note that the frequency or amount of discrepancies in grid alignment serve as only one of many criteria in judging the quality of a translation. Using this concept, the best, or most “pure” form of translation, would require that each word, phrase, and expression possess an absolute equivalent in both meaning and context between two languages. Whereas some translations come closer than others to this ideal, it is practically impossible to achieve. When a translator’s strategy shifts from focusing on grid alignments in favor of molding the source text to become more accessible for a target audience, the resulting product is an adaptation. As changes are made to alter the source, the text moves towards becoming an original play.

Additional theories concerning foreignization and domestication provide a crucial foundation for discussing contemporary translations and adaptations. These theories have developed over time through the contributions of various scholars. From as early as the English Restoration, John Dryden argued, “words are not like landmarks, so sacred as never to be removed; customs are changed, and even statues are silently repealed, when the reason ceases for which they were enacted” (28). Dryden addressed the fact that language develops over time, but more than just the actual words change or disappear. “Thoughts will lose their original beauty by the innovation of words; in the first place, not only their beauty, but their being is lost, where they are no longer understood” (28).

11 Thanks to John Kuhn, a fellow graduate student at the Ohio State University, for helping to expand my understanding of Lefevere’s theories.
Over a century later, in 1816, Wilhelm von Humboldt built upon Dryden’s ideas to suggest that there is a difference between respecting a foreign text and creating something new that sounds foreign, or has a sense of foreignness, and emphasized that a measure of balance should be achieved (58). It is important not to confuse this idea with the contrast between contemporary U.S. translations and older, British translations. For example, there is a noticeable difference between the work by Edward Fitzgerald, who translated plays from the Spanish Golden Age into a Victorian style of English that is no longer spoken in the contemporary world, and the work of the contemporary adaptor Dakin Matthews, who respects the context and rhyme scheme of the foreign text while writing in a style that a reader or audience will clearly recognize.\textsuperscript{12} Despite the difference in style, Fitzgerald’s work would have been just as comprehensible to his audience as Matthews is to ours. The problem von Humboldt envisioned is that some translators do not strive for balance. Domestication strategies focus on what will be understood by an audience in the target culture, without necessarily requiring changes that strip away a foreign notion of the source culture.

The danger inherent with ignoring or stripping away the source culture, or what may appear foreign to a contemporary audience, is that this may constitute an act of violence. In \textit{The Translator’s Invisibility}, translation theorist Lawrence Venuti challenges the concept of fluency, the idea that a translator possesses the ability to both

\textsuperscript{12} Edward Fitzgerald’s translation of Calderón’s \textit{La vida es sueño} was originally published in 1865 as \textit{Such Stuff as Dreams are Made Of}, and was republished in 2000 for \textit{Eight Dramas of Calderón} by the University of Illinois Press. By contrast, Dakin Matthews’s contemporary translations include Agustin Moreto’s \textit{Spite for Spite} (1995), Ruiz de Alarcón’s \textit{The Truth Can’t Be Trusted, or The Liar} (1998), \textit{The Walls Have Ears} (1998), and \textit{The Proof of the Promise} (2002), Tirso de Molina’s \textit{Don Juan, The Trickster of Seville} (2006), and Lope de Vega’s \textit{The Capulets and the Montagues} (2010).
understand universal equivalents and convert them with ease, arguing that translation strategies that focus only on a target language are inherently violent because they involve “reconstituting the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs and representations that pre-exist in the target language” (65). In “Translation as Cultural Politics,” Venuti states that fluency is “a discursive strategy ideally suited to domesticating translation, capable not only of executing the ethnocentric violence of domestication, but also of concealing this violence by producing the illusionistic effect of transparency” (73). Venuti promotes foreignization in an attempt to eliminate potential violence to the source text. However, despite the benefit of adopting a foreignizing tactic, this concept may be viewed as overtly prescriptive. In her translator’s note to Finished From the Start and Other Plays, Ana Elena Puga explains that in translating Juan Radrigán’s work into English, the challenge of rendering the thick slang of the Chilean underclass and creating an accessible, entertaining play for U.S. audiences without effacing the characters’ nationality led to a compromise between foreignizing and domesticizing strategies. Puga suggests that in certain instances, “it seemed appropriate to engage in what Venuti might condemn as ‘domestication’ destructive of the source culture. The only logically consistent test for when to domesticate and when to foreignize seemed to be the limits of what I thought I could get away with without losing the theatrical spectator’s attention” (xv-xvi). Given careful consideration of foreignizing and domesticizing tactics, both may be used to argue in favor of supporting a greater balance of power and justice between Spanish Golden Age and contemporary Latina/o culture.

The increase in research on staging and acting of comedias in the first decade of the twenty-first century has had implications on strategies for translation and adaptation.
This upturn in research is discussed in Richard Pym’s article, “Drama in Golden-Age Spain.” Pym describes the frequency with which Golden Age dramatists rewrote their own work, and explains that their plays underwent changes due to printing or editorial “corrections,” so that even in the seventeenth century, the text provided to readers may not have been the author’s first version (35-37). This shows that the practice of making changes to a text is not exclusively limited to the modern era. Of course, it may be argued that the types of changes made to plays from the seventeenth century did not alter the fundamental integrity of the text, but that contemporary adaptive changes distort the text, or even commit an act of violence against a foreign culture. Whereas some adaptations may negatively impact a classic Spanish text by focusing on the target culture, a practice known as domestication, other adaptations utilize a strategy of foreignization, which focuses on preserving the source culture, or source text in translation.13 I argue that the adaptations by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis demonstrate a complicated response to Spanish Golden Age comedia, ranging from respect, to anger, and even to parody.

Since they know it is impossible to recreate an authentic or exact translation, even with careful historical research, some translators adopt a domestication approach that makes the text more familiar for an audience. This practice assumes that because changes to the text are inevitable, translators should embrace radical changes for the sake of connecting with an audience. Scholars such as Michael Halberstam lend support to this

13 In some cases, a single Golden Age play will incorporate instances of both foreignization and domestication. My ideas regarding foreignization and domestication draw on theory developed by Lawrence Venuti in The Translator’s Invisibility, 2nd ed. (2008) and his article “Translation as Cultural Politics: Régimes of Domestication in English” from Critical Readings in Translation Studies (2010).
assumption by reminding us that even in the seventeenth-century, historical accuracy was a non-existent concept to the audience (131). This supports Pym’s research suggesting that many comedia underwent significant changes before and during various productions throughout the Spanish Golden Age, arguing that the creation of an authentic copy of a Spanish Golden Age comedia is impossible. However, some adaptations that embrace a domestication strategy lose focus on elements that are essential to the integrity of a foreign play. Given that it is impossible to recreate a performance exactly as it was performed, and that the purpose of writing comedias was to see them performed, any argument concerning the authenticity of a comedia translation or adaptation is irrelevant. I argue that if the goal of a performance is to communicate a sense of what a comedia might have been like in the sixteenth century, without suggesting a notion of authenticity, then a translation should utilize the source text as the primary foundation for inspiration.

Ben Gunter, who argues in favor of relocation strategies for adaptations, challenges my argument. According to Gunter, “translating location can forge connections between seventeenth-century playwriting conventions and twenty-first century staging practices, and help to shrink the ‘no translations’ blind spot that keeps the comedia absent from American stages” (108). Gunter’s argument suggests that adaptive changes such as relocation may increase the number of Spanish Golden Age productions in the United States. Despite the fact that relocation is a radical adaptive choice, it has been known to stimulate interest with audiences unfamiliar with comedia. It is possible to retain a sense of the foreign while changing the location or updating the context, but strategies that mire the play in unfamiliar, disconnected worlds often impede understanding and appreciation for new audiences. If a text specifies that the action take
place in a particular city, there should be significant justification for relocating the setting elsewhere. Relocating a *comedia* on the face of the moon may be innovative, but it is irrelevant if it fails to connect with an audience.

There is value in the foreignness of the *comedia*, and despite the fact that we cannot recreate performances exactly as they were, the spirit of a play may be preserved with a balanced approach that respects what is foreign while employing a contemporary tone or style. Halberstam points out that if we try to bring a play into an exclusively contemporary world then we open ourselves to a host of distractions, in which gimmicky updates ultimately obscure the play (131). While radical attempts to modernize sometimes present something new and interesting, there is often a risk that the modernizing tactic will replace the need for action that is honest, direct, and clearly resonates with an audience. According to David Johnston, “the translator committed to a wholesale strategy of domestication will do everything in his or her power to purge this haunting presence of otherness, but despite such determined efforts something of that difference must invariably remain” (54). In reality, audiences go to the theatre looking for themselves just as much as they go looking for the other. Often, the only way to relate to or engage with otherness, whether it be racial, gender-based, or across time and culture, is to show it. The *comedia*’s otherness is part of what makes it a beautiful theatrical genre. It is entertaining, moving, educational, and political. Successful translations and directorial concepts depend on retaining a sense of what is foreign and searching for familiar connections that truly resonate.

According to Thacker, the solution is to not become a slave to either domestication or foreignization, but to consider the following: how language translates to
staging, the relationship between audience and actors, the use of polymetry or lack thereof, the actors and their craft, and the use of language to evoke mood and location (26). Rather than argue for a single perspective or translation strategy, I agree with Thacker, and further propose three areas of focus for artists and scholars of the Spanish Golden Age: increasing the number of new English translations and adaptations, increasing the number of translations and adaptations of plays that have been previously translated into English, and expanding upon existing historical research to provide artists with innovative options for staging adaptations, such that production choices both connect, or resonate, with audiences and may be justified within an appropriate context.

Of the three dramatists in my dissertation, only Cruz attempts a translation that attempts to preserve the essence of Calderón’s original story. Cruz’s work may be compared with other translators of La vida es sueño, such as Gregary J. Racz, who separates each act into multiple scenes, and adds extra words and phrases to facilitate a poetic style and rhyme scheme. For example, in Segismundo’s final speech in the second act, Cruz translates, “What is life? An illusion, / a shadow, a fiction… / And our greatest good is but little, for all of life is a dream” (44). By contrast, Racz translates, “What’s life? Not anything it seems. / A shadow. Fiction filling reams. / All we possess on earth means nil, / For life’s a dream, think what you will” (79). Racz attempts to recreate the meter and rhyme that is characteristic of the polymetry in Spanish Golden Age comedias, but there is room to debate whether his version works best on stage. This comparison indicates that even with greater awareness of cultural nuances and ideology, translators still continue to wrestle with the issue of foreignization or domestication. Some translators focus on what will be understood by a contemporary audience in the target
culture, and make changes to domesticize vocabulary, grammar, and other conventions, while other translators strive to respect the original elements of the source text.

Whereas some fear that focusing on historical research to preserve the past will lead to a museum piece, or a theatrical performance that hypothetically belongs in a museum rather than on a stage due to its perceived inability to connect with audiences, others feel that strategies focusing solely on what works with a target audience, employing radical changes, wildly adaptive interpretations, and massive cuts to both dialogue and stage directors, will destroy context and understanding, especially in the case of Spanish Golden Age comedia such as *La vida es sueño*. García and Larson ask, “While the performance script must spark interest in a modern audience, if it deviates too much from the original, does it cease to be a comedia?” (32). Instead of attempting to label translations as literal or adapted, one solution is to refer to all translations and adaptations as “re-written” texts. Although this concept may dissipate semantic arguments, it does not help distinguish an adaptation from a translation, or a literal translation from a loose translation. According to Hutcheon, there is no such thing as a literal translation or adaptation; an adaptation is a re-mediation, or a form of translation.

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14 In *The Comedia in English*, Michael Halberstam, the Artistic Director and co-founder of Writers’ Theatre in Chicago, discusses his experience rehearsing Augustín Moreto’s *El desdén con el desdén*, translated and adapted by Dakin Matthews as *Spite for Spite*. Halberstam explains, “I realized that research into the milieu and traditions of Moreto’s original, although important, would only get me so far, and that ultimately in rehearsal I would have to deal exclusively with the text at hand. If I became too bogged down in research, I risked staging a museum piece or a lecture, with no emotional relevance for the audience” (127). In his contribution for *The Comedia in English*, David Johnston writes that a play translated from the position of a translator’s invisibility in time, will produce a museum piece, “of interest perhaps to scholars in the way that cartographers pore over maps of familiar territory, but it will not grant access to the play’s living pastness, to its status as an artifact that is simultaneously other and ours” (70).
involving transmutation or transcoding, a recoding into a new set of conventions as well as signs (16). However, if translation is the written replication of a text from one language into another, then adaptation is a type of translation.

Given the individual strategies employed by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, all three of their plays may be considered adaptations. In A Theory of Adaptation, Hutcheon explains that adaptations are repetition without replication, and are second to the original, but not secondary, or automatically worthy of denigration (7-9). What Venuti calls domestication, Hutcheon calls indigenization, and uses the term “adapted text” instead of “original” or “source text.” For Hutcheon, adaptation is a transposition of a work that involves (re-) interpretation and (re-) creation (8). This supports the idea that an adaptation may be original, but it does not necessarily replace a previous work. Hutcheon questions whether historical contextualization supersedes or undermines the benefit derived from innovation and creativity, and also suggests that knowing and unknowing audiences interpret performance in different ways. In addition, if we combine Hutcheon’s insight with McKendrick’s work on how contemporary adaptation compares with practices utilized during the Spanish Golden Age for performances in the corrales, it is possible to consider adaptation in terms of a Spanish Golden Age tradition to be studied and revitalized. McKendrick explains in Theatre in Spain 1490-1700 that during the Spanish Golden Age, it was common for an actor-manager, or autor, to cut or alter a play after commissioning and acquiring ownership of the text, and that responsibility for interpreting a play text lay mainly with the autor (190). Knowledge of these practices lends support to the argument that adaptations might re-contextualize Latinidad to forge a new relationship with the Spanish Golden Age.
Along with her research on adaptation, Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Parody* provides an alternative perspective for understanding and interpreting adapted work. Hutcheon focuses on how self-reflexivity and intertextuality affect the process of defining parody, and is careful not to confuse parody with satire. First, Hutcheon explains that parody applies to a wide range of writing: “It can be a serious criticism, not necessarily of the parodied text; it can be a playful, genial mockery of codifiable forms. Its range of intent is from respectful admiration to biting ridicule” (15-16). Hutcheon then suggests that parody operates specifically “as a method of inscribing continuity while permitting critical distance; it is also capable of transformative power in creating new syntheses” (20). When applied to an analysis of Solis’s work, Hutcheon’s theory of parody describes how *La vida es sueño* and *Dreamlandia* are connected: “In the background will stand another text against which the new creation is implicitly to be both measured and understood” (31). However, an audience may view a parodied text without any knowledge of the original work if the source text is foreign, old, or out of print. Additionally, although parody may be commonly associated with a form of comedy that ridicules its subject, Hutcheon points out: “there is nothing in parodia that necessitates the inclusion of a concept of ridicule, as there is, for instance, in the joke or burla of burlesque. Parody, then, in its ironic ‘trans-contextualization’ and inversion is repetition with difference” (32). This concept of repetition with difference parallels the idea of adaptation as repetition without replication. Although parody may be disrespectful, Solis employs it to recontextualize Calderón’s text in a respectful manner. Of the three playwrights in this dissertation, only Solis employs parody.
Finally, insights provided by Margaret Greer’s article, “An (In)convenient Marriage” help to answer questions concerning how the elements, issues, or problems with translation and adaptation affect the staging of *La vida es sueño*. Greer discusses the play in terms of an understanding of Pascal’s reflections on the relationship between power and justice. For example, the moment when Segismundo throws a servant out the window to his death requires careful consideration because it is interpreted differently not only by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, but also by other translators, and thus provides a point of reference for comparison. Greer describes how in Calixto Bieito’s 1998 staging, Segismundo returns to face the audience with a puzzled surprise rather than triumph (Greer 60). The particular staging choice in this moment exemplifies how audiences might be encouraged to interpret the character of Segismundo as a helpless or confused victim, rather than a tyrant or a monster. This type of comparison is crucial because it is possible to interpret the Segismundo character as either a representative of the Spanish Golden Age, or of contemporary U.S. Latina/o culture. Depending on the translation and interpretation of this moment, arguments can be made concerning the extent of power and justice afforded to, or abused by, either U.S. Latina/os or Spanish imperialists. Additional comparisons between translations reveal a distinct concern for the relationship between Spanish Golden Age and contemporary Latina/o cultures.

**POST-COLONIAL THEORY**

The relationship between U.S. Latina/o theatre and the Spanish Golden Age, as well as explanation of how the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis promote new expressions of Latina/o identity, requires analysis of these plays through the lens of post-colonial theory. This requires a careful definition of “post-colonialism.” Deborah L. Madsen’s
Beyond the Borders: American Literature and Post-Colonial Theory posits that the term “post-colonialism” has acquired three primary meanings over time, including writings produced in a previously colonized nation after its independence from colonial control, the whole complex of historical and cultural processes from the pre-colonial period through independence to decolonization, and writing by critics who adopt a post-colonial perspective (2). Other theorists have adopted more specific definitions for literature described as “post-colonial.” Bill Ashcroft’s The Empire Writes Back defines post-colonial literature as work that is affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression (2).

According to Peter Childs and R.J. Patrick Williams in An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory, this definition is inadequate. From their perspective, the difficulties created by Ashcroft’s definition are, “first, whether it is actually possible to identify a ‘continuity of preoccupations’ over such an expanse of time, and, secondly and more importantly, whether, even if that were possible, it would justify the loss of specificity which results from the eliding of periods, processes and practices which this entails” (3). This leads to a consideration of whether the prefix “post” refers not only to a moment after, or subsequent to, the colonial period, but also to a conceptual perspective beyond colonialism.15

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15 Madsen argues that the “post” in post-colonial “does not designate a period in time after colonialism but instead signifies the extent to which colonialism affects all cultural production after the moment of colonization,” a position that tends to mirror that of Ashcroft’s in The Empire Writes Back (65).
Discussion of the complexity involved with defining post-colonialism requires consideration of the specific empires and colonies under investigation. It is worth noting that *The Empire Writes Back* focuses specifically on cultures affected by English, rather than Spanish, imperialism, and does not address Latin American post-colonialism. However, Ashcroft explains why post-colonial theory applies to Latin America by stating that the antiquity and character of colonization in Latin America, the longstanding reality of its hybridized cultures, the “continental” sense of difference which stems from a shared colonial language, and the intermittent emergence of contestatory movements in cultural production all radically widen the scope of post-colonial theory (202). *The Empire Writes Back* also does not elaborate on the specific circumstances affecting the relationship between the Spanish Golden Age and Latina/o identity, but despite this fact, it does provide a foundation for understanding post-colonial theory and informs critical readings of literature from cultures affected by colonization.16

Building on *The Empire Writes Back*, I study the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis as a form of writing back to the cultural empire of Spain. I fuse Ashcroft’s ideas with concepts described in Jon Rossini’s *Contemporary Latina/o Theater: Wrighting Ethnicity* to suggest that these plays may also be read as a “wrighting” back to Spain.17 According to Rossini, theatre helps to shift our thinking about ethnicity through the idea of

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17 Madsen explains that writers often use counter-discursive strategies in post-colonial theory to “write back” in resistance to oppressive cultural narratives (4-5). This form of “writing back” should not be confused with my usage of “wrighting back” to Spain, which implies a connection or relationship, rather than resistance or deconstruction.
wrighting, the acts of writing and righting. “Wrighting is thus a simultaneous process of correction, revision, and cultural repositioning, or restructuring, in the act of creating a new conceptual framework” (Rossini 10). In addition, wrighting helps to reduce viewing cultural difference as a safe, exotic, consumable supplement to mainstream culture by creating an experience that forces audiences to reevaluate the very terms through which they engage with the world (15). I suggest that Cruz, Rivera, and Solis wright ethnicity and provide examples from their plays to describe how individual moments might correct, revise, and culturally reposition La vida es sueño within an adaptation.

*Contemporary Latina/o Theater: Wrighting Ethnicity* also takes an approach that moves beyond the acknowledgement of cultural difference, and views ethnicity as something “that produces a space for experience, generates cultural knowledge, and offers alternatives to models of identity consistently trapped within a representational paradigm” (Rossini 20). Rossini’s book describes the history and development of Latina/o theatre, and uses the idea of “wrighting” to explore and analyze how contemporary Latina/o dramatists use theatre to socially construct identity without limiting understanding to notions that are reductive or essentialist. I am curious as to how wrighting transforms when produced on stage, and how audiences might recognize the creation of theatrical alternatives for thinking about ethnicity. By shifting the thinking about Latina/o plays from how they are read or perceived to how they are conceived, Rossini reveals the complexities of representing Latina/o bodies on stage as something real, instead of imagined, and the need to examine characters in Latina/o theatre as “integral and central figures of analysis,” and not as “thematic elements or symbolic elements of difference” (18-19). My analysis uses these ideas to demonstrate
the variety of ways in which characters from the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis embody *Latinidad*, and how these embodiments are derived from Latina/o culture.

Further understanding of how these plays function as post-colonial theatre may be found in *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, an overview of post-colonial theory written by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins. This survey outlines significant concepts central to an understanding of how post-colonial theory informs a rationale for writing adaptations. Gilbert and Tompkins write, “Given the legacy of colonialist education which perpetuates, through literature, very specific socio-cultural values in the guise of universal truth, it is not surprising that a prominent endeavor among colonized writers/artists has been to rework the European ‘classics’ in order to invest them with more local relevance and to divest them of their assumed authority/authenticity” (16). I suggest that some playwrights, such as Cruz, do not so much rework the classics, but rather translate so as to pay tribute to them. The work by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis establishes a connection with imperial Spain, resulting in discourse to correct and revise previous notions of the relationship between contemporary *Latinidad* and the colonial Spanish empire. Gilbert and Tompkins go on to explain that “the center-margin model for understanding imperialism can be problematic and, at times, inadequate, since many current forms of cultural domination intersect and interact” (256). As a result, any discussion of *Latinidad* requires consideration of its application in a contemporary context. “Changes in the colonizer/colonized dialectic are inevitable when new imperial powers emerge, even if some of their practices replicate those of the recently dismantled European empires” (257). In Rivera’s adaptation, the Old
World/New World binary becomes a means of referencing and representing current cultural hegemony exercised by neo-imperial countries.

It is possible that, with regards to Spanish Golden Age adaptations by Latina/o dramatists, notions of national identity may be either Eurocentric, based on U.S. Anglo and Latina/o cultures, or perhaps exist as a new hybrid genre. Although Richard Gordon’s *Cannibalizing the Colony* focuses specifically on cinematic engagements of colonial literature, some of his ideas may be applied to show how stage adaptations inform national identity. Gordon makes three important points that inform my study. First, colonial narratives may be transformed into commentaries on national identity, and a particular artist’s vision of the past controls the way identity is understood in the present (Gordon 1). Second, through a process of anthropophagous adaptation, colonial source texts are captured, assimilated, and consumed for the sake of absorbing that which is valuable in constructing contemporary national identities (2). Finally, Latin American directors choose to highlight themes that embody a resistance to colonialism, themes that lend themselves to holding up the colonial period as a mirror for self-examination (7).

Though Gordon writes about film directors, his insights are equally applicable to theatre directors or to playwrights. These ideas concerning how cultural products, such as films, or theatre, are consumed, digested, and absorbed may be used to argue that a mutually beneficial process, less aggressive than the processes described by Ashcroft or Rossini, may be possible with regards to the adaptation of Spanish Golden Age *comedia* by Latino playwrights. Still, some of the playwrights may be more aggressive in their “wrighting” than others. The films studied by Gordon utilize a strategy of devouring and digesting culture, but Gordon also allows for the possibility that films realize a more “egalitarian
conversation with their historical source by taking steps to leave their resurrections open to multiple readings, or ones that promote a critical view of historiography” (8).

Following Gordon, it is worth considering if and how Cruz, Rivera, and Solis consume Spanish Golden Age culture, and how consumption may be influenced by contemporary culture within the United States. Gordon writes: “The directors draw on what amounts to the mythic status of the stories that the colonial texts tell, and exploit the inherited malleability of existing cultural icons in the process of re-conceiving the nations’ cultural heritage, of making the past relevant for the present, and of shaping their own, new national icons” (10). Some playwrights today, I argue, assimilate using a process that does not necessarily require a re-conception of the past, but instead places it in the foreground to comment on shared ideas of identity.

Equipped with an understanding of Spanish Golden Age comedia, theories of translation and adaptation, and post-colonial theory, questions concerning the extent to which the adaptations by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis relate to Calderón and the Spanish Golden Age, how these three playwrights individually connect with Spain, and how their work influences Latina/o identity may be addressed. First, it is necessary to consider how the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis resonate as an echo or a haunting of the past. Rather than view these plays as having been written with a sense of nostalgia for the colonial past, haunted elements in the text echo a past heritage that directly connects with a present, individual identity. The notion of theatrical haunting is one that has been carefully articulated in Marvin Carlson’s The Haunted Stage. Carlson describes how audiences familiar with a text or previous production view and review new performances based on memory and past experience. He describes this process as a haunting, and
suggests that memory, like a ghost, haunts revisions of texts and revivals of plays. Carlson also emphasizes that haunting involves the recycling of material in that it “encourages audiences to compare varying versions of the same story, leading them to pay closer attention to how the story is told and less to the story itself” (27). When applied to the adaptations by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, the concept of haunting draws attention to how each story is told and how this might inform an understanding of Latina/o identity. In some cases, an audience may recall an echo of a particular character trait or a line of dialogue and mentally reposition those elements within a present context. In other cases, the haunting of a subject or theme surfaces in the audience’s mind to revise a past conception or reference to identity. In either situation, the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis establish a connection between contemporary Latina/o theatre in the United States and Spanish Golden Age comedia as an echo or haunting, and may be read to show that theatrical haunting connects with the idea of “wrighting” back to Spain by functioning to revise and culturally reposition an audience’s memory.

ASSIMILATION AND LATINA/O IDENTITY

In order to understand how Cruz, Rivera, and Solis make the Spanish Golden Age past relevant to the present, and how productions of their versions of La vida es sueño haunt our United States imaginary, we must first understand the relationship of their works to the longstanding pressures on Latina/os to assimilate into mainstream United States culture and society. Published in 1964, Milton M. Gordon’s Assimilation in American Life coalesced research on the nature of assimilation and compared definitions for the terms assimilation and acculturation. According to his analysis, these terms had come to represent similar ideas, and although Gordon recognized the importance of
cultural behavior and social relationships in delineating between the two concepts, he ultimately determined that acculturation was merely a type of cultural assimilation (77).

Sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee, in *Remaking the American Mainstream*, distinguish between older conceptions of assimilation, acculturation, and more contemporary notions of assimilation in order to imagine, construct, and clarify Latina/o identities. Assimilation was once seen as an inevitable process of incorporation into American society, where the normative standard by which other groups were assessed and toward which they should aspire, was white middle-class Protestant culture (Alba and Nee 3-4). Drawing from a variety of sources, Alba and Nee compiled research that argues for the reversal of previously held standards that are both limiting and obsolete.

The founders of the Chicago School of sociology’s definition of assimilation envisioned a diverse mainstream society, viewed as a composite culture, or a mixed, hybrid ensemble of cultural practices, evolving out of the interpenetration of diverse cultural practices and beliefs, in which people of different ethnic/racial origins sustain a common national existence (Alba and Nee 10). Given that ethnicity is essentially a social boundary, embedded in a variety of social and cultural differences between groups, and that assimilation involves changes within groups on both sides of the boundary, Alba and Nee define assimilation as “the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences” (11). This idea encourages a view of society and cultures in which ethnicity is preserved, and individuals develop a reciprocal relationship with the dominant culture. An individual’s ethnic origins become less and less relevant, in relation to the members of another ethnic group, as individuals on both sides of the boundary see themselves as more and more alike (11). As individual social and cultural
groups begin to view ethnic origins as less and less relevant as markers of identity, new questions emerge concerning the nature of identity, representation, and acculturation.

Alba and Nee utilized Milton M. Gordon’s research to determine that acculturation can result from processes of group convergence, but “need not be limited to the substitution of one cultural element for its equivalent, whether the replacement comes from the majority or minority cultures” (25). My primary interest in these theories concerns how characters from the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis represent aspects of assimilation or acculturation, and how the plays themselves, to varying degrees, serve to either encourage or resist assimilation to dominant United States culture. In the work of some of these playwrights, the United States today has assumed the role of the colonizer, or more specifically, the source of cultural and political hegemony.

Assimilation theory helps us better understand the differences in the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis. Whereas Cruz’s work contributes to a process of assimilation, Rivera’s play resists or rebels against assimilation, and Solis’s play works to create an alternative, transcultural identity. An understanding of this identity, or identities, requires research involving contemporary means of constructing and interpreting notions of Latinidad and ethnic labeling. In Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives, Suzanne Oboler describes how ethnic labels, such as Latino or Hispanic, create a homogenized sense of identity that may stigmatize a group from the dominant ideology, or be used to forge a sense of unity, or Latinismo. The term Hispanic ignores, confuses, or obscures, the distinct and diverse experiences of a marginalized population. Oboler exposes the historical specificity of individual populations within the Latino label, recognizes the importance of geopolitical factors in the Americas, and acknowledges the particular historical and economic
conjuncture during which various groups of Latinos entered the United States – whether by conquest, colonization, or immigration (7). Oboler’s insistence on historicizing identities helps to provide perspective on how dramatists, such as Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, construct identity. Oboler suggests that identity should not be measured by ideological assumptions or beliefs of superiority, but rather by birthplace or self-definition (40). Whereas Cruz affirms his identity by seeking to assimilate and establish a connection between Spain and the United States, Rivera highlights uniqueness or difference from Spain as a Puerto Rican. Although Mexico was, like all of Spanish-speaking Latin America, colonized by Spain, the situation with Solis is particularly interesting because Mexico is not an island, like Cuba or Puerto Rico, but rather a neighboring land that lost a large portion of its territory to the United States. Along with the fact that Solis is the only playwright in my dissertation that was born in the United States, his play reflects the experience of contemporary U.S. Latina/os. Cruz, Rivera, and Solis each contribute a unique experience with the politics of representing Latina/o culture. This requires individual analyses of the ways in which each chooses to assume, resist, or transform various ethnic labels.

In many cases, the politics of representing Latina/o culture and Latinidad involves labeling that is based more on presumptions connected with regional or community identities than on ethnic markers. The issue of tropicalization reveals how notions of otherness manifest and spread, both from outside and from within Latina/o communities, to create complexity when dealing with identity construction. Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad, edited by Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman, considers tropicalization as a “mythic idea of Latinidad based on
Anglo (or dominant) projections of fear” that is “intricately connected to the history of political, economic, and ideological agendas of governments and of social institutions” (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 8). The plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis each involve characters that fear the exotic, wild, and mysterious nature of Segismundo/Lazaro, and characters that question their identity, such as Segismundo/Lazaro or Rosaura/Blanca. However, all three playwrights resist tropicalizing characters, including but not limited to Segismundo/Lazaro, in their plays. In this way, all three combat the imperialism and hegemony of United States culture. Whereas Cruz’s Life is a Dream resists the reproduction of Cuban tropicalization, Rivera’s Sueño subverts negative stereotypes, and Solis’s Dreamlandia rewrites Latina/o identity through the act of parody. The irony is that Cruz, Rivera, and Solis all utilize Calderón as a source of identity, and transform La vida es sueño, a product of imperial Spain, into a tool for resisting U.S. colonization and cultural hegemony.

Aparicio goes on to note that the discourse of exceptionalism that emerges from the three historically major Latina/o groups – the Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American – constitutes a strong obstacle that has served to oppose comparative work (624). Following Aparicio, I agree that in order to surmount resistance to the idea of a shared experience, it is necessary to compare the work by playwrights from three different countries. My readings consider the umbrella of Latinidad, attempt to provide three distinct and separate frameworks, and investigate how intra/trans Latino studies inform an analysis of the work by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis. Aparicio sees literature as the means to re-imagine Latino identity and serve as an essential discourse that helps to explore the larger intra-Latino spaces in U.S. society (627). Just as Chicana/o writers
may serve as conduits to redefining Cuban-American or Puerto Rican ethnicity, so too might playwrights who rework Spanish Golden Age literature serve as a conduit through which an intra-Latino identity may be socially constructed. This idea of an intra-Latina/o identity may also be used to analyze productions of the plays by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis, and to discuss their impact within the larger context of Latina/o culture.

Although an intra-Latina/o identity may be socially constructed through various conduits, it is also important to consider how Latina/o identity may be conceptualized as a kind of resistance to what has been called “internal colonization.” The theory of internal colonialism provides an alternative means for describing the development of Latina/o identity by suggesting that some Latina/os are specifically invested in a process that resists cultural assimilation. In his article, “Qué Assimilated, Brother, Yo Soy Asimilao: The Structuring of Puerto Rican Identity in the U.S.” from Challenging Fronteras: Structuring Latina and Latino Lives in the U.S., Juan Flores argues that minority groups form a sense of identity in its relation to, and self-differentiation from, the dominant Anglo culture (177). Flores suggests that the current cultural process is not only headed away from assimilation, but that resisting assimilation involves a personal, individual articulation of identity. He continues, “any instance of cultural expression by Latinos themselves may serve as a healthy corrective to the ceaseless barrage of stereotypes that go to define what is ‘Latino’ in the public mind” (185). In addition to correcting social stereotypes, Flores also suggests in his article, “The Latino Imaginary: Dimensions of Community and Identity” that resisting assimilation encourages a positive, empowered image of Latino identity: “Latino identity is imagined not as the negation of

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18 For more on internal colonialism see John R. Chávez.
the non-Latino, but as the affirmation of cultural and social realities and possibilities inscribed in their own human trajectory” (190). He goes on to describe identity construction as a process of imagination, rather than the result of assimilation. According to Flores: “The search for a name, more than an act of classification, is actually a process of social imagination. And in that sense the search for Latino identity and community, the ongoing creation of a Latino imaginary, is also a search for a new map, a new ethos, a new America” (191). Flores’s sentiment about discovering a new America resonates with each of the playwrights in this analysis, and specifically connects with references in Rivera’s play to the New World by drawing a correlation between a new perception for Latina/o identity, and a physical place, the New World, where this idea is manifested.

Latinas facilitate a process of imagining this new America or New World through written work, staged performances, and other forms of expression or discourse. In her article, “Remapping Latinidad,” Karma R. Chávez discusses how the practice of telling stories helps to conceptualize the unities and divergences within Latina/o identities, and enables the mapping of a variety of spaces, including, but not limited to, urban, coastal, or border spaces, in order to contextualize how identity is performed (178-79). Chávez’s analysis connects the practice of storytelling with issues of assimilation, and serves as a model to analyze how Solis’s Dreamlandia contextualizes identity on and around the Mexico/United States border. Chávez provides a case study that shows how Latina identity is constructed, and relates this to an understanding of space to show the importance of considering where a person grows up, moves, and makes connections with others in different Latina/o communities. Chávez states that space is always a process, where new relationships and juxtapositions are possible, and the dis-identification
practices enabled by one space can in fact become part of another (179). Her work emphasizes how space both influences the formation of identity as well as how we perform our own identities. Within the context of the United States, Latina/os negotiate their identity as Americans as well as people with a heritage from another country.

The formation and performance of this complex identity often requires Latina/os to reevaluate what it means to be an American, as well as question the validity of stories and information concerning Latina/o heritage. In “Remembering Selena, Re-membering Latinidad,” Paredez explores the Selena tragedy as a means through which Latina/os strive to re-configure traditional notions of American identity (73). Paredez examines how Selena is situated within American culture and as a phenomenon of Mexican culture outside the US border, and reveals how theatrical narratives influence the construction of Latina/o identity. In Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory, Paredez also writes about an exhibit at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s voyage to the Americas by reconstructing life-size replicas of the Santa Maria and the Pinta. Because Corpus Christi did not emerge as a city under Spanish colonial rule, attempts to promote tourism have imagined the city’s past as a romantic exaltation of Spanish exploration that strategically ignores the history of working-class Tejanos living in the city (Paredez 69). From Paredez’s writing, it appears that the exhibition imposes a celebration of colonization on U.S. Latina/os, but it is unclear if it is the desire of city planners or of Latina/os themselves to romanticize their supposedly glorious Spanish past. In reality, Spaniards did not settle in Corpus Christi until the middle of the eighteenth century, and Columbus never traveled anywhere near Corpus Christi, but an accurate representation
would unmask an Anglo history of violence and segregation toward working-class Tejanos (Paredes 70-72). Paredes critiques the celebration of a false glorious past, a celebration that in fact covers up colonialism. The work of Chavez and Paredes provide examples of how theatrical narratives that include storytelling, tragedy, and exhibition propagate Latina/o identity. As written and staged theatrical narratives, the adaptations by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis solidify unique and individual *Latinidades* that are inextricably bound with the Spanish Golden Age.
Chapter 2 – Nilo Cruz & Assimilation as Process, Product, and Identity

Nilo Cruz is perhaps the most recognized living Latino playwright. As the first Latino to win the Pulitzer Prize for drama with *Anna in the Tropics* in 2003, Cruz’s trajectory demonstrates the potential for Latina/os to build a reputation in the arts, and exemplifies the fulfillment of the American Dream. Cruz was born in Matanzas, Cuba, and immigrated to Miami with his mother in 1970, during a time when the United States offered residence to Cuban exiles escaping social and political turmoil. As an adult, Cruz studied theatre at Miami-Dade Community College, and after meeting Maria Irene Fornes, he moved to New York City where he joined Fornes’s Hispanic Playwrights Laboratory workshop at International Arts Relations (INTAR), one of the United States’ longest running Latino theatres producing work in English.¹⁹ During this time, Cruz was introduced to Paula Vogel, who was teaching at Brown University. Cruz earned an MFA from Brown University in 1994, and later taught playwriting at Brown University, the University of Iowa, and Yale University. Along with *Anna in the Tropics*, some of Cruz’s most important plays include *Night Train to Bolina* (1995), *Two Sisters and a Piano* (1998), *A Bicycle Country* (1999), *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* (2001), *Lorca in a Green Dress* (2003), *Beauty of the Father* (2006), and *The Color of Desire* (2010). Cruz also completed two translations of plays by Federico García Lorca, and in 2008 he published *Life is a Dream*, a translation of Calderón’s play *La vida es sueño*.

¹⁹ This information comes from the Encyclopedia of World Biography, [http://www.notablebiographies.com](http://www.notablebiographies.com).
In Cruz’s version of Calderón’s text, there are two main plot lines. The first plot focuses on the actions involved with the prince Segismundo, who was placed in prison when his father, the king Basilio, learned of a prophecy that his son would grow up and become an evil, tyrannical ruler. Believing in fate, Basilio placed his son in a prison cell within a tower cave. The second plot focuses on Rosaura, a noblewoman seeking revenge on Astolfo, a nobleman who took advantage of her, and thus stole her honor.

The play begins when Rosaura, disguised as a man and accompanied by her comedic servant Clarín, accidentally discovers Segismundo while traveling through Poland in search of Astolfo. Once inside the secret prison cave, Rosaura and Clarín speak with Segismundo, but are soon arrested by Clotaldo, a loyal servant to king Basilio assigned to guard Segismundo and teach him while in prison. We learn that Clotaldo is actually Rosaura’s father, but due to Rosaura’s disguise, Clotaldo is uncertain of her true identity. Clotaldo takes Rosaura and Clarín to the castle, where in order to test the prophecy Basilio has decided to restore Segismundo to his rightful place as the prince.

Segismundo is drugged, brought to the castle, and dressed in princely clothes so that when he wakes up he will believe his time in prison was all a dream. When Clotaldo explains the truth of the prophecy to Segismundo, he reacts with violence. Disappointed, Basilio believes that fate is greater than free will, and has his son drugged again to be returned to the prison cave and told that his time in the castle was actually a dream.

In the meantime, Rosaura, now a member of the Polish court, has changed into women’s clothes, but disguises her identity by using the name Andrea. She encounters Astolfo, who is trying to marry his cousin Estrella. Estrella is jealous because Astolfo still wears a locket around his neck with Rosaura’s picture inside. Estrella asks Andrea
(Rosaura) to retrieve the locket, which leads to a confrontation between Rosaura and Astolfo, who instantly recognizes her. The scene shifts back to the tower cave, where Segismundo awakes confused, but now believing that all of his life is a dream. Rebel soldiers who want their true prince restored to the throne rescue Segismundo and make him the leader of an army mobilized to fight Basilio. Rosaura appears and rides out to join Segismundo in the fight against Basilio. The battle rages and the king’s forces are defeated. In the end, Segismundo is victorious. He spares his father’s life, forces Astolfo to marry Rosaura, in order to restore her honor, and agrees himself to marry Estrella and rule Poland as a just and noble king. In versions by both Calderón and Cruz, the story ends with order restored and a sense of hope for the future.

In a theatre review by Richard Zoglin for *Time* magazine, Cruz was quoted saying that he felt the characters in his play *Anna in the Tropics* are “residents of the universe” (1). The same concept might also apply to characters in *Life is a Dream*. In addition to possessing qualities shared by people throughout the world, characters such as Rosaura, Segismundo, and Clarín communicate a timeless story. According to Rossini’s analysis of Cruz’s work on *Anna in the Tropics*, “Difference is valued in a way that makes it safely consumable by mainstream audience members, allowing them a safe visit to the exotic and an unquestioned assumption of cultural understanding instead of an experience that forces them to reevaluate the very terms through which they engage with the world” (16). Given this view, it is possible to conceive of Cruz’s work following *Anna in the Tropics* as a re-evaluation of how U.S. Latina/os engage with the world, both past and present. I argue that Cruz establishes a connection between the Spanish Golden Age and contemporary U.S. Latina/o culture by wrighting back to Spain from the position of an
assimilated U.S. Latino, by adapting Calderón in a way that reflects a process of assimilation, and by creating a product of assimilation.

Cruz does not engage in a process of wrighting ethnicity as described by Rossini, but instead wrights back to Spain from the perspective of a playwright who has assimilated both U.S. and Latina/o cultures. Because Cruz writes from the position of a bicultural U.S. Latino specifically for a contemporary, multi-cultural, and English-speaking audience, his work reveals the limitations of existing theories of colonization. Cruz’s work communicates with the past by restoring, rather than by correcting or revising, the relationship with imperial Spanish culture. It is important to stress that Cruz’s text is written entirely in American English for Anglo audiences in the United States. This all-English adaptation makes the play more accessible to English-only audiences, which would tend to enhance Cruz’s prominence among non-Latino audiences as well as further his assimilation to culture and values of the American mainstream. As defined by Alba and Nee, assimilation is “the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences” (11). Reading Cruz’s work through the lens of Alba and Nee’s definition of assimilation helps bring into focus how in this adaptation, Cruz subsumes his Cuban ethnicity into American culture, yet also inhibits any outward or perceptible distinctions of ethnicity by making changes to the source text that do not directly signal a distinctly Latino or Cuban-American culture. Cruz also adapts using a process of negotiation that mirrors the act of assimilation. Comparisons between Calderón’s text and Cruz’s play reveal that although there are enough alterations to suggest that his work is more of an adaptation than a translation, the storyline is relatively similar. The adherence to Calderón’s storyline raises questions as to whether cultural
markers of Latina/o identity are implied or hidden within the text, and how this play
relates to the Spanish Golden Age.

With these questions in mind, analysis of Cruz’s play reveals a dynamic, yet
complicated, engagement between U.S. Latina/o and Spanish Golden Age culture. By
translating and adapting Calderón’s story, Cruz occupies a position of authority on the
nature of this engagement by portraying it as a positive relationship, or as a connection
between imperial Spain and contemporary Latinidad. According to Paredez, the term
Latinidad refers to a process of Latina/o identity making (xiii). From another
perspective, sociologist Teresa Carrillo writes:

What is Latinidad? Latinos are defined by a complex interplay of what we do,
how we perceive ourselves, and especially how others perceive us. Latinidad is
something that grows out of all these aspects of identity. Latinidad is our culture,
our language, our appearance, our work, our actions. Latinos do not solely define
Latinidad; it is a notion that takes shape around a myriad of practices, processes,
and perceptions – both Latino perceptions of ourselves and non-Latino
perceptions of Latinos. (195)

Cruz also creates the potential for an unmarked space that allows his adaptation to be
interpreted as Latina/o while also discouraging obvious reference to Latina/o identity.
Whereas certain references in Cruz’s play evoke a connection with Cuban culture, these
references are not explicit and may be interpreted differently to resist any association
with Cuba. Although it appears that Cruz incorporates conflicting strategies, his play
represents connection between the Spanish Golden Age and contemporary U.S. Latina/o
culture by contributing to the formation of an assimilated Latinidad.
WRIGHTING FROM THE POSITION OF AN ASSIMILATED IDENTITY

In order to consider how Cruz establishes a connection between the Spanish Golden Age and contemporary U.S. Latina/o culture it is necessary to analyze how he is able to wright back to Spain from the position of an assimilated U.S. Latino. This requires an understanding of the function of Latina/o assimilation within the United States, as well as an investigation of theories that explain individual Latina/o assimilation experiences. Due to the fact that U.S. Latina/os experience varying degrees of, and often resistance to, assimilation with the dominant Anglo culture, Kevin R. Johnson, a Latino law professor, questions if full assimilation is possible, or even desirable, for Latina/os, and suggests that a “ring of fire” metaphor should replace the more traditional “melting pot” metaphor for the assimilation process. Johnson explains:

Survival is possible if one remains near the middle of the figurative ring. The fire is hot and even those fortunate enough to avoid touching it and survive are hurt. All Latinos in the United States, even those who successfully navigate their way through the flames, are scarred. Many are not so lucky, however, but suffer immense pain, perhaps even self-destruction, as they get too close, or even touch the ring and are burned, sometimes beyond recognition. (191)

Johnson’s metaphor equates full assimilation with a painful destruction of identity, rather than a mutually beneficial or reciprocal process of identity construction. He uses the term “survival” to suggest that resisting assimilation is a matter of life and death. Such an extreme view implies that some U.S. Latina/os experience significant tension between their cultural heritage and U.S. identity: “Tension exists because some immigrants resist complete assimilation; moreover, racial and other differences prevent full acceptance by
dominant society of some minority groups” (192). Johnson balances this argument by pointing out that some Latina/os find it easier than others to assimilate into the Anglo mainstream (205). These observations may be used to imagine a spectrum along which Latina/os experience shifting degrees of acceptance or resistance towards assimilation, where individuals conceive of their own identity by either adapting or remaining fixed in their views. In addition, Johnson proposes that Latina/os of mixed heritage, like himself, face alienation from the Latina/o community: “Because being rejected by Latinos does not necessarily mean full acceptance by Anglos, such persons may feel as if they do not belong fully in either the Anglo or Latino worlds” (207). The extent of contrasting experiences among U.S. Latina/os, along with the threat of alienation and rejection, present a reality that requires more sophisticated means for understanding differences regarding Latina/o identity. Latinidad helps to explain these differences in experience among Latina/os.

In Chapter One, I briefly defined Latinidad as a concept used to describe a shared, common identity among Latin-American groups, or as a means of claiming Latina/o identity. This definition, however, is still too general for my purposes, and I expand upon it here in order to engage with a variety of more specific definitions. According to Rivera-Servera, Latinidad is an identity-in-process: it is through acts such as performances that it becomes an approachable, although fluid, position (25-26). Considered from an alternative perspective, “Latinidad suggests a process through which contested constructions of identity work to constitute one another, emphasizing ‘and’ over ‘is’ as a way to think about differences” (Rodriguez 22). All of these views complement one another and focus on the fact that Latinidad involves a process as well
as a specific product. Paredez makes this point succinctly: “Understood as a hegemonic category of capital, a political constituency, an affective mode, a performative process, or a necessary and momentary cultural fiction, *Latinidad* functions in multiple locations for frequently divergent ideological goals” (24). Just as there are many varied Latina/o lives and experiences, there are also multiple ways of understanding, interpreting, and defining *Latinidad*. Caminero-Santangelo suggests the possibility of imagining multiple *Latinidades* that reach across national-origin lines but need not account in some comprehensive way for all Latinos and Latinas. Multiple *Latinidades* seems more accurate than the concept of a single, monolithic *Latinidad* that must continually make a case for overarching commonalities among all the groups – a case which inevitably fails (215). This notion of multiple *Latinidades* recognizes the impossibility of a single, unified Latina/o identity.

Together with the Venn diagram described above, the theory of multiple *Latinidades* helps to visually represent a connection between the Spanish Golden Age and the different, individual assimilation experiences among U.S. Latina/os. In this diagram, the contemporary United States, imperial Spain, and *Latinidad* each occupy a space that overlaps with one another, while *Latinidad* is shown to be both independent of and influenced by contemporary U.S. and imperial Spanish cultural hegemony.

Examples from Cruz’s play support this model by showing how a varied and complex U.S. Latina/o identity is built from connections between Spanish heritage and *Latinidad*. For example, when Segismundo wakes up in the palace, having been taken from his prison cave, he encounters Clarín and says, “Of all the people in this new world, you’re the one I like the best” (28). It is interesting that he uses the term “new world” to refer to
Basilio’s palace, located in a non-specific setting. Calderón’s text reads, “Tú solo en tan nuevos mundos / me has agradado” (646). The Spanish text mentions new worlds, which is not the same as “The New World” of the American continents, but does suggest a new context. On one hand, Cruz’s work may be seen as respecting the original meaning with Calderón’s play. On the other hand, the implication of referring to the non-specific setting as a “new world” opens up the possibility that this new world could refer to the experience of Cuban, or Latina/o, immigrants encountering the United States for the first time. Instead of a linear connection between Cruz’s work and the Spanish Golden Age, this simple translated phrase reinforces a relationship between Spanish Golden Age culture, contemporary United States culture, and Latina/o culture as an interconnected bond. This connection may also be seen in how various changes in pace, action, dialogue, and character balance a respect for Spanish Golden Age culture with attempts to relate to a contemporary audience. In doing so, Cruz establishes a relationship between imperial Spanish and contemporary U.S. Latina/o cultures.

The Venn diagram provides a visual model to describe how individual Latina/os might relate Spanish Golden Age drama within a contemporary context, or connect Latina/o identity with imperial Spanish heritage, but further explanation is necessary to describe how Cruz writes from the position of an assimilated U.S. Latino. In addition to considering a wider scope that incorporates a connection between imperial Spain, the contemporary United States, and Latinidad, the idea of “writing back,” taken from Ashcroft’s The Empire Writes Back, may be used to explain a process whereby adaptations of Spanish Golden Age plays by Latina/os in the United States are viewed as
individual acts of writing back to Spain. The idea that an adapted written text communicates with a past culture by writing back coalesces with Jon Rossini’s work on Latina/o ethnicity in order to explain how Latina/os write back to Spain. As mentioned in the first chapter, Rossini coins the term “wrighting,” to describe how a playwright creates through the act of writing and righting (10). Rossini explains that wrighting involves political and cultural positioning enacted by the process of “righting” – correction, orientation, and revision – contained within written works; wrighting is thus “a simultaneous process of correction, revision, and cultural repositioning in the act of creating a new conceptual framework” (10). By synthesizing Ashcroft’s idea of writing back with Rossini’s idea of wrighting, it is possible to conceive of a process whereby Spanish Golden Age plays adapted by Latino playwrights, such as Cruz, may be viewed as “wrighting” back to Spain. Although many adapted texts do indeed involve a process of correcting, revising, and culturally repositioning Latina/o identity, Cruz’s play does not specifically correct or revise the imperial Spanish or U.S. Latina/o culture. Instead of revising a sense of the colonial relationship between Spain and the Creole/Mestizo ancestors of U.S. Latina/os, Cruz’s adaptation communicates with the past by creating a new relationship between contemporary Latina/os and the Spanish Golden Age.

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20 Most theoretical writing on post-colonial literature focuses on cultures affected by imperialism from the United Kingdom, rather than Spain. Ashcroft’s On Post-Colonial Futures recognizes complaints that his previous work in The Empire Writes Back ignores discussion of Latin American literature, and admits that Latin America fundamentally changes our view of the post-colonial with its demonstration of a post-colonial future (26). Ashcroft then reiterates an argument from The Empire Writes Back: “the antiquity and character of colonization in Latin America, the longstanding reality of its hybridized cultures, the “continental” sense of difference which stems from a shared colonial language, the intermittent emergence of contestatory movements in cultural production – all radically widen the scope of post-colonial theory (202).
Even though Cruz does not engage in the process of wrighting exactly as described by Rossini, Cruz’s position as an assimilated U.S. Latino makes it possible to consider the extent that a present-day connection between imperial Spain and contemporary Latinidad problematizes theories of colonization, while promoting expressions of assimilated Latina/o identity for a U.S. audience. John R. Chávez suggests, “Internal colonialism derived from earlier and even broader theories attempting to explain territorial expansion and ethnic conflict. According to these, colonialism (often conflated with imperialism) was the process through which many, if not most, people confronted each other around the world. Through this process, colonial theorists argue, one people for its own benefit dominates another, usually including the latter’s land” (787). I argue that Cruz’s play actually works against internal colonialism, not as an apology for colonialism, but as a form of mediation to mitigate tension or conflict.21 This is apparently due to the fact that adapted changes in Cruz’s text do not support a model where one culture dominates over or excludes another culture. Instead of

21 It is important to acknowledge that Cruz restores a relationship between the American continent and the Iberian peninsula, but he restores it through a far different population than the one the Spaniards conquered and kept under dominion from the 1500s until the late 1800s, in the case of Cuba. The descendants of those colonized Cubans, who were also in a sense colonized by U.S. imperialism, can look to Spain in order to mitigate tension or conflict, and replace this tension with a new, alternative conception of identity. Jill Lane cites José Martí’s famous 1891 essay “Nuestra América” (Our America) in Blackface Cuba, 1840-1895 to argue that the idea of an indigenous mestizo “both incorporates and elides the history of colonial violence that made mestizaje a reality: the ‘mestizo autóctono’ is a false, but necessary, originary figure for a productive nationalism in what Martí famously called ‘nuestra América mestiza’ or ‘our mestizo America’” (5). In the same way that Martí creates a new image or idea for Cuban identity, so too does Cruz. His adaptation forges a new relationship between Cuban-Americans and Spain through a process, and as a product of, assimilation.
referencing a specific cultural imaginary, references in Cruz’s play are ambiguous, open to interpretation, and designed to resonate with a contemporary, multi-cultural audience.

In Cruz’s adaptation, although the adaptive changes are subtle and do not directly correct or revise expressions of Latina/o identity, contemporary audiences could interpret actions and dialogue for many characters as either Spanish or Latina/o. For example, Cruz shapes Segismundo such that some readers or audiences may interpret the character as a figure for Latina/os oppressed by a Spanish fatherland, yet without necessarily altering the fundamental characterization of Segismundo as written by Calderón. Whereas it is possible to read Cruz’s Segismundo as more rational or decisive than Calderón’s Segismundo, Cruz does not specify that his character is Latino. When Segismundo wakes up back in the prison cave, he questions his reality saying, “God help me! / All the things I dreamt!” (Cruz 42). He quickly makes up his mind that it must have all been a dream. In translations closely aligned with Calderón’s text, Segismundo questions if it is time to wake up, but Cruz has him say decisively, “It’s time to wake up.” Segismundo knows he is now awake and it is an appropriate time to be awake, having dreamt that the horrible things towards his father in his actual dream, and the reality of being in the castle that he now thinks was also part of the dream. However, once Clotaldo enters and tries to deceive him by saying that he fell asleep while being told a story about an eagle, Segismundo ponders if he is still dreaming. In fact, he guesses that he probably is dreaming. His rationale is that the “dream” of being in the castle was as real to him now that he is awake as actually being awake seems to be real. He is, for all practical purposes, using logic to confuse himself about the difference between illusion and reality, between waking life and a dream. It may seem that Cruz corrects or revises
Segismundo as a rational, decisive Latino that has suffered hegemonic oppression, but the specific changes to do not specifically reference Latinidad.

Cruz also adapts Segismundo as a patient and self-disciplined man. In the moment when Clotaldo presents himself to Segismundo to be killed, having been defeated in battle, Cruz writes stage directions for Segismundo to pause and contain himself before pardoning Clotaldo. In the Rick Davis translation, there is an aside in which Segismundo talks out loud to himself, at first calling Clotaldo a traitor, and then stating that he must control himself. Whereas Davis writes a crazy, or even schizophrenic Segismundo, Cruz writes a Segismundo that already shows self-control. In Calderón’s text Segismundo says, “¡Villano, / traidor, ingrato! (Aparte.) Mas, ¡cielos! / el reportarme conviene, / que aun no sé si estoy despierto” (675). Racz’s translation is similar, but does not include the stage direction for an aside. His translation reads, “Oh, traitor! Vile, / Ungrateful wretch! Almighty God! / Some self-command might serve me well / Until it’s certain that I wake” (89). Compared with Calderón, Cruz alters Segismundo by giving him greater decisiveness. This may lead some readers or audiences to view the character as more sympathetic, while others may view Segismundo as a disenfranchised, politically manipulated character incapable of growth and self-empowerment. Cruz does not correct or revise Latina/o identity by adapting the characterization of Segismundo. Instead, the adaptive changes in his writing allow for contemporary, multi-cultural spectators to draw parallels between themselves and Spanish Golden Age characters such as Segismundo. Such a perspective suggests that

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22 This translation comes from a collection of plays, published in 2008, entitled *Four Great Plays of the Golden Age*. His version changes the title to *Life’s a Dream*. 

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Cruz first assimilated his identity as a Latino in the United States, and then, from that position, adapted Calderón’s text.

Despite the fact that Cruz does not mention anything about Latina/os or comment on *Latinidad*, he transforms the relationship between the Spanish Golden Age and U.S. Latina/os. According to Ashcroft, individuals can effect a transformation in the local effects of the world system by taking control of the discursive tools of the dominant powers (31). As a Latino, and as a U.S. citizen, Cruz may be read as engaging with imperial Spanish culture using the tool of American theatre to transform the relationship between U.S. Latina/os and imperial Spain, as well as conceptions of *Latinidad* itself. Ashcroft goes on to point out, “A persistent argument of ethnocentric resistance is that to speak in the colonizer’s language is to remain colonized, but an equally persistent argument of post-colonial writers is that the language may be appropriated for the writer’s own purposes” (33). In the case of *Life is a Dream*, Cruz does not write using Castilian Spanish, but he also does not incorporate Cuban Spanish into his play. In many other English translations, there is a moment late in the play when soldiers rescue Segismundo from his prison cave and shout, “Viva Segismundo!” Cruz adapts this phrase as “Long live Segismundo” (49). When presented with an opportunity to include a Spanish word like “viva,” an expression commonly understood in the United States, Cruz selects an English word, thus creating an Anglicized version of Calderón’s text. Considering that the United States did not colonize Cuba, though it was an imperialist power in Cuba during the 1950s, along with the fact that Cruz chose to adapt for a U.S. Anglo audience, indicates assimilation with U.S. Anglo culture, I argue that Cruz’s
decision to write entirely in English in this work helps to forge a bicultural identity that neither proclaims its resistance to U.S. imperialism nor to Spanish colonialism.

As a Cuban-American, Cruz writes from a dual perspective as both a U.S. citizen and as a Latino minority. Many of his plays do indeed focus on the Cuban-American experience, but the lack of direct references to Cuba in *Life is a Dream* may be used to argue that Cruz positions himself at a distance from Cuba.\(^{23}\) Readers and audiences familiar with Cruz’s body of work may interpret moments as allusions to Cuba or Cuban culture. As a bicultural playwright, Cruz is able to embrace both perspectives. According to literary scholar Silvia Spitta, “The doubleness of the Cuban-American is lived both as nostalgia for wholeness, closure, singularity, and the celebration of doubleness, multiplicity, and homelessness” (173). Cruz’s adaptation exemplifies a sense of doubleness or multiplicity in that it borrows from Spain while remaining open to interpretation. Cruz’s play thus resists identification as Cuban or Latino, while at the same time allowing readers and audiences to identify, connect, and relate elements within the text as Spanish, American, or Latina/o, and thus create a relationship between the Spanish Golden Age and U.S. Latina/os.

**TRANSLATION OR ADAPTATION?**

In order to understand how Cruz’s play connects with the Spanish Golden Age, it is necessary to consider *Life is a Dream* as an American English translation of an

\(^{23}\) In an online interview found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgvWASjS1Dc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgvWASjS1Dc) Cruz explained that *The Color of Desire* might be his last play with Cuban themes. Cruz stated, “I don’t want to be repeating myself, even though that Cuba has enough material to write thousands of plays. I want to investigate other countries. I want to investigate the Latino experience here in the United States.” His comments in this interview with Christine Dolen help to show that *Life is a Dream* is a departure from his previous body of work.
imperial Spanish play, written for audiences in the United States. In addition, examining the difference between translations and adaptations, investigating the visibility of the translator, and exploring decisions to either focus on the source text while translating, or consider what might appeal to a target audience, collectively help to define Cruz’s *Life is a Dream* as an adaptation, and suggest that the process of adapting reflects the process of assimilation. Nearly a dozen different playwrights have translated *La vida es sueño* in the last two decades. Along with varying strategies and techniques for rendering the Spanish text into English, these playwrights each translate with diverse goals in mind. In the course of my analysis, I consulted and read numerous versions of Calderón’s classic play. Although translations by Roy Campbell (1959), Adrian Mitchell and John Barton (1990), Edwin Honig (1996), and Rick Davis (2008) were helpful during my initial research, I decided to focus my analysis using Gregary Racz’s 2006 translation *Life is a Dream* in comparison with Calderón’s Spanish text of *La vida es sueño*, edited by José Martel (1985). While Calderón’s text provides a means to compare Cruz’s play with the Spanish source, the Racz translation serves to highlight moments where Cruz’s play departs from Calderón’s drama. Although Racz’s play was published two years before Cruz’s play, therefore representing a contemporary point of view, unlike Cruz, Racz follows a more rigid pattern of translating word-for-word and sets his play in an identifiable location. Following Calderón, Racz sets his translation in Poland, and has Rosaura and Astolfo arrive from Moscow. Despite the fact that he changes the

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characters’ names to Segismund, Astolf, Clarion, Stella, and Basil, Racz pays careful attention to details, such as Calderón’s mention of the hippogriff, which Cruz elects to cut from his text, and focuses on recreating or imitating Calderón’s sense of poetry, rhythm, and meaning. The Spanish-language text edited by Martel was chosen due to its accessibility, informative introduction and footnotes, its extensive use as a primary text in collegiate Spanish instruction, and the fact that an original copy of Calderón’s play is not readily obtainable\textsuperscript{25} (ix).

The majority of information gained from textual comparison supports the idea that Cruz’s play departs from what might be called a more faithful translation. However, this alone is not sufficient to argue that his play may be classified as an adaptation. Other evidence suggests that the play is indeed a translation. The title page by Dramatists Play Service, Inc. reads, “Life is a Dream by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, translated and adapted by Nilo Cruz.” Even though this title defines the play as both a translation and an adaptation, the fact that the publisher views this as an adapted text is significant. The difficulty in identifying Cruz’s play as a translation or an adaptation is due to the fact that any changes made to a text may be used to argue for either definition. When considering the extent that a work may be adapted and still be referred to as a translation, some may believe that any text that alters the reader’s ability to recognize the source culture is considered an adaptation, while others may argue that the impossibility of a truly literal

\textsuperscript{25} In preparing the second edition of the text used for comparison, José Martel and Hymen Alpern consulted the texts edited by J.E. Hartzenbusch (Madrid, 1848), M.Krenkel (Leipzig, 1881), A. Kressner (Leipzig, 1886), N. MacColl (London, 1888), Morère (Paris, 1897), W.W. Comfort (New York, 1904), F. Pinochet Le-Brun (Santiago de Chile, 1911), G.T. Northup (New York, 1926), and particularly E. González-Blanco (Buenos Aires, n.d.) (ix).
translation is justification for radical textual changes. It is important to realize that these are the imagined extremes, or possible sides that one might argue. When deciding on a definition for a single text, there are valid arguments for both sides. Likewise, in a changing world, the text must also change in order to live, especially if it is meant as a performance text.  

Utilizing Lefevere’s concept of grid alignment, further textual comparison suggests that specific cuts and word choice may constitute discrepancies in textual grid alignment, while changes in the tone, interpretation of thematic elements, and modifications that alter the role or function of characters within the story may be discussed as discrepancies in aesthetic, personal, or socio-political grid alignment. I analyze these multiple discrepancies in grid alignment in order to conclusively define Cruz’s play as an adaptation. However, when compared with other adaptations, such as those by Rivera and Solis, Cruz’s play appears to have a greater frequency of conceptual and textual grid alignment. Although sufficient discrepancies may be found to argue that his play is an adaptation, the extent that Cruz’s play may be understood as an adaptation is a crucial first step to developing my argument that his process of adaptation utilizes an approach that is similar to the act of assimilation itself.

When a playwright engages in adaptation, the goal is not to create discrepancies with various textual, aesthetic, personal, and socio-political grids, but instead to create a

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26 As a script consultant for the Royal Shakespeare Company, theatre scholar Kathleen Mountjoy developed hands-on experience working with translated text for performance. In her article, “Literal and Performance Text” for The Spanish Golden Age in English, Mountjoy explains that if a translation is not very “literal,” it may still be a useful tool in the rehearsal room (77). Mountjoy argues, “in our search for a ‘faithful’ translation, the give-and-take required of translators and directors necessitates a collaborative environment where all parties are working towards a playable acting script” (87).
new text. The process of adapting will result in a text where discrepancies may be found, but not all adaptations are the same. Depending on the frequency or amount of discrepancies, some adaptations, such as Cruz’s play, retain more of the original or source text, and thus may be located on the grid alignment spectrum closer to a pure translation. The focus of translation is on rendering one language into another, whereas an adaptation, as defined by Hutcheon, involves (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation (8). As such, an adaptation is more likely to involve assimilation than a translation, despite the fact that both translation and adaptation require a negotiation between source and target cultures. Using the definition of assimilation from Alba and Nee, which describes a decline in ethnic distinction between two cultures, an adaptation may be shown to involve the decline in the distinction between the source culture and the target audience. When elements or moments in a text focus only on the target audience, or move in a direction towards the far end of the spectrum where few if any of the grids are in alignment, the adaptor merely appropriates by borrowing or re-contextualizing material for the purpose of creating a new work. An assimilated text necessitates sufficient discrepancies to be considered an adaptation. Therefore, moments where discrepancies occur in the text may be identified and described in order to argue that Cruz’s play is an adaptation as well as a product of assimilation, rather than a translation of Calderón or a more radical adaptation that appropriates the Spanish Golden Age for the purpose of creating an original story.

Comparisons with Racz’s translation in conjunction with Calderón’s Spanish text indicate that Cruz shifts textual and aesthetic grid alignment by altering sentence structure and word choice, along with shifting the role and function of certain characters.
For example, Cruz creates a contemplative Segismundo who questions if his authority is due to his nature, the fact that he has royal blood, or because he accepts the reality of his dream. Segismundo first experiences and recognizes a sense of entitlement when he says, “But why should I worry about these things, when I should let myself be served?” (26). Racz translates this as, “Whatever turns out to be true, / Who could dispute what I’ve observed? / I’ll let myself be richly served / Here, come what may, in this milieu” (43). In addition to the fact that Racz’s text rhymes and Cruz’s text does not, one significant difference is that Cruz opts for wording that introduces a new idea: there is a possibility that Segismundo may be dealing with worry or anxiety over his surroundings. Racz’s translation makes it seem as if Segismundo is more relaxed. Calderón’s text reads, “Pero sea lo que fuere, / ¿quién me mete en discurrir? / Dejarme quiero servir, / y venga lo que viniere” (643). Compared with Cruz, the Racz translation contains a closer grid alignment with Calderón’s play in sentence structure and word choice. Taken word-for-word, “pero sea lo que fuera” translates as “but whatever it was,” but Cruz translates this as a rhetorical question: “but why should I worry” (26). In the following moment, Cruz translates part of Astolfo’s line, in the scene where he first meets Segismundo, as “I am by birth a duke and that makes me your cousin” (Cruz 29). Racz translates the same phrase as “this makes us equals.” Cruz communicates the obvious familial relationship, but the audience may not view these two characters as equals. Another possible interpretation might be that Astolfo’s appeal to Segismundo as a family member inspires audiences to view him as sympathetic. Regardless of audience interpretation, these alterations to the character Astolfo indicate significant discrepancies in grid alignment that may be used to define Cruz’s play as an adaptation rather than a translation.
In addition, Cruz cuts significant portions of his text, which alters the tone of and pace of various moments, to focus on ideas or feelings not found in the source text, but he does not replace or re-contextualize this dialogue with material that alters the story. In Segismundo’s first major speech in the first act, Cruz cuts fourteen lines of text, which alters the tone by emphasizing the last line spoken. Segismundo begins by stating that he feels a thirst in his eyes, which simply means that he is attracted by Rosaura’s beauty. Cruz cuts and simplifies the text, ending with a statement that focuses on how Segismundo desires to see Rosaura. He wants her and says that not even death will be able to quench this desire:

Segismundo: because if drinking is death
my eyes will long to drink all the more.
And if seeing is dying
then I’m dying to see. (8)

Even though the message that death cannot quench Segismundo’s desire is clear, a comparison with Racz’s translation reveals the extent that Cruz alters the meaning of this speech. The Racz translation offers a contrasting view of Segismundo’s desire:

Segismundo: The more I look at you, the more
I want to see you all my days.
It’s dropsy making my eyes glaze
And brim with water now, I think,
For knowing it’s sure death to drink,
They drink you in still more like wells.
Still, seeing that my seeing spells
My death, I’ll die to let them graze.
Oh, let me look on you and die!
For all I know, come my last breath,
If seeing you will mean my death,
What will not seeing you imply?
Much worse than death would signify –
Dread fury, rage, and wracking pain.
At least in death my teeming brain
Will grasp life’s harsh finality:
Why grant life to a wretch like me
When happy mortals can be slain? (9)

In both versions, Segismundo communicates that he desires Rosaura. However, because Racz translates the speech word-for-word, rather than cutting it as Cruz does, the reader or audience is given more of an opportunity to experience Segismundo’s heightened emotion and depth of thought. More importantly, Racz includes the same number of lines of text found in Calderón. The act of cutting text is a major discrepancy in textual grid alignment, while the use of death as a clever play-on-words is an aesthetic discrepancy in grid alignment that communicates a simplified meaning that Segismundo merely desires Rosaura. In Racz’s text, there is a greater sense that Segismundo
genuinely contemplates his own death. Finally, by cutting the text Cruz creates succinct
dialogue with a quick pace, designed for a contemporary U.S. audience less patient with
long speeches than was Calderón’s audience.

Considering the fact that few theatregoers in the United States are familiar with
the context in which Spanish *comedia* was originally performed, it is likely that changes
to the rate and pace of the action, and to the dialogue, were made to appeal to a
contemporary spectators’ limited attention spans. For example, at the beginning of the
second act in Calderón’s *La vida es sueño*, Clotaldo explains to Basilio that Segismundo
has been drugged and brought to the castle. Cruz cuts this moment in his adaptation.
Calderón goes into great detail about how Clotaldo put the thought about aspiring to be
like an eagle in Segismundo’s mind, which he later uses to explain why Segismundo
dreamed of being a king. Segismundo reacts by stating that birds submit to his orders,
that he will not submit to another man, foreshadowing what is to come, and that although
he is ruled by his free will, he also somewhat believes in fate. These ideas are distilled
and compressed by Cruz for clarity and to speed the pace of the play. Cruz carefully
balances the need to connect with a modern audience with the need to respect the
emotional truth of the source text. Yet other attempts to speed the pace are very abrupt.
When Clotaldo explains the truth to Segismundo in the first scene of Act II, the shift from
confusion to anger at having been denied the truth is almost immediate. The moment is
not allowed to develop as in the original, but by adjusting the pace, Cruz manipulates
how his story will resonate with a contemporary audience.

Given this focus on the audience, it may be argued that some cuts made by Cruz
to improve the pace and clarity result in a performance text that loses the weight of
Calderón’s imagery and description. In the scene where Astolfo and Estrella flatter the king in an over-the-top manner that seems fake but ceremonious, although the exposition is preserved and the text matches closely with Calderón, Cruz’s version is much shorter than either Calderón’s or Racz’s. Even though this moment is significantly shorter and less descriptive, the essential information needed to understand the scene is preserved.

We realize that Basilio is a man of science and math, but believes he can tell the future, which means that he believes in fate/destiny and not free will/freedom. He also admits his own doubts in this belief, which is why he wants to test fate and bring Segismundo to the castle. Even though these cuts were likely made to speed the pace of the action, the loss of text does not diminish the quality and complexity of Cruz’s adaptation.

Cruz’s version helps the audience relate to important concepts, ideas, and plot development, and utilizes cuts to emphasize action or characterization. When Rosaura finds that she is unable to tell Clotaldo how Astolfo offended her, because it would require revealing that she is a woman, and that she was taken advantage of, Cruz cuts her dialogue, suggesting that her anxiety forced her to think quickly and explain herself. Cruz writes to communicate that Rosaura is afraid of losing respect and wants to protect herself. Instead of a long monologue, Rosaura says, “These clothes, Clotaldo… This disguise… I am not who I appear to be!” (Cruz 21). Racz translates, “How can I venture to explain / The riddle these deceptive clothes / Conceal? They don’t belong to whom / You’d guess. / Judge wisely what this shows: / I’m not who I appear to be” (33).

Whereas the Cruz translation emphasizes a startled or confused action for Rosaura, Racz writes with a diction that is more elevated, less succinct, and more poetic than Cruz. In addition, Cruz writes dialogue that sounds believable, or rather, that imitates a realistic...
speech pattern of someone desiring to tell the truth, but nervous about maintaining a hidden identity. Rosaura’s choppy dialogue does not diminish her character, but instead allows audiences to focus on her actions, and relate with a contemporary character that speaks like a person living today.

It may also be argued that Cruz shows a greater concern for character development than translators such as Racz. Cruz writes that when Basilio arrives at the cave to find out how Segismundo is doing, and if his plot to deceive his son worked, he states that he has grief and calls Segismundo “my poor unfortunate Prince.” Despite his cruelty, Basilio shows concern and love for his son. This is a sign of a more complex character, because he is able to express a range of emotions. After Segismundo says to himself that he still feels love within him, Cruz writes that Basilio exits and that Clotaldo “notices the King was moved by what Segismundo said” (43). In Racz and Calderón, there is no stage direction to indicate that Basilio is moved by Segismundo’s words, suggesting a less sympathetic character. Racz and Calderón simply state that Basilio exits. Also, Racz has Basil (Basilio) refer to Segismundo as “the prince.” In Calderón, Basilio says, “La necia curiosidad / de ver lo que pasa aquí / a Segismundo” (665). Perhaps calling him by name is more familiar, but neither Calderón nor Racz include the possessive word “my” or the sympathetic adjectives “poor” and “unfortunate” to describe Segismundo. They simply refer to him as the Prince. The inclusion of one word or detail helps Cruz to develop a more intimate relationship between the characters and the reader or audience. As a result, Cruz plays more to a contemporary audience’s expectation of a “good father,” and utilizes changes in pace, cutting long monologues in favor of quick dialogue.
Adaptive techniques such as altering thematic elements help to further engage with U.S. audiences. In the scene following Rosaura’s appearance on stage in female clothing, Clarín and Clotaldo discuss the fact that with Rosaura’s new identity as Andrea, Clarín is now left without a job. In order to emphasize the desperation of his situation, Cruz writes so that the crux of Clarín’s anxiety focuses on the themes of time and unemployment. Cruz adapts Clarín’s line as, “That’s all I think about – time. And time seems to be at a standstill for me, since I have no employment” (26). In the Racz translation, Clarion (Clarín) briefly mentions, “While I, who served her night and morn / Am left to die from hunger’s want / Forgotten and ignored by all” (42). He does not refer to any kind of employment or being without a job. The only reference to time is the previous moment:

**Clarion.**
Word is, she’s biding time until
The moment your avenging wrath
Restores her honored name in full.

**Clotaldo.**
No surer thing to bide exists,
For only Time as it transpires
Can put an end to all of this. (41)

No other reference to “time” exists in the Racz translation. Compare this with Calderón:

**Clarín.**
Hay que ella está esperando
que occasion y tiempo venga

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en que vuelvas por su honor.

Clotaldo. Prevención segura es esa;
que al fin el tiempo ha de ser quien haga esas diligencias.

Clarín. Hay que ella está regalada,
servida como una reina,
en fe de sobrina tuya.

Y hay que viniendo con ella,
estoy yo muriendo de hambre
y nadie de mí se acuerda,

sin mirar que soy Clarín,
y que si el tal Clarín suena,
podrá decir cuanto pasa al rey, a Astolfo y a Estrella;
porque Clarín y criado
son dos cosas que se llevan con el secreto muy mal;

y podrá ser, si me deja el silencio de su mano,
se cante por mí esta letra:

*Clarín que rompe el albor,*

*no suena mejor.* (642)
By contrast to Racz and Calderón, Cruz’s play may be located on the spectrum further away from an idealized translation, due to the fact that his word choice and thematic interpretation is less closely aligned with Calderón’s. In addition, when comparing Cruz with Racz, it is clear that Cruz adapted the dialogue by placing greater emphasis on the concept of employment. Rather than imply that employment is a major concern to U.S. Latina/os today, this thematic adaptation may potentially resonate with U.S. audiences that value their jobs as a source of identity. In this way, Cruz adapts Calderón by altering thematic elements to appeal to a contemporary audience. These numerous examples help to demonstrate that Cruz’s play is indeed an adaptation that contributes to a process of assimilation.

VISIBILITY OF THE ADAPTOR

As an adaptation, Cruz’s play brings to mind the question of the visibility of Cruz’s influence or presence. In his research on translation theory, Lawrence Venuti explains that fluency may be used to judge the degree of translator visibility or invisibility within a translated text. From Venuti’s point of view, “the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text” (1). Venuti describes a fluent text as one that utilizes a modern or contemporary tone, rather than the archaic language of the original source. “A fluent translation is immediately recognizable and intelligible; under the regime of fluent translating, the translator works to make his or her work ‘invisible,’ producing the illusory effect of transparency that simultaneously masks its status as an illusion: the translated text seems ‘natural,’ that is, not translated” (Venuti 5). Venuti also emphasizes that the translator’s invisibility is partly determined by the individualistic conception of
authorship, with the point being that the precise nature of the translator’s authorship remains unformulated, and so the notion of authorial originality continues to stigmatize the translator’s work (6). However, Venuti’s focus is strictly on the translator’s textual invisibility. For example, if a U.S. citizen were to buy a copy of Les Miserables at a local bookstore, it would likely be written in English, with Victor Hugo’s name on the front cover. If the wording is fluid, modern, seamless, or graceful, then the reader believes that he or she is reading Hugo’s words, and not those of a translator fluent in French and English. This is what Venuti means by translator invisibility. I argue that Venuti’s concept is flawed, due to his confusing definition of fluency, and suggest an alternative idea that focuses on the visibility of the adaptor.

Close examination of Venuti’s concept reveals that the determining factor influencing translator invisibility involves the reader’s inability to pick up on hints or characteristics of the translator’s voice. According to Theo Hermans, translators are like interpreters in that they speak in someone else’s name, and thus are expected to re-express the original speakers’ ideas, and manner of expressing them, as accurately as possible and without significant omissions (196). The translator is never really invisible, though. Instead, the reader hears only one distinct voice, which creates the illusion that the translator seems to be transparent or invisible. The difficulty in arguing for translator visibility or invisibility is twofold. First, it is the original author’s voice that becomes invisible, not the translator’s. “When we read translated fiction we have only the translated text in front of us. The primary voice, the authoritative voice, is in fact absent” (Hermans 197). In the case of Life is a Dream, the authoritative voice is Calderón’s. As the original author, his voice is only perceptible if the translator deviates from the story,
alters the tone, or makes changes to highlight an element of difference. Therefore, either the translator’s voice is always visible, because the original author may only be perceived through the translator’s text, which is inherently present, or translator visibility depends on how his/her work compares with texts of other translators.

The second difficulty with Venuti’s concept of translator invisibility is that it is entirely possible that a single translated text contains both passages where the translator’s voice is clearly visible, along with other passages where this distinction is less clear. Cruz’s play is an excellent example of a translated text where the degree of visibility changes depending on the moment or passage being read and interpreted. Whereas some sections of the text appear to be molded specifically for a contemporary audience, at other times, it may seem as though the reader is transported back in time to the Spanish Golden Age. According to translation theorist Maria Tymoczko, “One must conceptualize the translator not as operating between languages, but as operating either in one language or another, or more properly in a system inclusive of both source language and target language, a system that encompasses both” (223). The translator exists at the intersection between the source and the target languages, and mediates between the two by interpreting the construction of meaning. Due to these two issues, I propose amending Venuti’s definition of fluency to incorporate the concept of grid alignment. Instead of describing language that has a modern, contemporary tone as fluent, I argue that fluency should be used to describe the ease with which a translator attempts to replicate language word-for-word. A more fluent translation will show greater grid alignment, and thus render the translator’s voice more invisible.
With this new understanding of fluency, Cruz’s play may in fact be considered less fluent, due to the fact that it is an adaptation. Further examination of Cruz’s views on playwriting and the efficacy of his adaptation expose his visibility as an adaptor. In the introduction to another one of his plays, *Night Train to Bolina*, Cruz writes that the political and social protest voiced in his texts is not always spelled out in dialogue, but sometimes streams out from under the surface of the writing and a presence, with a tragic undercurrent that rises above the plot and dramatic line (116). Indeed the voice of the playwright often surfaces within the text of an original play, but an adaptation is different in that it involves the presence of two authors. The visibility of the adaptor refers to whether an adaptor’s voice is visible and distinct from the source author. In the opening scene of the play, Cruz introduces an alternative perspective on how Segismundo responds to his environment by adapting his dialogue so that Segismundo states his thoughts explicitly and with an emphatic tone. The Racz text has Segismundo question what laws or codes can deny him “that sweetest privilege proffered” (7). Calderón’s text also uses the word *privilegio*. Cruz writes, “what justice, reason or law can deny man these simple rights” (7). There is a significant difference between a person’s rights and a person’s privileges. This change signals a noticeable shift in Segismundo’s agency and political power. Although implicit within the text, the decision to use one word as opposed to another establishes Cruz’s political voice. Although Venuti might argue that these moments exemplify Cruz’s invisibility, Cruz functions as a second author by communicating Calderón’s story for a contemporary reader or audience. Due to the fact that he inserts his own language of political protest, Cruz establishes a visible presence.
Having rendered himself visible to a contemporary audience by inserting political language and ideas, Cruz further establishes his visibility by introducing new meaning for abstract concepts such as revenge and honor that may or may not have obvious contemporary political resonance. In one scene from Cruz’s play, Clotaldo states, “A noble man who’s been dishonored has been erased from life” (20). This references an aspect of the Spanish honor code, but it is curious how the phrase is translated. In Calderón’s text, Clotaldo states, “un hombre bien nacido, si está agraviado no vive” (634). Racz translates this as, “No gentleman that’s nobly born / Can live as long as he’s aggrieved” (30-1). Cruz’s use of the phrase “erased from life” retains the idea that a person seeking revenge is not alive until s/he achieves revenge. However, whereas the tone in the plays by Racz and Calderón implies frustration, Cruz seems to imply a lack of existence, or perhaps that in achieving revenge, a person becomes legitimate and visible within society. In this moment, Cruz becomes visible by altering the tone and emphasizing a meaning not found in the other translations, but this is balanced with other moments within the play where it is difficult to make a clear distinction between Cruz’s ideas and those in Racz or Calderón. For example, Cruz translates Rosaura’s story of the wise man to confirm her belief in fate. When compared with Calderón, this philosophical moment appears to have been distilled word-for-word. The ideas, as well as the translated language, are very similar in both texts. Rather than alter the text, Cruz integrates Calderón’s ideas with his own, effectively making himself invisible as the adaptor. However, despite the existence of a few places in which Cruz’s presence as adaptor is less visible, on the whole he seems to be the visible adaptor of La vida es sueño.
THE LINE BETWEEN FOREIGNIZATION AND DOMESTICATION

It is difficult to classify Cruz’s play as a foreignized or domesticized text, because his adaptation utilizes both strategies. The line between foreignization and domestication is not always clear. It might seem that there is a distinct difference between focusing on whether it is best to preserve the foreign, source text, and the culture it represents, or to introduce changes to appeal with a contemporary, or domestic, target audience, but Cruz’s adaptation exemplifies a balanced focus between the two extremes. Although there is no single preferable or recommended tactic for translating a play, choices to foreignize or domesticize dramatic literature involve a power struggle. Cruz’s adaptation retains the essential structure and plot development found in Calderón’s text, which suggests that he favors a tactic of foreignization, but various cuts and additions contribute to an artistic vision that seems more domesticized. Various moments in Cruz’s play may be cited to emphasize one strategy over the other, which ultimately highlights the complexity of this text. The fact that it is difficult to classify Cruz’s play according to one strategy over the other lends further support that his adaptation constitutes a process of assimilation.

In many scenes, the text appears to have been adapted with a focus on the target culture rather than on Calderón’s text. For example, elements such as the use of asides are cut and replaced with dialogue in which characters directly address one another. This use of asides was a common convention in Spanish Golden Age drama, but Cruz chose to eliminate them, along with stage directions that might indicate a more presentational performance style. Instead, there are moments when it seems more or less obvious that a character is speaking to him/herself. Cruz also cuts and adds dialogue not found in other
translations, such as in the scene where Segismundo meets Estrella for the first time. Cruz introduces a quick pace, numerous cuts, as well as added text where Segismundo describes Estrella’s eyes, face, and skin in great detail. As a result of these cuts and additions, there is a divergence between Calderón’s text and Cruz’s adaptation, which encourages readers to view Cruz’s play as distinct from the Spanish Golden Age.

The danger inherent with ignoring or stripping the source culture, or what may appear foreign to a contemporary audience, is that this may represent an act of violence against Golden Age Spain. Scholars such as Venuti challenge the notion that all meanings can be universally understood and possess a modern equivalent. Venuti argues against domestication, referring to it as a discursive strategy, capable not only of executing ethnocentric violence, but also of concealing this violence by producing the illusionistic effect of transparency (73). If the concept of fluency suggests that a translator possess an ability to both understand supposed equivalents and convert them with ease, this creates a problem because fluency allows the translator to focus only on the target language. This form of translation is inherently violent because it involves “reconstituting the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs and representation that pre-exist in the target language” (Baker 65). To avoid this, Venuti promotes foreignization in an attempt to eliminate potential violence to the source text.

Instead of adopting a strict foreignizing tactic, as Venuti might advise, Cruz strikes a balance between foreignization and domestication. In various examples, his writing respects the source culture of the Spanish Golden Age, yet includes cuts and additions demonstrating that he is less concerned with preserving the source culture than he is on creating a play for a contemporary, target audience. For example, Rosaura’s
final speech near the end of the play seems to suggest a distinct foreignizing tactic. Rosaura explains how Segismundo saw her three times in different ways, and provides an explanation for her true identity. Even though this section might appear to be translated word-for-word, due to its length and style, careful inspection reveals that it is severely cut, when compared with Calderón’s text. Despite the fact that Cruz includes a long monologue for Rosaura, the original was much longer and included greater description and detail. Cruz may have cut this speech so that it would be concise and easier to perform. However, whereas these cuts provide support for domestication, the amount of information central to the plot that remains in the play may be used to categorize this as an example of foreignization.

Although it may be possible to define Cruz’s play as an adaptation and argue for Cruz’s visibility as an adaptor, his work on *Life is a Dream* resists easy classification as either a foreignized or domesticized text. For example, the final scene of the play includes a monologue where Segismundo summarizes the overall philosophical message of the play, but even this moment in the play seems to signal the use of both foreignization and domestication strategies. On one hand, Cruz translates by having Segismundo speak about the issue of fate, which is a key feature in Calderón’s play. This seems to indicate support for a foreignizing tactic. On the other hand, Cruz simplifies the text to a point where it no longer shares the same style or resonance as Calderón’s play. By comparison with the Racz translation, it is possible to see how much Cruz changes the text without altering the play’s meaning. Racz translates Segismundo’s dialogue as, “Foreseeing future harm does not / Ensure the victim will be spared / Its ravages, for while it’s true / That man may save himself some care / Through sheer humility – that’s
This happens only once the harm presents itself, as there is just no chance that fate will be disarmed” (117). Cruz simplifies Segismundo’s dialogue to, “Fate can never be defeated by injustice and cruelty. For violence breeds resentment and revenge” (61–2). Cruz writes using a much more colloquial style, but still manages to preserve the inherent meaning. Instead of adopting a clear foreignizing or domesticizing tactic, Cruz adapts with consideration for both the source culture and the target audience. His balanced approach to adaptation involves borrowing from Calderón while negotiating between two different translation strategies. Just as assimilation involves the decline of ethnic distinctions and their corollary cultural and social differences, Cruz’s work on *Life is a Dream* engages in a social process of assimilation by blurring the line that distinguishes between foreignization and domestication so that neither strategy dominates over the other.

ADAPTATION AS A PRODUCT OF ASSIMILATION

From the position of an assimilated identity, and using a process that mirrors assimilation, Cruz’s adaptation reveals a dynamic, yet complicated, engagement between Spanish Golden Age and U.S. Latina/o cultures. As a product of assimilation, certain references in Cruz’s adaptation evoke a connection with Cuban culture but are not explicit enough to discourage alternative interpretations. Because Cruz’s play is ambiguous enough to be read in a variety of ways, it appears to incorporate conflicting strategies, or rather, to embrace a numerous identities. Textual analysis also demonstrates a lack of emphasis placed on establishing Cuban identity as distinct and independent from Spanish heritage. Although Cruz does not write obvious references to *Latinidad*, various elements in his adaptation establish a sense of Latina/o identity.
through the disappearance of recognizable cultural markers of representation. As a result, his adaptation contributes to the formation of an assimilated identity.

The connection, or relationship, between the Spanish Golden Age, contemporary United States culture, and *Latinidad* is not always clear or direct, but rather than think of the space between them as geographical distance or a time span of over four hundred years, there are elements that contribute to the formation of an assimilated Latina/o identity, which subsequently functions to bind these seemingly disparate cultures together. One of the ways that this may be shown is in how Cruz cuts and condenses large monologues into shorter portions of dialogue. For example, when Basilio confers with Clotaldo to learn how his plan to drug and relocate Segismundo transpired, Cruz cuts the fifty-five line monologue in which Basilio expresses his hope that Segismundo might prove the omens incorrect. This cut removes a significant element from the original story that might mark it as a distinct product of the Spanish Golden Age. At the same time, Cruz does not include any additional adaptive elements to imply a sense of Latina/o identity with these characters. Cruz creates a gap, or a space, that leaves the moment open to interpretation and questioning by readers and audiences. In this way, he allows readers and audiences to fill in the gaps for themselves, and make connections between Latina/o identity and either a contemporary U.S. or Spanish Golden Age culture.

Cruz creates the potential for his play to be read and interpreted as either a marked or an unmarked play. The term unmarked is borrowed from Peggy Phelan’s study of the politics invested in visible representations of the real, such as photographic artwork by Robert Mapplethorpe and other works of visual art. I am building here on Phelan’s idea that the relationship between that which is real and its representation is a
version of the relation between the self and other, and therefore is marked, which is to say
that it is unequal (3). In describing what it means to be unmarked, Phelan specifically
references the relationship between the seer and the object being seen, which is almost
always a physical, visible object. Phelan writes, “it is assumed that disenfranchised
communities who see their members within the representational field will feel greater
pride in being part of such a community and those who are not in such a community will
increase their understanding of the diversity and strength of such communities” (7). The
process in which pride and understanding are created is not limited to visual art. Taken
one step further, I believe Phelan’s work applies both to works of theatrical literature and
performance-based art. Readers and audiences are equally capable of seeing themselves,
or increasing their understanding of another disenfranchised group, while reading a play
or watching it performed on stage. Phelan’s research supports this when she argues that
identities are visibly marked so that reading physical resemblance is a way of identifying
a community (7). At first glance, this may seem to support the idea that in order to
empower an oppressed, minority community, it is important to gain more visibility
through markers of identity. However, identifying and marking ethnicity highlights
differences from communities that are unmarked. In contemporary U.S. society, Anglo
culture is viewed as unmarked because it remains dominant without requiring any
specific markers of ethnic background. I agree with Phelan that visible markers of
identity help to distinguish a community, yet in order to empower a minority community,
it is necessary to gain invisibility through unmarked representation. Because readers and
audiences do not necessarily view his work as Cuban or Cuban-American, Cruz’s
adaptation contributes to the formation of an assimilated *Latinidad* by remaining open to interpretation and appealing to a wide, multi-cultural audience.

When readers or audience members encounter an unmarked element in Cruz’s adaptation, they fill the void by constructing a sense of identity from perceived relationships in the text or performance. The reader or audience interprets the unmarked element through a process requiring phases of negotiation, loss, and creation. In this way, unmarked elements in Cruz’s adaptation provide opportunities for varied interpretations of cultural identity. For example, taking notice of parallels between characters and the ideas they represent allows an opportunity to explore the impact of assimilation on *Latinidad* within four key moments of the play. First, Segismundo’s experience waking up in Basilio’s castle after having spent his entire life in prison is not unlike the liberation felt by a Cuban immigrant arriving in the United States at the height of the political violence during Fidel Castro’s regime. However, having been drugged and removed from one place to another does not mirror the same experience of many Cuban immigrants, including Cruz, who chose to leave their home for a new life, and subsequently chose to assimilate within a new culture. For readers and audiences born in the United States, it is difficult to imagine the amazement or culture shock experienced by Cuban immigrants. Segismundo says that his lived experience in this new place is like a dream. To an extent, Cruz’s depiction of Segismundo’s experience may be interpreted as similar to that of a Cuban immigrant attempting to obtain the American Dream.

The second moment involves a scene in the second act in which Astolfo confronts Segismundo (36). In this scene, Segismundo’s identity is symbolically transformed. He appears to represent Cuba, which makes sense if Astolfo represents the United States.
Like Rosaura, Segismundo’s character arc represents a journey from one form of existence to a new one, or from a native country to a foreign country. However, in taking on Astolfo in the final battle, the reader or audience member may come to view Segismundo as a leader, struggling to be understood, to be avenged, to fight oppression, and to discern his identity in a changing world. Within a contemporary context, the inherent meaning of certain moments changes to reflect new ideas. Astolfo’s preoccupation with honor translates as pride, arrogance, and a sense of entitlement.

The third moment occurs later in the play, when Segismundo finds himself back in his tower prison, after having delivered a profound monologue on the illusory nature of life. Suddenly, a group of soldiers arrive to rescue Segismundo, and mistakenly take Clarín for their prince. For the first time, we see characters from below the social class of nobility on stage, other than the servants who live within the confines of the castle. The Soldiers represent the common man, fighting to restore Segismundo to the throne as their rightful Prince. They want justice. It is easy to imagine how these characters might be interpreted as either a common “everyman,” or a Cuban immigrant fighting for human rights. In both scenes, with Astolfo and the Soldiers, the reader and audience members are reminded of how this adaptation may be interpreted in a contemporary context of relations between Cuba and the United States.

Finally, a fourth key moment near the end of the play further establishes characters as possible allegorical representations of nations or ethnicities. Just before going into battle against his son, Basilio advises Astolfo: “There’s no use fighting what is meant to be, because in trying to avoid the risk one meets it” (Cruz 50). Basilio’s form of fighting is the same thing as avoiding risk. Having gained the power that others dream
of having, he admits to being controlled by fate. He also admits, “I myself have destroyed my country!” (Cruz 50). Like Basilio, Clarín tries to escape from danger, only to run into it and be killed. If Basilio is read as the dominant political force, similar to the United States, and Clarín is read as a Cuban immigrant, Cruz’s adaptation suggests that the dominant cultural hegemony within the United States will inevitably succumb to, and be overcome by, its own fate, while those without power will be killed. Later in the same scene, Basilio states that it is easier to restrain nature than the proud wrath of a nation. He goes on to say, “The shouts of a divided country attest to this truth” (Cruz 50). On one hand, the image of a divided country evokes the political situation and division among people in 1970s Cuba, when Cruz and his family immigrated to the United States. Because Cruz left Cuba when he was a child, his memory of the political situation in 1970s Cuba may seem more like a dream than a reality. In remembering that experience, Cruz may likely have (re)discovered the cultural impact that this play might have had on an early seventeenth century audience, as well as the legacy it provides for contemporary Cuban Americans. In this moment of the play, Cruz perhaps identifies and connects his waking life experience, as both a Cuban and a citizen of the United States, with the fictional, dreamlike illusions within a Spanish Golden Age play. On the other hand, due to the fact that Cuba is not specifically mentioned in the text, the actual illusion might be that there is something Cuban about this play to begin with.

The main argument to support the idea that Cruz included references to Cuba in *Life is a Dream* focuses on the fact that he had previously written about issues affecting Cubans and Cuban-Americans. Although many of Cruz’s original plays deal specifically with the Cuban-American experience, *Life is a Dream* does not follow this pattern.
Analysis of the text reveals a lack of clear reference to Cuba, Cuban-American culture, or any form of *Latinidad*. However, it is possible to interpret dialogue, characterization, and actions from *Life is a Dream* as references to Cuba, or issues affecting Cuban-American immigrants, and consider how Cruz’s adaptation yields interpretations that reveal how U.S. Latina/o culture and the Spanish Golden Age resonate with one another. This leads to the conclusion that selected elements may be read as metaphors for Cuba, but given that the Cuban-American experience is not a theme explicitly addressed in the text, there appears to be nothing specifically Cuban, or Latina/o, about Cruz’s adaptation.

Perhaps the most significant element that Cruz introduces in his adaptation is the lack of a specific setting. Instead of setting the play in Poland, Cruz simply does not specify where the action is set. The unspecified setting creates a space that remains unmarked. One of the side effects resulting from Cruz’s non-specific setting is that the reader or audience is left to wonder if “this country” is Cuba, the United States, or some other dreamlike world. When Rosaura first describes her impressions of this setting she calls it a “cruel land.” Rosaura’s line may be an expression of Cruz’s view of the United States, or perhaps a more general perspective of the United States from a non-specific refugee, rather than a Cuban immigrant. When Clarín hopes that the people of this land are hospitable and will welcome them, it is possible to interpret his voice as the desires of all Cuban immigrants, but there is nothing specific to suggest that he has to be Cuban. Clarín could just as easily be expressing a hopeful emotion. This concept encourages readers and audiences to think about the world of the play as an unmarked space, rather than a specific country.
Without a clear space in mind, interpretations rely on other descriptive details within the text to guide an imaginative construction of setting. Even though Cruz does not specify a country, like Spain, Cuba, Poland, or the United States, he does refer to the surrounding area as a dry landscape at the beginning of the play. This does not lead the audience to think about a tropical island, like Cuba, or palm trees and beaches, found in parts of Miami and other areas of Southern Florida. Early in Cruz’s play, Clarín states that he and Rosaura roam “through these arid fields” (Cruz 5). Miami and Southern Florida are hardly dry and arid. It is possible to imagine the setting as a place where there is no distance between cultures, a place where the identity is not segregated, but still confused. The unmarked space allows for an interpenetration of cultural interpretations in which no single group may assume cultural authority or ownership over this play for social or political gain. However, without a distinct or implied setting, readers and audiences may likely imagine that the play is set in Poland, based on knowledge of Calderón’s original text, or perhaps even Spain, like Rivera does for his adaptation. Regardless of how and why readers or audiences interpret information, the fact remains that Cruz provides very little description to help identify the unmarked space. Cruz may not want anyone to imagine or think about a specific location because his play is not about what is real, but instead about the limits and possibilities of imagination. Within the unmarked space, Cruz preserved certain themes, characters, and elements of plot structure that link the play to Spain and Calderón, thus creating an echo or nostalgic resonance with the original.

While I maintain that Cruz’s play is potentially unmarked, I do want to point out several instances in which it is tempting to draw connections to Cuba, or to the plight of
Cuban immigrants to the United States. Just as Segismundo uses a metaphor to suggest that his lived experience in the castle was like a dream, so too may a Cuban metaphor be used to describe how other characters interpret their identity and environment. Some of the elements that readers and audiences may interpret as allusions to Cuba, or to a Cuban culture metaphor, may even be viewed as having been a specific choice by Cruz to express attitudes concerning Cuban-American identity. For example, when Segismundo wakes up in the castle, he questions Clarín asking, “And who are you?” Clarín responds, “I’m just a fool, a dog” (Cruz 28). In other translations, the word used is “meddler” or “busybody.” The use of the word “dog” communicates that the immigrant characters are low, base, or of lesser value than the native, oppressor characters. Even if this is just a descriptive word chosen by Cruz to describe how Clarín is submissive towards the prince, there is an implied degradation that bleeds through, exposing an outlook concerning class and character. Cruz’s word choice describes a negative bigotry that has been reinforced in the United States concerning Cuban, or other Latina/o, immigrants.

Despite its aspirations to unmarked status, for some spectators, Cruz’s adaptation might nevertheless metaphorically refer to the experience of Cuban immigrants living in the United States. For example, when Clarín states that he does not have the strength to go anywhere, this may relate with sentiment that Cuban-Americans are stuck or disempowered. Similarly, Rosaura describes the play’s setting as a cruel land. She states, “You receive me as a stranger, and as a stranger you inscribe my name with blood on your sand!” (Cruz 5). Audiences may respond to this dialogue by considering how the United States “inscribes” identity onto Cuban immigrants, or by focusing on the setting as a cruel land. The only set description in Cruz’s adaptation is that there is a dry
landscape. This suggests a place where it is difficult to survive, or where the possibility of freedom is limited. Audiences aware that Cruz is a Cuban immigrant may also draw connections to the fact that Rosaura and Clarín are immigrants in a new country, and arrive at the conclusion that the main character’s vision of this new country may have been similar to Cruz’s experience having arrived in the United States from Cuba. Further support for readings that incorporate the Cuban metaphor rely on dialogue that provides a sense of relative context for the characters. It is important to remember that Rosaura and Clarín have come from a distant land, and even though Cuba is relatively close to the United States, Cuban culture may be seen as foreign and distant. Clarín asks the question: “Tell me again why we left our country in search of this adventure?” (Cruz 5). There is no mention of which country Clarín and Rosaura came from. However, this adaptation specifically states that they, on their own volition, chose to leave, which may be interpreted as similar to the experience of so many Cuban refugees who choose to leave Cuba and come to the United States. When Basilio talks about a divided country, it is possible to imagine how this connects with the political division in Cuba when Cruz and his family escaped to the United States.

Embracing the possibility that Rosaura and Segismundo represent Cuban immigrants to the United States opens up questions about the political relations between Cuba and the United States today. Irrespective of whether or not Cruz consciously intended to comment on Cuban politics with his play, he may have been aware of, and affected by, the political conflict in his home country. Inside Basilio’s kingdom, the characters Astolfo and Estrella reinforce the notion that, in the United States, those with political power may appear civil, but are actually consumed with attaining more power.
Astolfo and Estrella compete, but do not intend to declare war. They are perhaps peaceful but competitive representations of some aspect of relations between Cuba and United States. It is also interesting that Rosaura would say, “The door is open” when talking about the entrance to Segismundo’s cave, as if the door to the United States opens to Cuban immigrants via Miami. This concept begs questioning as to how open that door remains today. If it is an open door, then Rosaura, as a symbolic Cuban immigrant, is justified in stating, “I fear new trials and tribulations come our way” (Cruz 6). She does not know it yet, but there is a monster inside that threatens to kill them. If this metaphor is taken literally, then Rosaura’s fears may be read as foreshadowing potential danger due to the fact that a monster lives in the United States.

Reading elements of character and setting as aspects of Cuba also helps to reinforce the philosophical message communicated by Calderón that life is a dream. Basilio says to Clotaldo, “everyone who lives is dreaming” (Cruz 25). There are two worlds: the life we know and the life after we die. What we know of as life might be like a dream to the life we experience after death. We might be the dream of someone else, or the dream of God. Likewise, there are two worlds: Cuba and the United States. Each world is separated by time and custom, but also is connected through a sense of identity. Cruz writes “this world” to describe a specific place within the real world, or rather, an implied sense of the world as only Cruz knows it. In this way, we may interpret the world of the play to be a space where both Cuba and the United States intermingle. In an interview for South Atlantic Quarterly, Jody McAuliffe noticed that the storytelling in Cruz’s play Two Sisters and a Piano “transports the characters, and they transcend their place” (463). A similar process may be found in Life is a Dream. Like the parallels
between individual worlds, characters in Cruz’s play transcend their place by representing specific concepts.

Throughout the play, Cruz’s characters demonstrate varying degrees of acceptance and resistance to expectations and pressures placed on them. This may resonate with Cuban immigrants living in the dominant cultural hegemony of the United States, but it is may also resonate with a non-Latina/o U.S. audience. Clarín mentions that he and Rosaura left “with a tempest in our wake,” which may relate with the devastation left by Communist forces in Cuba, but certainly does not specify where they escaped from directly. Later, Rosaura says to Clarín, “Let’s run from this awful place” (Cruz 5). If there is a direct correlation between Cuba and the land where Rosaura and Clarín came from, then Rosaura’s statement implies that the United States is an awful place. An alternative reading may interpret Rosaura’s line to mean that it is the desire of many Cuban-Americans to resist assimilation. Instead of arguing for the Cuban metaphor literally, it is more appropriate to suggest that Cruz’s play reinforces U.S. cultural perception of Cuban-Americans.

As a play produced in the United States and intended for a U.S. Anglo audience, *Life is a Dream* invites speculation as to whether it can be considered a Latina/o play. One idea that helps to inform this speculation is the concept of a pan-ethnic Latina/o identity, a view closely related with that of multiple Latinidades. Consideration of a pan-ethnic Latina/o identity helps by providing a means to argue that Cruz’s play both encourages and resists classification as Latina/o. Caminero-Santangelo questions the existence of a collective or pan-ethnic Latina/o identity, defined as a sense of relations between and among Latina/o groups that does not explicitly argue for essentializing
notions of Latina/o identity (4). Despite the fact that a light-skinned, middle-class, Mexican-American woman living in San Antonio, raised speaking only English, and a lower-class, dark-skinned, Spanish-speaking Cuban man do not share a common identity, both are labeled as Latina/o. However, the concept of a “sense of relations” between (inter-) and among (intra-) Latina/o groups, or as Caminero-Santangelo suggests, a pan-ethnic Latina/o identity, expands the notion of what Latina/o might include. Even though Cruz’s play is not particularly Latina/o, audiences might identify Life is a Dream with Cruz, his previous body of work, and a sense of relation with Latina/o culture. As suggested by Flores, “Any instance of cultural expression by Latinos themselves may serve as a healthy corrective to the ceaseless barrage of stereotypes that go to define what is ‘Latino’ in the public mind” (185). From a U.S. cultural perspective, the lack of Latina/o markers, as well as stereotypes, in this play actually challenges audiences to consider Cruz’s influence, and broaden their understanding of what “Latina/o” might include. However, some audiences may not find their horizons broadened; they may simply find nothing Cuban or Latina/o in the play. Moreover, Latina/o audiences may find it difficult to see Cruz’s play as representative of Latinidad because of their own resistance to the idea of a unified Latina/o identity, especially within a U.S. context. As Caminero-Santangelo points out, “A common history is not enough for a collective identity” (20). Instead, Cruz’s play may be viewed as resisting categorization as a Latina/o play not only due to the lack of connection with Cuban culture, but also because Cruz’s own experience as a Cuban immigrant is insufficient to suggest that his writing represents a collective Cuban-American identity.
Caminero-Santangelo offers two powerful ideas helpful to grappling with Cruz. First, she proposes that the latent possibility of identifying as Latin American and of conceiving of a common continental history vis-à-vis both Spain and the United States can nonetheless be given new life under the right set of circumstances within the United States. And second, she suggests that the invocation of a common history is more important than the factual existence of shared historical circumstances (20-21). Given these insights, I conclude that while Cruz’s adaptation may be identified as Latino, it forges a connection between the Spanish Golden Age and contemporary U.S. culture by contributing to the formation of an assimilated Latinidad.

**LIFE IS A DREAM AS AN ECHO OF LA VIDA ES SUENO**

Rather than attempt to challenge notions of imperialism, Cruz’s assimilated Latinidad instead offers an homage to Calderón, an homage that assumes that plays from the Spanish Golden Age can resonate with audiences today. Despite the adaptive changes made to Calderón’s story, the overall meaning or essence remains intact. Cruz’s play exists as an echo, or a nostalgic resonance, of the Spanish Golden Age, and as such, helps to revitalize interest in Spanish Golden Age literature, scholarship, and theatre production. The characters Astolfo and Estrella are excellent examples of a preserved echo from the Spanish Golden Age. Instead of altering these characters to appeal to contemporary readers and audiences, Cruz preserves Astolfo and Estrella by having them fulfill plot functions similar to those of Calderón’s original story. It is important to recognize that Astolfo and Estrella create a love triangle with Rosaura that moves forward the plot concerning Rosaura’s revenge, and because they are in line to inherit Basilio’s throne, which moves forward the plot concerning Segismundo and the
prophecy. Cruz recognizes Astolfo and Estrella as necessary to the structure of the play, and unlike other translators, he does not adapt them as comedic, crude, or secondary to the overall plot. Whereas Astolfo is eloquent and poetic, Estrella is severe, transparent, and possesses a threatening defensiveness:

Astolfo. It is most apt to say
that rays of vanished comets
and a burst of music
greets your presence.
And a symphony of fountains
announces your arrival,
as if they were welcoming
the goddess of spring.
Bullets shoot into the air
as if they were greeting
the goddess of war.
Birds welcome you with gladness
after a bashful night
and greet you, as if
you were goddess of dawn.
The goddess of my soul.

Estrella. It is unwise
for you to flatter me with praise,
since your words
do not match your actions.
And your fine compliments
seem to contradict
everything I see before me.
If your sweet words
are preparing for war,
let me just warn you
that I’m armed for the battle
For it is base to flatter
with the tongue
and wish evil
with the heart. (Cruz 13)

Astolfo goes on to explain that he and Estrella are in competition for the throne, but Cruz cuts the text in a way that does not allow Astolfo’s affections toward Estrella to fully develop. Astolfo simply states that Estrella should not doubt him. It leaves the feeling that Astolfo is perhaps not sincere. Regardless, the changes that Cruz makes do not alter the fact that Astolfo is still courting Estrella, if only in a superficial way. 

When Astolfo attempts to woo Estrella, he finds that she does not trust him because she thinks he’s in love with the woman on the portrait in his necklace. Estrella says that Astolfo’s words are empty, because as long as he wears the necklace she thinks he loves another woman. He promises to remove the necklace, but does not. Then he
exits. At this point, it seems as though he is in love with the woman in the portrait, and it should be clear to Estrella that this is true. However, Astolfo leaves because he has to go and get the portrait. This would be clear to the audience, because they would see that Astolfo was not wearing a necklace. In Cruz’s translation Estrella states, “whose portrait you carry around your neck” (37). She does not say “that portrait you sometimes wear.” Cruz writes a line of dialogue stating that something exists when it does not. We also realize later that Astolfo really does love Estrella, because he comes back saying, “here’s the portrait” but there are “…” marks to indicate that he cuts himself out of surprise at seeing Rosaura. He is clearly not expecting her, and also clearly willing to part with the portrait without giving a second thought. All of this indicates a careful understanding of how this relationship serves the main plot, which corresponds to Cruz’s decision to preserve the ending of the play. Cruz does not alter Calderón’s choice to have Segismundo marry Estrella and force Rosaura to marry Astolfo. Consideration that this ending might upset contemporary readers and audiences suggests that the need to exploit a romantic plot line for the sake of audience response is less important to Cruz than preserving an echo of the Spanish Golden Age.

In addition to Astolfo and Estrella, the gracioso Clarín is equally sustained as an echo or resonance as a stock character from the Spanish Golden Age. The depiction of Clarín as a comic fool, a gracioso, is similar in Calderón and in Cruz’s adaptation. When the action returns to the prison cave, Clarín is found locked up because Clotaldo is worried he might talk too much and reveal the illusion that he and Basilio hope for: that Segismundo will believe his time in the castle was just a dream. It is interesting that Clarín, the servant and gracioso, is a dangerous character that threatens to undo their plot.
He fulfils the traditional function of the Spanish Golden Age fool in that he knows more that the other characters and has valuable information, but also serves as an outside observer, commenting on the other characters’ actions. However, in Calderón’s play, the gracioso is included as part of the Spanish Golden Age tradition. Cruz refashions this character type by including a section that is missing from other translations, but contains significant imagery that is part of Calderón’s play. Segismundo uses a comparison between life and nature to explain to the soldiers that life is short and that we often do not know what we have until it is gone: “Just like that young almond tree which unadvised, rushes to bloom before its time and finds its flowers wilted before it’s spring” (Cruz 48). The decision to include the almond tree analogy exemplifies how Cruz cuts lengthy description to create contemporary dialogue and quicken the overall pace, while preserving symbolism included in Calderón’s text.

Finally, Cruz preserves the integrity of important themes that were relevant during the Spanish Golden Age, yet resonate with audiences today. The two most recognized themes include the honor code and the battle between fate and free will. In the scene when Clotaldo refuses to help Rosaura kill Astolfo, because Astolfo risked his life to defend Clotaldo, Cruz not only preserves but emphasizes the Spanish Golden Age honor code. Cruz condenses a few long speeches by Rosaura and Clotaldo into five short lines that ultimately get to the point: “I don’t have to remind you that the man who gives will always excel the man who receives. I’m asking you to give me back my honor, since giving is nobler than receiving” (52). Clotaldo responds, “I will not kill Astolfo and add more blood and suffering to a country that has fallen into the hands of misfortune” (Cruz 52). The Racz translation also includes these long speeches. Cruz, however, alters the
dialogue so that Clotaldo explicitly states what he will not do. Other versions have him less forceful and decisive, with no mention specifically of killing Astolfo. With Clotaldo, and many other characters, Cruz alters the text to create these decisive and strong characterizations. Of even more importance is how Cruz manages to uphold the essence of the Spanish Golden Age honor code. Cruz preserves the ending that Calderón wrote, where Segismundo commands Astolfo to wed Rosaura, thus restoring her honor. Other translators focus on the relationship between Segismundo and Rosaura and have them wed. This change is popular with contemporary audiences, but Cruz writes an ending that respects the Golden Age virtue of restoring honor.

Along with the preservation of the honor code, the battle between fate and free will is played out in Cruz’s adaptation as an argument between a father and a son. In the moment after Segismundo throws the servant out the window, Basilio rebukes Segismundo and points out that his anger is “proof” that fate trumps free will. Basilio does not ask why Segismundo is angry or why he killed the servant. He does not listen. He does not attempt to understand. It is as if he has made up his mind. He does not offer a relationship, and when he suggests the impossibility of having one, Segismundo rejects him. Segismundo states, “Who would want the embrace of a father who mistreats his son?” (Cruz 31-2). His argument is valid and rational. He is not crazy, or out of his mind. Basilio wishes he had never been born, and Segismundo says that Basilio’s actions made him this way. Finally, Basilio threatens that Segismundo’s experience in the palace might all be a dream, an idea that he hopes takes root, so that he can write off his son forever. Cruz cuts the text in this moment to increase the pace and provide an added level of tension, but the essential meaning and integrity of the scene remains intact.
Indeed, this four-hundred-year old story is relevant today, and therefore does not need additional filtering or adapting in order to make sense within a contemporary context.

**PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE**

*Cruz’s Life is a Dream* premiered at the South Coast Repertory theatre in Costa Mesa, California, on February 9, 2007. Almost exactly one year later, Cruz’s adaptation was produced at Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Both productions provide an opportunity to examine the work as a theatrical event. Although neither production utilized elements that might connect the Spanish Golden Age with *Latinidad*, South Coast Repertory’s production reinforced the unmarked nature of Cruz’s adaptation, while Seton Hill University’s production presented the play as a product of the Spanish Golden Age. Using Thomas Postlewait’s model for historical inquiry, I analyze the productions at South Coast Repertory and Seton Hill University as theatrical events within a narrative context involving four factors. According to Postlewait, these four contributing factors – world, agents, reception, and artistic heritage – need to be understood as part of the event as well as part of the context (15). When applied to the productions at South Coast Repertory and Seton Hill University, these factors elicit questions related to four areas of investigation: the world (i.e. audience demographic and professional/educational goals), agency involved with acting issues, the director’s concept, the selection and interpretation of text, and explanation of design choices, the reception of Cruz’s play from the director’s perspective, and the director’s view on the cultural implications involving Cruz’s play and assimilation.

In order to understand more about these productions, I interviewed Alex Boyles, an MFA actor at the Ohio State University who had seen a performance of Cruz’s *Life is
a Dream at South Coast Repertory, on October 20, 2011. When asked about the world of the play for the production at South Coast Repertory, Boyles explained, “I don’t recall anything Spanish or Latino. That being said, I know that Nilo Cruz wrote this version of the play, so there must have been, but I don’t remember.” When asked to describe the setting, Boyles commented, “There was a big mountain on stage, but it didn’t look like a rock. It looked futuristic to me, and all the costumes reflected that as well. I remember it being red. Red seemed to be an important color. I remember that they had soldiers that did this weird dance thing when they crossed the stage.” When asked about the setting, Boyles said, “It seemed to come from this dream sort of landscape, and it was weird. It was other-worldly. You wouldn’t have been, like… ‘Oh, that’s Boston.’ It wasn’t like that at all.” Based on these observations, it appeared that the director, Kate Whoriskey, was either uninterested in creating a world that reflected an understanding of Cruz’s previous work and contribution to Latina/o drama, or felt that the unspecified setting was in invitation to create a futuristic world for her production.

In addition to elements of design, another significant factor affecting the event and its context involves reception. Theatre reviews for South Coast Repertory’s 2007 production confirm the observations made by Boyles concerning the odd, futuristic set. According to Tom Titus’s review in the online newspaper, Daily Pilot, “the program lists no time nor place for South Coast Repertory’s production of Life is a Dream, but the Spanish epic, though it dates back to the 17th century, appears to be set in some futuristic, militaristic society where rulers are guided by astrological whims.” Bob Verini’s review in Variety criticizes Whoriskey’s directorial concept as “tentative and undercooked,” and adds that the muscular, expressive text “doesn’t sit well with Whoriskey’s production.
choices, which seem capricious at best. Because King Basilio is an astrologer, his kingdom is contrived to look like Mars with glowing planets flown in or carried on poles.” Just as Boyles commented on the odd movement of the soldiers, Verini notes:

the courtiers and soldiers, costumed by Ilona Somogyi as if in an old Buck Rogers serial, periodically hip-hop across the stage – not the Russell Simmons kind, but actual hopping. As if no one trusted the poetry to speak for itself, lines and whole speeches are arbitrarily sung to music with occasional stabs at flamenco dancing, bringing an unanticipated (and unwelcome) touch of Zarzuela to Life is a Dream. (www.variety.com)

In addition to the direction and design, Verini also recognizes this production as “the unveiling of an admirable translation/adaptation commissioned from Nilo Cruz,” and goes on to mention that Cruz not only cut large sections of Calderón’s text, but also “substitutes for the original’s multiple rhyming and metric styles, a lean, sinewy free verse more reminiscent of Garcia Lorca than the baroque Golden Age.” Both reviews by Verini and Titus substantiate my observations and arguments concerning the setting and Cruz’s textual changes.

Compared with South Coast Repertory’s production, which fully utilized the unmarked space created by Cruz to shape a bizarre world for the play, the production of Life is a Dream at Seton Hill University moved in the opposite direction, striving to recreate a vague notion of the Spanish Golden Age. On November 18, 2011, I interviewed four artists involved with the production at Seton Hill University: director Kellee Van Aken, set designer Karen Glass, costume designer Sue O’Neill, and undergraduate actor Brendan Duffy, who played the role of Basilio. My initial questions
focused on how educational goals and audience demographics affected the world of the play. Van Aken explained that due to fact that this play was produced at a university, education was a primary component. When asked about audience demographics, Van Aken stated “our audience is the university community for the most part.” She described how the theatre department had previously been located in another building at the top of a hill on campus, but had very recently been relocated to a newly built theatre center in the downtown area of Greensburg, away from the main campus. Of the new space, Glass stated, “We have a different audience here. Because of the theatre being in the middle of downtown, and just because communication has improved with the community outside of the university, we bring a better amount of the community in.” I asked if there were any difficulties or challenges involved with producing a Spanish Golden Age adaptation for a university audience. Both Van Aken and Glass said that their audiences have a sense that their department produces a variety of genres and styles, and that due to this variety, there is not a need to call attention to issues associated with producing either Spanish Golden Age drama, or Spanish Golden Age adaptations. This leads me to suspect that the faculty at Seton Hill are concerned with exposing students and audiences to classical drama, but do not focus on original practice staging and acting, historical knowledge and context, relocation, revitalization, or issues involved with performing translated language.

I was surprised to learn that there seemed to be a degree of misunderstanding concerning the issue of language. While discussing the decision to produce Life is a Dream, Glass explained that their season selection committee has a formula where a “classic” play is produced every other year. When asked about the term “classic,” Glass stated that the agreed definition within the theatre department is “something with elevated
language,” and explained that plays from the Spanish Golden Age are given production consideration using this definition. There seemed to be a lack of awareness that Spanish Golden Age plays in English are not necessarily translated using language styles that might be considered elevated. In addition, the student actor who played Basilio described his process as if Cruz’s language required the development of an archaic period style of delivery. Duffy explained that when he began preparing the role of Basilio, he had not yet learned anything about the Spanish Golden Age. When asked about performing the language, Duffy stated, “The dissociation from how we speak now is something very different, and knowing how fundamental it is to communicate the action of the play and make sure that everything propels in the direction that it needs to go,… I don’t know if using a form of speech that we don’t necessarily use today is related to the Spanish Golden Age or not, but I guess I think that’s true for anything classical.” It appeared that he was unaware of Spanish Golden Age polymetry and the development of Life is a Dream as a translation. Other agents involved with the context of this production may have influenced Duffy’s perception.

As the director, Van Aken was responsible for selecting the translation, developing a conceptual vision, and interpreting the text for rehearsals. During the interview, Van Aken informed me that the decision to produce Life is a Dream had been made by the department, but she was responsible for selecting the Cruz adaptation after having consulted multiple versions. Van Aken explained, “I thought Cruz had a beautiful sense of language and imagery, and his adaptation had a beautiful flow that was an approachable linguistic style for the students.” It was unclear exactly how Van Aken directed students to deliver this particular style of language, but it was clear that she
picked up on the Spanish Golden Age resonance, and attempted to communicate a Spanish essence with her director’s concept. When asked why she chose to set the play in the Spanish Golden Age, given the fact that Cruz does not specify a setting, Van Aken explained, “It was hard to dissociate the play from the culture of Spain, and the ideas that Calderón has embedded in the play about honor and fate. They’re very much of the time period, and part of the value of doing the play in the first place was setting it in the period so that the students would have the experience of doing a period piece.”

Despite Van Aken’s sense that the Spanish Golden Age resonates with Cruz’s adaptation, the actual echo of the Spanish Golden Age appears to have been lost in this production. Rather than incorporate interpretations of this text from the perspective of a theatre historian, Van Aken addressed interpretive questions solely from a practical viewpoint, with her cast and audience in mind. The ending of the play and the portrayal of Segismundo were two areas that concerned Van Aken. She expressed her surprise that the students were dissatisfied with the fact that Segismundo marries Estrella and forces Rosaura to marry Astolfo. Van Aken said, “the cast questioned why the wrong people seem to end up together, and we talked about that in terms of rank and honor, the world being ordered, and that romantic love is nice, but the things that are going to carry you through life are maintaining those status quo issues. Ultimately, for me, the characters recognize the value of those choices, and I think that that’s in the text.” Although Van Aken justified her decision to preserve the ending with a description of the Spanish honor code, her rationale for Segismundo’s characterization had more to do with human emotion and audience appeal than historical context and information in Cruz’s play. Van Aken also decided that Segismundo should be portrayed as an “over educated human,”
rather than a monster. When asked how she interpreted text referring to Segismundo as inhuman, or as a beast, Van Aken stated her opinion that the other characters in the play are warped by their perception and expectation of Segismundo based on predictions Basilio received from the heavens. When asked if Segismundo was confused about his actions regarding the murder of his servant in the castle, Van Aken stated, “No. He was not confused. He knew exactly what he was doing.” This interpretation causes confusion because a rational, human character would be less likely to commit murder than an irrational beast, or a monster. This was left unaddressed in the interview, but the contribution of other agents helped to reinforce Van Aken’s Spanish concept for the production.

Both Glass and O’Neill worked to design and build the world of the play according to Van Aken’s ideas. Glass pointed out that the stage space for Seton Hill’s production of Life is a Dream was very small, and thus required a unit set. She explained, “the proscenium opening is about twenty feet wide and about ten feet high, with no wing space or backstage space to speak of.” Based on photographs taken of the production, it was clear that Glass utilized area staging. The center stage area was used for Basilio’s castle, and there was an area on stage right for Segismundo’s tower cave. One of the unique challenges Glass encountered involved the scene where Clarín is placed in prison. Glass explains, “the original concept was to have flat panels, but it was too complicated. The idea distilled down to floor plates with a hook and chain, so that actors could carry the “prison” out on stage when they had to, stand on it, and appear chained to the floor.” In addition to space considerations, Glass developed a color palate based on images of Spanish castles from a book given to her by Van Aken. It was
obvious during the interview that Glass and O’Neill worked well together; Glass felt that O’Neill’s costume design effectively distilled the Spanish Golden Age. O’Neill explained how many of the costumes helped to reinforce Van Aken’s concept of rank such that “the more jeweled tone and wealthy colors were for wealthier characters.” O’Neill’s color palate also helped to communicate changes in rank. When Rosaura changes from being dressed as a man to disguising herself as Andrea, the color of her costume goes from a brown, sandy color to a beautiful pink dress.

Van Aken’s interpretation of the text, along with her opinion regarding the authority of a playwright provided a justification for various production choices. When asked about cuts or changes to the script, Van Aken said that changes were made to shorten long sections of dialogue, but overall she followed what was given in the text. I asked if she felt that directors have a responsibility to the authority of the playwright, and found that Van Aken agreed that they do. She said, “I think it’s tricky when the playwright is being translated and their voice is coming through an adaptor, so I picked my adapter [Cruz]. I picked the voice I wanted to hear, basically. I liked his interpretation of Calderón’s voice the best.” With that being said, I asked if she felt that the Cruz adaptation resonated with a Latina/o or Cuban influence. Van Aken replied, “I don’t know whether I’d say it sounded Latino. I wouldn’t know enough about the Cuban American experience to recognize it in an adaptation of a Spanish Golden Age play. In my mind, part of the job of a translator is to be true to the text, so I’m actually trusting in their integrity as a translator based on their reputation as a writer.” Given that Cruz does not reveal explicit references to Latina/o culture in his adaptation, it is understandable that Van Aken would not perceive any connection.
As it turned out, Van Aken did not feel the need to address the fact that the adaptation she chose for production was written by a Latino playwright, and that this play connected the Spanish Golden Age culture with Cruz’s Latino heritage and ethnicity. According to Richard Gordon, certain film directors, “draw on what amounts to the mythic status of the stories that the colonial texts tell, and exploit the inherited malleability of existing cultural icons in the process of re-conceiving the nations’ cultural heritage, of making the past relevant for the present, and of shaping their own, new national icons” (10). Similarly, theatre directors within an educational theatre setting often assimilate texts through a process that does not require a re-conception of the past, but instead places it in the foreground to comment on shared ideas of identity. The production of Cruz’s play at Seton Hill University serves as an example of a production that resists adherence to a strict directorial concept. Production choices were made without any known references to Latinidad and staging choices appeared arbitrary. All of this points to the profound need for increased support of Spanish Golden Age and Latina/o theatre research and instruction at the university level, and a need for both additional translations and productions of Spanish Golden Age and Latina/o plays.
Chapter 3 – José Rivera’s New World (W)rights the Old World

Jose Rivera’s 1999 adaptation Sueño offers a perspective on the Spanish Golden Age that contrasts with that of Nilo Cruz. As a versatile and highly accomplished Latino writer, Rivera is perhaps the most well-known contemporary Puerto Rican playwright in the United States. Rivera was born in Puerto Rico, immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1959, and settled in Long Island, New York. His interest in writing was sparked at an early age, but was not exclusively limited to writing for the theatre. Rivera is possibly better known for his screenplay for the film The Motorcycle Diaries (2004), which earned him the honor of becoming the first Puerto Rican to be nominated for an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay. In addition to this honor, Rivera’s plays have also garnered prestigious awards and critical acclaim. Some of his more noteworthy plays include The House of Ramon Iglesia (1983), The Promise (1988), Marisol (1992), Cloud Tectonics (1995), Sueño (1999), References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot (2000), Sonnets for an Old Century (2000), School of the Americas (2006), and Brainpeople (2008). Over time, Rivera’s writing style has developed from traditional realism to incorporate experiments in surrealism. According to David Savran, The House of Ramon Iglesia makes use of a straightforward, kitchen-sink realism, which contrast with his later turn to magic realism, in part the result of his studies with Gabriel García Márquez, and also in part to his coming to terms with the richness of traditional Puerto Rican culture (165-6). In addition to developing themes in his plays related to Latina/o culture, Rivera
is adept at creating stunning visual images and mind-bending scenarios that test the boundaries of reality. It is no surprise that his experimentation includes an adaptation of Calderón’s *La vida es sueño*, a play that deals specifically with the illusion of dreams and the reality of waking life. In his own adaptation of this classic Spanish story, Rivera makes less of an attempt than Cruz to imitate the structure of *La vida es sueño* and makes radical changes by writing additional scenes, a new ending, and alternative actions for some of the characters.

Rivera’s message is far from a celebration of Spanish Golden Age culture. In fact, right from the prologue scene he adds to Calderón’s version, Rivera presents the possibility that there is evil in the Spanish Golden Age. The new prologue scene depicts the moments immediately following the birth of Segismundo. A servant brings the baby Segismundo to Basilio, explaining that the Queen has died in childbirth. Basilio proclaims that Segismundo is guilty, as a man, of murder, an outlandish remark that prompts Clotaldo to respond, “He has your eyes, sire” (Rivera 12). This simple statement connects father and son, and reminds the audience that these men share similar qualities, or at least the same blood. In response, Basilio immediately begins to pray to God for help. He prays for the power to change his infant son’s fate, to save Spain, and to save himself. Basilio leaves, the baby cries, and in an act of compassion, Clotaldo asks a servant for some milk to feed the baby. Unlike Calderón’s play, or other translations, Rivera’s prologue creates a sense of humanity or vulnerability for these characters. The following scene opens in a similar manner to the traditional beginning of the play, with Rosaura and Clarín stumbling upon Segismundo’s prison. Rivera beautifully describes the prison cave as “more like a wound than a door” and a “deep uterus out of which
midnight’s darkness itself is born” (15). When Segismundo appears, he states that he is being punished for a sin that his father believes he committed when he was born, the murder of his mother. This is the first adaptation to show a dark side to Calderón’s dream.

Along with this dark tone, Rivera chooses not replicate the meter or poetry of Calderón’s play, but instead writes dialogue that is descriptive and modern. He also blends beautiful metaphors with crude, sarcastic language to create a unique style that transforms the language of Golden Age Spain into a more contemporary idiom. Clarín is particularly profane, but very funny. When the guards drag him away, Rosaura questions what kind of a country is so dishonorable as to hurt a clown, one of many critiques of imperial Spain. Astolfo and Estrella are, like Clarín, very funny, and speak in bizarre and crude metaphors. Their contribution to the plot is unfortunately diminished and mitigated. In the scene where Segismundo wakes up in the castle, Clarín plays a much larger role, telling jokes, commenting on the action, and humoring Segismundo, while Astolfo and Estrella appear merely to offer insincere praise and greetings. Estrella’s comments are prepared, read from a piece of paper, and insincere, as she inappropriately speaks aloud the directions she had written to herself to curtsey. Their comments also blend images of Segismundo as both colonizer and colonized, or as savior and demon.

In addition to utilizing a modern style, Rivera alters the action and dialogue to express emotions of anger and hostility towards characters that represent the Old World of imperial Spain. In most translations and adaptations, when Segismundo wakes up in the palace as the prince, he fills with rage and kills a servant by throwing him out of a window. Rivera changes this action so that Segismundo blinds the servant by gouging
out his eyes. In this moment, Rivera focuses on Segismundo’s newly discovered power, or more specifically, his ability to do what he pleases and call it the Law. Rivera’s Segismundo is a spoiled tyrant who claims that the servant is speaking treason. He tells everyone around him to “Shut up,” and reacts with violence when he is told that he cannot enforce punishment. The resolution of this scene closely follows the action in most other translations, but Rivera turns the tables in the confrontation between Basilio and Segismundo. As a prince, Segismundo verbally attacks Basilio for not being a real father; he claims that his imprisonment is similar to being locked away as a political prisoner during a dirty war.

Rivera writes dialogue that shows how, as a symbol, Segismundo is both a product of Spain and a representative of the New World. After being placed back in his tower prison, Segismundo awakes and questions the nature of his dreams, but then remembers that Clotaldo told him he was the heir to the Spanish throne. In this moment, Rivera helps to establish a connection between Spain and the New World. After the soldiers arrive and free Segismundo, they explain to him how he was drugged and made to believe that his reality was a dream. As in most translations, Segismundo behaves as if this is also a dream, but Rivera writes dialogue that shows Segismundo wrestling, just as many Latino/as in the United States do, with a diverse, composite identity. Segismundo says, “Let’s dream of conquest and justice! Let’s dream of armies and liberation! Let’s dream of honor and sweet revenge!” (Rivera 62-3). Each pair of dreamed ideas contains one image of the Spaniard, with conquest, armies, and honor, and one dream of the colonized man of the New World, with justice, liberation, and revenge. In the following scene, Basilio describes the two warring factions as two halves of the country as if they
were two equal halves of one identity. Basilio knows that he is defeated, and says that they must escape to the New World. In his final speech, Segismundo describes the scene as a conquest, and points out that by trying to keep him from becoming wild, Basilio made him wild. As two halves of one identity, Rivera reveals an understanding that Latinidad involves a connection or relationship between the Old and New Worlds.

In his introductory notes, Rivera admits that he has never adapted a play before and that he felt it was untranslatable. He comments that he wanted to be faithful to the story, but then provides no explanation for wanting to change the ending. His notes describe how his decision to create twentieth-century characterizations was based on an article he read saying that Calderón wrote archetypes instead of fully developed characters. Although many scholars may disagree and argue that the characters in Calderón’s play are indeed carefully and completely developed, it is possible that the idea of character or characterization was different in the seventeenth century. The point, however, is that Rivera reveals his intent by publishing his rationale for adapting characters, and justifies his choice by arguing that the story of an adaptation is the story of a relationship. Rivera concludes by writing that his play is “either a dance, a dialogue, a duet, or a duel between you the adaptor and the original creator – for Calderón and me, it’s been all of the above” (8). This relationship between Rivera and Calderón validates the ability to comment on the present by communicating with the past, and emphasizes that Rivera’s message is far from a celebration of Spanish Golden Age culture.

By contrast to the ways in which Cruz writes back to Spain, either to re-evaluate character relationships or resolve tension, Rivera’s adaptation betrays a sense of anger towards neo-imperialist forms of oppression against Latina/os and Latina/o culture.
Rivera does not write, much less wright, an homage echoing the Spanish Golden Age master. Rossini defines *wrighting* as “a simultaneous act of creation, correction, and cultural positioning” (24). Unlike Cruz, Rivera engages in an act of wrighting back to Spain, creating new scenes and revising details of Calderón’s play, and thus culturally (re)positioning or reclaiming Latina/o identity by resisting assimilation. Aparicio suggests that the process of reclaiming the “tropics” as a cultural site is a way of rewriting and transforming “American” culture with Latina/o signifiers (796). Rivera’s play is indeed invested in transforming contemporary culture, which includes all American cultures, by wrighting back to Spain, as well as by reclaiming Latina/o signifiers. These semiotic markers are not necessarily tropicalized, but include meanings that signal readers and audiences to consider how Spanish conquest and colonization of the Caribbean affects Latina/os living in the United States. Aparicio argues that language from the Hispanic Caribbean illustrates tensions between the dominant discourse on *Latinidad* emerging from the United States and the voices of Latina/os who “constantly appropriate this very same discourse, re-tropicalizing it with new, politicized, transgressive, and ‘trans-creative’ meanings” (194-5). Although his play is not connected with a tropical location such as Puerto Rico, as a Latino playwright, Rivera creates specific binaries in *Sueño* that present ideas and characters as different or “other” than the social or cultural norm. Clearly indebted to Said’s ideas concerning orientalism, the term tropicalization has been employed in diverse contexts, and may be extended to embrace Latin America and, in more radical and innovative ways, the United States (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1). Using theories of tropicalization and diaspora, together with
Rossini’s theory of wrighting, I suggest that Rivera’s play is engaged in a process of simultaneous distancing and connecting.

At the same time that Rivera unleashes anger towards Spain, creating a rift between the past and the present, he also provides a sense that contemporary Latina/o identity is forever connected to imperial Spain. Despite the fact that both activities occur simultaneously throughout the play, each contributes to the appropriation of the Spanish Golden Age as well as to the adaptation’s exploration of Latina/o identity. First, it is important to recognize the Old World/New World binary that Rivera establishes early on to visualize the distance between cultures. This binary allows Rivera an opportunity to express his anger, criticize imperial Spanish culture and values, and ultimately separate, or segregate, notions of heritage from ethnicity. Having discussed the anger and apparent void between the Old and New World in his work, it is possible to view elements of Rivera’s play as representations of both worlds. This chapter will analyze the play as an expression of anger against Spanish imperialism, the contrasts it draws between the Old and New Worlds, and the connection it nevertheless forges between those worlds. In the end, the chapter will show that Rivera’s adaptation resolves the tension between the Old and New Worlds by including elements that are common to both: father/son dynamics, comedic language, and a code of honor.

THE OLD WORLD / NEW WORLD BINARY

Rivera criticizes Spanish Golden Age culture using a binary that positions the Old World against the New World. Before analyzing the potential meaning of the New World, it is important to identify how this term has been understood. First, the New World is a term used to designate the land in North, Central, and South America.
discovered by Spanish explorers and colonizers. The New World may also be used to
differentiate Spain from its colonies, or designate an area that is foreign. Although
Rivera does not provide a definition for the “New World” in his play, I argue that within
the context of my analysis, the “New World” refers to any idea, space, or person that
embodies an identity contemporary and segregated from, or even directly opposed to,
 imperial Spain. In addition, I feel it is important to consider how readers or audiences
perceive Old World imperialism in relation to post-colonial, New World culture.
According to Gilbert and Tompkins, “The center-margin model for understanding
imperialism can be problematic and, at times, inadequate, since many current forms of
cultural domination intersect and interact” (256). However, the diagram presented in the
last chapter, which includes the contemporary United States, Spanish Golden Age, and
Latinidad, helps by providing a post-colonial framework. Because Latina/o identity is in
a constant state of change, it is necessary to conceive of a model that allows for identity
to be negotiated between various cultures. Instead of viewing Rivera’s adaptation within
a framework that privileges the connection between Puerto Rican and U.S. culture, the

27 The idea that the New World designates a specific land mass is reinforced by Jonathan
Hart in Columbus, Shakespeare and the Interpretation of the New World when he refers
to the New World as “the islands and mainland of America, or the Indies, or the
Americas” (2). According to popular sources for information, such as Wikipedia, the
New World is “one of the names used for the Western Hemisphere, specifically the

28 The New World has been referred to as something foreign or as a newly born land.
According to Fredi Chiapelli’s First Images of America, found in the research edited by
Marvin Lunenfeld for Discovery, Invasion, Encounter, the New World may be
understood as being distant and devoid of civilization, as well as “so new and infantine,
that he is yet to learne [sic] his A.B.C.” (289-91). Alternative ideas concerning the
meaning and interpretation of the New World are supported by G.R. Crone’s writing in
The Discovery of America that Columbus thought he was in a “‘new heaven and a new
world’ in which the natural laws of the old world did not hold invariably” (143).
diagram represents a transcultural intersection, suggesting a potential connection between Spanish heritage and Latina/o identity.

In *Sueño*, Rivera’s consistent references to the New World and the Old World provide a context from which to examine the nature of the relationship between contemporary Latina/o culture and the Spanish Golden Age. Specifically, Rivera’s changes to Calderón’s original story highlight a distinct tension between the Old World and the New World. First of all, Rivera chooses to set the play in Spain in 1635. This is an odd choice, because not only does it conflict with Calderón’s setting the play in Poland, but it presents confusion due to the fact that Philip IV was King of Spain during this time, and not some fictional character named Basilio. Scholar Maria C. Quintero writes: “The play requires us to accept a strict historical milieu for the action, but to forget the ‘real’ historical figures and substitute them with fictional players. Rivera is thus historicizing the action and making it alien at the same time” (131). This presents a direct conflict between what audiences would know to be true about this time and place and what Rivera selects for his play. According to Quintero, “If Rivera means to provide a commentary on the conquest, colonization, and genocide associated with the Imperial Spain he so insistently invokes, it is surprising that his Rosaura and Clarín hail from, of all places, Poland” (131). While it seems strange that Rivera would have Rosaura and Clarín arrive from Poland, the country where Calderón set his play, this does not discourage reference to Spanish conquest, colonization, and genocide. The decision to set his play in Spain, instead of Poland, helps to signal the audience that Calderón’s play was written in the country, era, and culture that Rivera’s adaptation criticizes.
Rivera highlights the Spanish-ness within his play to criticize Old World culture. Although Rivera follows a similar structural outline for his adaptation of Calderón’s play, he also includes scenes that do not match with Calderón’s. Each time the text of the adaptation strays from that of Calderón’s, it is worth questioning why, and if this is an indication of some point that Rivera wishes to address to his audience, or what effect this would likely have on his audience, regardless of his wishes. The opening scene of Sueño is a good example. There is nothing adapted in this originally conceived moment. Rivera allows his imagination to consider what it must have been like for Basilio and Clotaldo to ponder the fate of their country, just minutes after the birth of Segismundo.

The overall effect of Rivera’s opening scene is to put distance between imperialist Spanish culture and contemporary Latina/o culture in order to discredit imperial Spain and provide support for Latinidad against Old World values. According to Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman, “Latino/a writers and performers are standing the dominant culture’s stereotypes and images on their heads from the margins, resemanticizing them” (12). In the opening scene, Rivera’s writing creates an Old World versus New World binary by creating distance and revising stereotypes. Calderón’s play mentions the prophecy that Segismundo will grow up to be a tyrant, but Rivera takes it a step further and suggests that Segismundo will “cut the kingdom in two in an endless and tragic civil war. And he’ll trample my dishonored corpse on his way to the throne” (11). Rivera elaborates on the prophecy to add civil war and the trampling of Basilio’s corpse in order to either portray Basilio as unstable and erratic, or to indicate the given circumstances of this new adaptation. Either way, Basilio is depicted as the old king, willing to put his child in prison based on events and predictions founded in magic and pagan practices. If Basilio
is read as a representation of the Old World, Rivera’s emphasis on Basilio’s negative qualities encourages readers and audiences to view Old World values as negative as well.

Rivera fashions the character of Rosaura as a product of the New World. Her first impression of Spain communicates an opinion that the Old World is ugly, morbid, and full of tension: an “ugly desert…some freak frontier” (Rivera 14). She questions if it even is Spain. It’s true that she is lost, but it also means that her idea of Spain is not what it is in reality. It is as if she had hoped it would be less ugly. Rosaura’s reaction may be interpreted to suggest that the Spanish Golden Age is an ugly, barren, and freakish time and place. Rivera then has Rosaura state, “It looks vaguely Spanish: morbid and feisty all at the same time. Hey, Spain! Is this how you stamp the passport of every new immigrant to your country – in blood? (No answer.) But since when have the lost and dishonored of the world every found pity” (14). Although Rivera does not specifically write dialogue addressing the history and culture of the Old World, Rosaura expresses her frustration using a rhetorical question that implies a legacy of Spanish violence and cruelty. Rivera imagines a morbid and feisty version of imperial Spain through Rosaura’s dialogue. In doing so, Rivera depicts the Spanish Golden Age in a very negative light.

While Rosaura is not necessarily the voice of the playwright, she does seem to represent the voice of the play: her language communicates a direct and clear tension. When Rosaura shouts at Spain, it is as if the adaptation shouts or wrights back to Spain. Rosaura’s question is very odd in that it deals with immigration and blood, two things that do not connect with the action within the scene. This incongruity may be explained using theories of diaspora. According to Braziel and Mannur, “Diaspora can perhaps be
seen as a naming of the other which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile” (1). As an immigrant, Rosaura’s journey may be seen as a form of displacement or dislocation. It is interesting to note that when we meet her, Rosaura is angry, expressing her hostility towards Spain. Her explanation that there is no answer from Spain provokes a response in the audience that there is a need to communicate and arrive at a satisfactory answer. Rosaura refers to herself as lost and dishonored, which perhaps epitomizes the position of the colonized, or the displaced. As the play’s voice, Rosaura speaks for the New World, and yet she lives and exists within the Old World. Stuart Hall describes the “New World” presence as the “beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference,” and suggests a definition of diaspora as “the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity,’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference (244). Through Rosaura, Rivera suggests that there is not a global answer to Rosuara’s question. However, Rivera allows for the Old World and the New World binary to be considered within a global context, in the past, present, and on into the future. According to Gilbert and Tompkins, “Changes in the colonizer/colonized dialectic are inevitable when new imperial powers emerge, even if some of their practices replicate those of the recently dismantled European empires” (257). The Old World/New World binary focuses attention on these changing representations of the cultural hegemony exercised by neo-imperial countries.

**ANGER TOWARDS SPAIN**

Latina/os have both a claim to Spanish heritage, as well as justifiable anger towards imperial Spanish violence. According to José Trías Monge, “When colonization
started in earnest in 1508, the Spaniards, undoubtedly for evangelical reasons, distributed
the Indians as slaves among themselves (the encomienda system). Being unaccustomed
to good, Christian hard work, the tainos died in great numbers” (5). In addition to this
violence, the tyrannical style of Spanish colonial authority justifies the anger felt by
Latina/os, specifically those from Puerto Rico. Monge goes on to write: “The Spanish
Crown, assisted by the Council of the Indies, rules on all legislative, executive, judicial,
military, commercial, and even ecclesiastical matters in Puerto Rico; the king’s power
went uncheckd for many centuries (6). The adaptive choices in Rivera’s play address
these violent and oppressive actions involved with Spanish colonialism through
expressions of anger directed towards Old World Spain.

In an introduction to the actor’s script of Sueño, Rivera writes that he is aware of
the relationship between ancient Spain and the New World, and expresses his feelings
about imagining Calderón’s play coming out of a society obsessed with honor at home,
and genocide and conquest of indigenous people abroad (cited in Quintero 129-30). It is
curious that Rivera has Clotaldo remind Segismundo of his heritage and legacy: “You
are, sir, the king’s son, the prince, and the principle heir to the Spanish throne” (37). If
the throne symbolizes a claim to Spanish heritage and legacy, then Segismundo is
inextricably linked with the imperial Spanish society responsible for genocide and
conquest. According to Quintero, “as the descendant of both the conqueror and
conquered, Rivera tries to come to terms with this dual ancestry and patrimony”
(Quintero 137). However, when Segismundo learns the truth that he has been deprived of
the literal throne, along with the power and privilege that accompanies such a title, he
reacts violently: “Clotaldo, you have betrayed your nation by concealing me” (Rivera
Clotaldo responds in Spanish, “Ay de mi triste!” There is an implied sentiment that the Old World has concealed some truth about the Latina/o legacy through an act of betrayal. When Segismundo condemns Clotaldo in anger, he does so in three ways: as the king, as the law, and as himself. These three elements are significant in establishing Segismundo’s identity and his perception of where his identity comes from. Segismundo’s anger may be emblematic of an anger that some Latina/os may feel towards Spain for depriving them of a legitimate legacy through horrific acts of violence that took place during the colonization of the New World. Monge explains that in Puerto Rico, the Indians were supposed to be enlightened by the Spaniards and treated kindly, but instead were promptly extinguished (8). Other acts of violence led to the development of mestizaje, which Diana Taylor explains, carries with it “a history of unequal power relations, racial and sexual domination, and rape: the white male forcing himself on the indigenous woman. The illegitimate, mixed-race child lived the tensions, contradictions, push-pulls, racism, hatred, and self-hatred associated with domination in her or his own flesh” (95). Rivera’s characters, such as Segismundo, express the pain of colonialism and the anger that results from such painful oppression.

In some scenes, Rivera uses ghosts to describe how oppression destroys identity, and also criticizes the Catholic Church, suggesting that religion may be used to limit and oppress Latina/os. First, Rivera uses the idea of ghosts to describe how Latina/o oppression is often ignored or remains unseen in the United States. While wearing a mask, Clotaldo labels or describes Segismundo as a ghost, and tells him that he must remain invisible. Clotaldo’s words express a desire to view Latina/o descendants of Spanish heritage as invisible or non-existent within contemporary Anglo culture in the
United States. Second, Rivera’s adaptation includes moments that are highly critical of Catholic instruction. When Clotaldo teaches Segismundo to read the Bible and think of Christ’s suffering, Segismundo responds by saying, “that black book has taught me a world I would never see beyond this black box” (Rivera 19). Although this seems to suggest that the Bible offers Segismundo an experience outside of his prison, the image presented is that religious instruction is dark, and only reminds him of pain. Segismundo’s irreverence culminates when he describes how he eats the pages of the Bible. He says, “I’ve been eating Bibles and shitting Gospels all my life. The words are written in my tissues now” (Rivera 19). With this, he writhes in pain as if the Bible, and Catholicism itself, are the source of his physical pain. When asked about the political subtext of his play, Rivera remarked: “We’ve inherited a painful relationship to Spain” (Klein 3). Rivera’s statement concerning this painful relationship appeals to the reader’s or audience member’s sense of empathy and pity, as well as suggests a possible source for Rivera’s anger.

Whereas some adaptive changes focus attention on Spanish oppression or the painful relationship with Spain, other changes suggest a need to resist assimilation. This resistance to assimilation is seen most clearly when compared with most other translations or adaptations. For example, Rivera does not begin the third act with Clarín’s monologue, but instead adds two things: Spanish dialogue and a disembodied voice-character. When Rivera’s Clarín begins speaking, he refers to the tower as being “haunted.” This word is not used in other texts, but works on two levels. Yes, this adaptation is a haunting of every other version that has come before, much like what Marvin Carlson suggests, and the disembodied voice creates a sense that a ghost is
somewhere offstage haunting Clarín literally. Rivera also adds dialogue about how Clarín has nightmares of crucified virgins and tortured martyrs. Rivera introduces the word “liberation,” which is not found in other texts, and ends this moment with Segismundo cheering, “Death to foreigners!” The play seems to suggest that Spain is hostile to foreigners, a sentiment not found in Cruz’s version or Racz’s version. The hostility expressed in this scene relates directly with Latina/o anger. Rivera keeps the dream metaphor and imagery present, but the extra description seems included to make this text Rivera’s own unique work of literature. Just as many Latina/os resist various forms of assimilation, Rivera’s play also resists assimilation.

THE LATINA/O EXPERIENCE & CALDERÓN’S PHILOSOPHY

In many ways, Rivera wrights back to Spain by substituting an original story for the philosophy and religious ideas of Calderón. This points to the significance of Rivera’s personal perspective as a factor in the tension between the Old World and the New World. According to Flores, “From a Latino perspective, analysis is guided above all by lived experience and historical memory, factors which tend to be relegated by the dominant approach as either inaccessible or inconsequential” (187). Rivera’s memory and experience emigrating from Puerto Rico, and growing up in the United States, form a basis for understanding his identity. In adapting Calderón’s philosophy into scenes with original ideas, Rivera re-evaluates the connection or influence between Latina/o heritage and ethnicity by suggesting that archaic philosophical debates, such as fate versus free will, are less relevant to contemporary Latina/os than actual lived experience. For example, in the opening scene, Clotaldo speaks about how the stars can only point the way to the future, rather than actually create the future, a lesson that Calderón’s Basilio
learns only at the end of the play. Rivera acknowledges the philosophical argument between fate and free will, but mentions it only to suggest its irrelevance. In another example from the following scene, Rivera focuses on how Rosaura’s and Clarín’s horses have run off because they are afraid, and introduces the detail that their map of the area was in a saddlebag. This new information helps explain that their discovery of Segismundo is an accident due to the fact that they are lost, rather than because of fate. Aparicio suggests: “What on the surface appears to be a praxis that signals cultural assimilation may be defined also as a subversive act: that of writing the Self using the tools of the Master and, in the process, transforming those signifiers with the cultural meanings, values, and ideologies of the subordinate sector” (797). In this case, instead of recycling elements of Calderón’s plot, Rivera removes the issue of fate vs. free will from his adaptation to suggest that the construction of a Latina/o identity requires navigation without formal, prescribed guidelines, or without a map to guide the way.

Rivera redirects Calderón’s philosophical message with details that demonstrate the power that Latina/os to acknowledge heritage while reinventing ethnicity, which subsequently helps connect with contemporary audiences. According to Aparicio, “Literary critics and historians, stage directors and actors have all subjected the comedia to a multiplicity of interpretations and approaches, ranging from the philosophical (the nature of existence itself), to religion (predetermination vs. free will), politics (the nature of monarchial power), and gendered readings (e.g., cross-dressing)” (129). Rivera adds to Aparicio’s list, interpreting Calderón’s comedia by disregarding the issue of fate and distorting historical reality in order to communicate contemporary Latina/o issues. For example, unlike Calderón’s Basilio, Rivera writes that Basilio verbally admits that his
empire is in decline. The question of the decline of the Spanish Empire is a topic that has been debated among scholars today and requires detailed historical contextualizing in order to justify comments that otherwise would be conjectural or speculative. More importantly, it is very unlikely that Phillip IV, or Basilio, would have been aware of the full extent of Spanish decline in the same manner that historians are today. It is even more unlikely that the monarch would specifically talk about the decline of his empire within the context of the story written by Calderón, because in that version took care of his tyrant-to-be son by placing him in a prison. In fact, if Rivera is faithful to the original story, this scene would reveal that Basilio has hope for the future, or views it as impervious to fate.

Rivera’s play communicates that the characters should anticipate violence due to past violence. An excellent example of this occurs early in the play when Rosaura and Clarín arrive in Spain. Clarín questions, “What queer tricksters and fiends accompany the darkness of Castile?” (Rivera 14). This dialogue displays hints of fear and hostility towards imperial Spain, and Rivera expresses the idea that the New World should prepare for the Old World to harm or trick them in some way. Upon approaching the tower, Rosaura says, “That door…looks more like a wound than a door” (Rivera 15). This is the door that leads them to Segismundo. It is curious that the door leading to him is described as a wound. Rivera also adds details that demonize the Old World, and portray imperial Spain as hypocritical, making the New World, and by extension Latina/o identity, appear superior by comparison. One very overlooked detail that Rivera includes is the fact that Basilio ordered, and Clotaldo carried out, the murder of the doctors and
astrologers deemed untrustworthy. This detail further suggests that Rivera wants to emphasize the depravity of the Old World.

Comparison of the dialogue in various translations reveals contrasting emphasis on religious exegesis, and the philosophical idea that life is like a dream. Segismundo’s speech at the end of the second act is slightly adapted, but fairly similar to the original text by Calderón. However, it is worth noting one special feature about the final lines. Because this dialogue contains quotations easily recognizable to contemporary audiences, any changes to the exact wording are instantly noticeable, and invite greater scrutiny as to why the adapter would choose to alter or add information. In Racz, the final lines in Segismundo’s speech are: “All we possess on earth means nil, / For life’s a dream, think what you will, / And even all our dreams are dreams” (79). He creates a more rhythmic poetry than can be found in Calderón’s play. Cruz writes, “And our greatest good is but little, / for all of life is a dream / and dreams are only dreams” (44). This is actually perhaps closer to the original than Racz. In comparison, Rivera writes, “To live is to sleep, to live is to dream, all who live are dreamers, all dreamers are the dreams of God, and what is God Himself, but the greatest dream of all?” (58). First, Rivera changes the statement to a question. Second, he introduces the idea that our existence is God’s dream. Third, he removes the central message that Calderón meant to convey about how both life and dreaming is like a dream, and inserts speculation that God does not exist. According to Rossini, the act ofwrighting involves “creating something new in the process of correction and revision that moves beyond cultural assumptions that limit thinking and place Latinos in demarcated cultural spaces” (25). Such a radical change is not without reason, but this type of radical adaptation points to a deliberate choice by
Rivera. Overall, his adaptation comes across as more of a critique of religion than an observation of human nature and existence.

Rivera often takes an idea expressed in Calderón’s story and exaggerates it to criticize imperial Spain. In Cruz’s play, when the soldiers first see Clarín, Solider 1 says, “The prince is here!” and Clarín responds, “No he isn’t,” denying that he is the prince out of fear of what they might do to him, and also creating a comic moment due to the obvious contradiction that the very act of speaking indicates his presence (46). In Calderón’s text, the Soldier says, “Aquí está,” and Clarín responds, “No está” (670). Rivera goes one step further and writes, “Please! Don’t torture me! I know you Spanish excel at it!” (60). Neither Calderón nor Cruz refer to the Spanish as excellent torturers, but Rivera’s text conjures up images and references to the Spanish Inquisition, and to the tortures the Spanish inflicted upon the indigenous peoples of America, or at the very least offers a very negative critique of the Spanish. As stated by Gilbert and Tompkins:

“Given the legacy of colonialist education which perpetuates, through literature, very specific socio-cultural values in the guise of universal truth, it is not surprising that a prominent endeavor among colonized writers/artists has been to rework the European ‘classics’ in order to invest them with more local relevance and to divest them of their assumed authority/authenticity” (16). Rivera exemplifies this canonical counter-discourse by wrighting back to Spain with a reminder that the Spanish were responsible for campaigns of violence against an innocent and indigenous people.

Other dialogue in Rivera’s play may be interpreted as a criticism of Spain’s history of colonial violence. Whereas Calderón and Cruz both write that Clarín questions if the soldiers are drunk, Rivera has him state emphatically that they are drunk. Rivera
goes on to add dialogue for the First Soldier. He has him say, “We fight and die under the banner of a native-born Prince of Spain...but never under the colors of a foreigner!” (Rivera 60). This statement introduces the idea of a foreigner, or the “other,” which must be fought and destroyed, which also serves as a critique of Spanish ethnocentricity and xenophobia. Rivera goes on to add dialogue for the soldiers, who refer to Basilio’s court as a “gang.” This conjures up images of modern gangs in the United States. Rivera suggests that the Spanish have a need to fight against anything that is not pure or native to the land where they are from. This calls into question how “indigenous” is defined, and criticizes the violence of the Spanish against “otherness.” According to Spanish Golden Age scholar Christopher Weimer: “Sueño is most definitely not, in other words, our parents’ or our professors’ La vida es sueño; it is a revisioning of Calderón’s comedia which simultaneously pays homage to and challenges its source” (244). The anger and hostility in Sueño is played out as a war between Old and New World cultures, which may perhaps be read as a war between different generations within the same family.

**GRAPHIC AND IRREVERENT LANGUAGE**

Along with occasional comedic moments and opportunities to build connections, Rivera communicates using language that is graphic and often scatological. This particular quality of his writing is difficult to ignore. Rivera’s “slangy and strange insults” and “irreverent – indeed, blasphemous – religious references” are an attempt to approximate the “otherness” of a different language by making his own discourse alien (Quintero137). I agree with Quintero and further suggest that Rivera incorporates graphic language for two purposes. First, the use of “slangy and strange insults” is anachronistic, which may seem to make the Spanish Golden Age appear less foreign, but
may also distance readers and audiences from the period, pulling them out of the past and into the present. Second, because characters such as Astolfo and Estrella are representations of the Old World culture, their language emphasizes the vulgarity of imperialist Spanish values. In the second scene of the play, Rosaura indirectly references the hippogriff horse, a detail in Calderón’s play that is cut and substituted with profanity. Compared with Calderón, Rivera’s dialogue is less poetic and descriptive, and much more concise and vulgar. Rosaura shouts, “I swear if you were a bird you wouldn’t know how to fly! If you were a stream you wouldn’t know how to babble! You’re a fart without smell!” (Rivera 13). In this case, Rosaura is clearly injured, disheveled, and lost. Given the context of her situation, it makes sense that she would speak with crude language. However, considering the fact that other characters in the play, Astolfo and Estrella, also use graphic language, it is likely that Rivera uses Rosaura’s example to show how an individual alien to the country not only embodies “otherness,” but also speaks with an informal linguistic style that is different from polite expressions of frustration and anger.

The extensive use of graphic language in Rivera’s play may be explained as a strategy to blame imperial Spanish for influencing contemporary Latina/o identity. Clarín’s rambling is another example of Rivera’s choice to create profane characters, and reveals an additional expression of the anger and frustration with the Old World’s influence on contemporary Latina/o identity. Clarín admits that he is “addicted to stress” (Rivera 14). His anxiety causes not only finger pointing back at the Old World, but also a questioning shrug and an open palm, curious to learn the truth to correct the present. According to Quintero, Clarín’s “linguistic improvisation becomes a way of simulating a
When Clarín says that he misses Poland, the European nation may serve as a figure for Puerto Rico. Although Poland is not a tropical island, the same issues that Rosaura and Clarín struggle with are those of Puerto Rican emigres, longing to return to their island. The characters’ longing for Poland may express a longing for Puerto Rico.

The epitome of graphic or irreverent language is found in Rivera’s portrayal of the characters Astolfo and Estrella. Although they provide comedic relief, it is possible to interpret these characters as representatives of Old World Spain. As such, their dialogue reveals a negative, ridiculous, and hostile attitude towards Old World, or Spanish Golden Age culture. At first it may seem as though Astolfo is awkward with romance and clumsy with words, but within the world of this play, his obnoxious character makes sense. He is struggling to find, what he feels are, the best words to describe Estrella, and though it might seem to be unflattering and silly, his attempt is genuine. He struggles and even stops to say, “Let me try that again” (Rivera 24). He ultimately decides that the best descriptive metaphor is that of Christ on the Cross. Not only does this image connect more with suffering than with beauty, but it also highlights the importance of the Catholic religion in Spanish Golden Age culture. Finally, Estrella cuts him off saying, “Cool off, Duke. It’s bullshit. Your words are flattering but they contradict your actions” (Rivera 24). Later, in the same speech, she continues, “Pure destruction is your aim, Astolfo, not love; it’s conquest, not peace, that you want” (Rivera 24). This appears to be a direct and blatant critique of Spanish Golden Age politics, and these two characters epitomize or represent the worst aspects of Old World culture.
Astolfo speaks with irreverence; whereas Estrella points out that everything he says lacks substance or value. It is true that Astolfo does not really love Estrella, but means to conquer her. Likewise, Rivera presents the Old World as the epitome of the mentality of conquest and war, under the guise of peace.

Rivera continues to portray Astolfo and Estrella as crude and vulgar in how they address Basilio. Their vulgar actions portray the Old World as animalistic, and may lead readers and audiences to develop a polarized view, in which the Old World is bad and the New World is good. The comparisons between Jesus and Socrates, meant to flatter Basilio, serve as an example. Astolfo and Estrella use generic, insincere terms such as “nicer than” when making this comparison. When they both attempt to lick Basilio’s toes, there is a sense that these two Old World nobles are not only fools, but also dogs. Rivera uses their dialogue to show that the values of the Old World are insincere and arrogant. Early in the play, Basilio enters and commands Astolfo and Estrella to embrace him saying, “A little tighter. Just a bit more. You both love me!” (Rivera 26). This suggests that either Basilio needs to state that they love him, rather than know or feel this love to be true, or that because Astolfo and Estrella are insincere, Basilio has to suffer them that they love him. Rivera also adds dialogue for Basilio that exaggerates his arrogance. He says, “I am called Basilio the Great. I am referred to in the epic poetry of Castile as Basilio the Beautiful. I like that last one very much” (Rivera 26). This encourages audiences to identify less with characters representative of the Old World, and thus create a disassociation of the Old World from the New World.

Rivera also uses crude and vulgar language to show the harmful influence that the Old World had, or even still has, on the New World. According to Gilbert and
Tompkins, “Part of imperialism’s project has been to impose the English language on colonized subjects in an endeavor to control them more completely” (164). In the Spanish colonies, the Spanish language was imposed on the Indians in the same manner that English was imposed on people conquered by the British. Gilbert and Tompkins point out that post-colonial playwrights, “determined to interrupt the transmission of ‘correct’ English in favor of local languages, regional variants, shifting registers, and indigenous accents,” concentrate on writing language that is less inflected by imperialism (166). In Sueño, Rivera interrupts the transmission of “correct” English with crude and vulgar dialogue. For example, Astolfo appears exceedingly crude when he says to Rosaura, as Astrea, “I command you to trot your tight little Ass-trea over to the princess,” playing on the name Astrea, which Rosaura has chosen for herself as a disguise (Rivera 52). Astolfo even brings out the worst in Rosaura. When she implies that Astolfo has no honor she says, “Damn you! I spit in your father’s sperm!” and refers to him as “Ass-tolfo” (Rivera 53-4). Rivera seems to imply that Astolfo, as a representative of the Old World, has a negative influence on Rosaura, who represents the New World.

Rivera’s use of abusive dialogue often conjures sentiments exposing the ignorance and futility involved with fostering racist “us and them” political binaries, but his religious imagery and dialogue presents a new take on Calderón’s “life is a dream” metaphor. In Cruz’s play, Clarín states, “You were the stubborn fools who Segismunded me” (47). Rivera writes, “You’re the one who re-baptized me Segismundo” (61).²⁹ Because religious practice is not exclusively Spanish, and because the Spanish Catholic

²⁹ Rivera conjures this religious imagery to connect Old World Spain with baptisms performed during Spanish colonial conquest that were imposed by force and ultimately unnecessary, due to the fact that the action has already been performed.
dogma is indeed a foreign to the indigenous people in the Caribbean, it appears that Rivera is critical of oppressive hegemonic violence, rather than religion in general. When the First Soldier explains why they have come to rescue Segismundo, instead of simply delivering exposition, as in Cruz and other versions, Rivera uses very harsh language to describe them. Rivera writes, “Now the incogitant king and his senile staff wish to give our fair Castile to foreigners! To Polacks! But the people, hearing that a true native-born prince exists, have risen up against your father. We have come in vast numbers, a true guerrilla army of bandits and peasants, to give you freedom and fight at your side” (61). The “guerrilla army” conjures up imagery of modern warfare in Central and South America, and the emphasis on “Polacks” suggests that the soldiers are racist. It seems that neither side is free from critique. Even the soldiers that represent the New World feel the need to use ethnic labeling in a derogatory manner. Suddenly, Segismundo transforms and begins speaking Spanish: “¿Otra vez? ¿Que es esto, cielo?” [Again? What is this, heaven?]. Rivera introduces a new idea that God is somehow involved and responsible for his dreaming. Rivera writes, “I know that you floating, insubstantial men are the shades and hand puppets of an evil Dreamer – a God determined to make me crazy!” (62). It is as if Rivera reinforces Segismundo’s earlier claim that we are God’s dream, but this goes a step further to denigrate the soldiers, and also to blame God, rather than embrace the philosophical question that Calderón intended. Rivera even introduces the concept of déjà vu, adding to an already secular worldview, an idea that makes it difficult to discern Rivera’s essential message beyond the notion that life is a dream, or that everything in life is temporary.
The graphic dialogue, often scatological in nature, helps to focus attention on the magnitude of change that takes place as Segismundo searches for his identity. Early in the play, Segismundo says that he spends his time “eating and shitting and waiting to die!” (Rivera 18). He then adds, “Clotaldo gives me advice – he tells me how to hold my dick so I don’t piss on myself” (Rivera 18). In this moment, Rivera shows the depths of Segismundo’s despair in order to emphasize the level of greatness he achieves by the end of the play. Not only does Segismundo wrestle with difficult questions about his identity, but the obstacles and challenges he faces are shown to have a dramatic affect on shaping his character. Having emphasized the change that Segismundo undergoes, Rivera also de-emphasizes the Spanish Golden Age concept of honor as a significant value. The first mention of honor in the play is lumped together in a litany of lessons that Clotaldo teaches Segismundo. Rather than emphasize ideas related with the Spanish Golden Age honor code, Rivera tacks it on as if to suggest that despite its presence, honor is not very important. This suggests that although there are traces of Old World ideals that are in fact a part of Segismundo’s worldview or identity, they are merely one tiny aspect and not a significant factor.

**REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NEW WORLD**

Throughout the play, various characters communicate the tension between the Old World and the New World as representations of the New World. Segismundo appears as a representation of the New World, but rather than rewriting the fate or identity of the Old World, Rivera questions how he might use his own writing to rewrite an identity that seems tragically pre-destined. It is worth noting that Rivera uses the word “rewrite” in the opening scene when, in reference to the newly born Prince Segismundo, Basilio
questions, “How do I rewrite this creature’s destiny?” (12). Hall suggests that we should think of identity as a “production” which is never complete, “always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (234). When Segismundo asks how to save Spain and himself, there is a distinct hint not only at the connection between Spain and Rivera, but also that there is a need to save, restore, or perhaps liberate twenty-first century thinking about Spanish and Latina/o identity. Many of the elements that characters in the play label in connection with the New World are references that incorporate contemporary Latina/o perspectives on the New World. For example, when Astolfo attempts to convince Estrella to marry him, he uses the term “New World” three times. First, he compares the New World with Estrella’s breasts. Next, he uses it to reference the “endless New Worlds discovered by your sailors” (Rivera 25). Finally, he speaks about how they can both rule “the New World” together. Each example provides the audience with the idea that the New World is a site of discovery and dominance. Although Astolfo and Estrella talk of sharing the throne, there is no mention of sharing the New World with the people already there.

Within the context of the Old World versus New World conflict, certain characters appear not only as representations of the New World, but are also described using terms connected with Latin America. When Rosaura first sees Segismundo, she describes him as “the ghost of a poor man,” and “a walking mirage, born dead, dressed in animal skins…a slave, maybe, stolen from an oppressed island, or a refugee of a defeated warrior-state where nightmares are rulers and imaginary monsters walk the streets” (Rivera 15-6). Rosaura labels Segismundo based on her initial visual impression of him, but careful consideration of how she labels him, and why Rivera might have her relate
him with a slave from an oppressed island, reveals a connection with similar images from Calderón’s text. The use of the word “island” connects images and ideas relating to the island of Puerto Rico, and as a “defeated warrior,” Rivera suggests that Latina/os in the United States have fought to understand, claim, or construct an identity, only to be haunted by historical oppression and a sense that the same kind of fear that causes nightmares has also created an anxiety that needs to be remedied or refashioned.

As a representation and embodiment of the New World, Segismundo shares the dreams and desires of contemporary Latina/os. Cultural identity may be thought of in terms of one, shared culture, where identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people,’ with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history (Hall 234). Rivera reveals this concept by writing details that are purely original and have no equivalent in Calderón’s play, but do reflect the shared cultural identities of contemporary Latina/os living in the United States. For example, Segismundo says about Clotaldo, “He tells me of the wonders of an Eden discovered beyond the Ocean Sea. I dream some day I’ll be exiled to that New World, to live among my kind, the noble savages at one with nature, on pure land ten times the size of Europe” (Rivera 18). In no other translation or adaptation is there any mention of Clotaldo telling Segismundo about such a place. This mention of the New World makes it possible to imagine the United States as part of the New World. Because its land mass is ten times that of Europe, it is likely not Puerto Rico. Even more interesting is the way that the New World, or the American Continent, is described in relation to Segismundo.
In selected scenes in Rivera’s play, Segismundo states that he dreams of living in
the New World, which may be interpreted as the United States, but he also speaks about
dreaming of being exiled to the New World as well. This is very curious, but it connects
with the idea that as an embodied representation, Segismundo communicates the history
and desires of all Latina/os, a concept related to Taylor’s writing on mestizaje:
“Mestizaje both reveals the marks of its initiating conditions and transcends them. It has
a history, tells a history, enacts a history through racialized embodiment, and gets
retheorized at different moments as part of various social projects” (100). Rivera
suggests that Segismundo desires or dreams not of a place where he will be exiled, lost,
or abandoned, but instead, because he is representative of contemporary Latina/os, he
views the United States as a dream land. He sees this country as a land of opportunity,
and yet feels trapped and lost because of a disconnection from the country that provides a
source for both individual and collective cultural identity. Rivera mentions that
Segismundo will be among his own kind, but also uses the term “noble savages,” perhaps
ironically to underscore the stereotype. Not only does it seem as if the land is pure, but
so are the people living there. There is also a sense of pride that exists with this imagined
society. This notion of the New World provides Latina/os with a source of identity, or
even the most pure source of identity, for “savage” people like Segismundo.

Both Segismundo and Rosaura possess positive character traits that reflect
elements representative of the New World. Segismundo suggests that Rosaura eases his
pain, and that she is “more natural than all the Nature” he has seen (Rivera 19). As a
representation of the New World, Rosaura’s very nature helps Segismundo to realize his
identity. They identify with each other because of a shared pain. When Clotaldo enters
and tries to arrest Rosaura, Segismundo almost immediately becomes less wild, less savage, and less like an animal when he says, “I’d rather tear out my own eyes than watch my friend suffer” (Rivera 20). This line shows that the supposed beast actually possesses a very real sense of humanity and understands friendship.

**SYMBOLIC LINKS BETWEEN WORLDS**

Certain characters in Rivera’s play may be interpreted as representing or embodying elements from both the Old and New Worlds. As such, these characters provide a symbolic link to facilitate a revision and resolution of the tension caused by identity conflict. According to Stuart Hall, “cultural identity is a matter of becoming as well as of being; cultural identities come from somewhere and have histories, but like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (236). Certain characters are written to suggest a sense of being both a part of the Old World, while becoming more like a contemporary society in the New World. As the son of the Spanish king Basilio, Segismundo may be seen as directly related with the Old World of imperial Spain. However, when Segismundo first appears in the play, he speaks in Spanish, saying, “Ay misero de mi! Y ay infelice!” [Oh woe is me! And woe to the wretched!] (Rivera 15). His Spanish dialogue helps establish his Spanish identity, but also perhaps suggests a more contemporary or New World identity. Quintero explains that because the first words spoken by Segismundo are in Spanish, this disrupts the spectators’ comfort and complacency with the tone the actors have previously established; likewise, the intrusion of Spanish verses embeds Calderón’s words into the new play, thus paying homage to the “imperialist” precursor language that, like it or not, forms part of Rivera’s own cultural patrimony (136). Rivera’s choice to have Segismundo’s first lines be
spoken in Spanish suggests a dual alignment with the Old World and the New World. Not only does this distinguish Segismundo from the other characters in the play, but it is important to recognize that the Spanish dialogue establishes Segismundo as a representative example, expression, or icon of Spanish identity.

As an embodiment of both the Old and New World, Segismundo’s actions may constitute an attempt to provide a link connecting the two worlds. When Segismundo wakes up in the castle, he again speaks using Spanish and English: “Ay Dios, what am I seeing?” (Rivera 36). This adaptation reinforces Segismundo as a new, contemporary character that is both Spanish and English. In an interview with Rivera, he stated, “I often think of America as a hyphenated place. There are many hyphenates of many combinations. Within the same person there are a variety of cultures. I can’t escape my immigrant experience – born in Puerto Rico and moving to New York when I was four years old, and always being aware of our differences” (166). Similar to many Latina/os living in the United States today, Segismundo effectively engages in code switching. This ability reflects an identity that is capable of incorporating a variety of languages, and thus a variety of cultures. In this way, Segismundo models the potential to embody two dissimilar worlds. In the same scene, Segismundo refers to his new situation as “this dreadful beauty” (Rivera 36). His comment about “this dreadful beauty” reflects a sentiment that having discovered himself to be physically within the castle, and thus now a part of that which represents the Old World, he feels it is both beautiful and dreadful. This may point to the beauty in the history, majesty, values, or legacy handed down through generations of ancestors to Latina/os, as well as the dreadfulness of being
associated with a culture that does not support, advocate for, legitimize, or empower Latina/os in contemporary society.  

In addition to representing a connection between the Old World and the New World, Segismundo’s doubt transforms into hope for the future, suggesting that Latinidad might benefit from the Old World/New World relationship. Segismundo asks, “Why do I doubt it and believe it?” in reference to his identity as the true heir to the throne. His doubt both acknowledges and denies the authenticity of his relationship with Golden Age Spain. Segismundo recognizes that his doubt, or anxiety, stems from the inability to separate his Old World identity from his New World identity. Only when Segismundo faces the reality of being the prince, of being fully in the Old World, does he see and feel that his chains are gone…that he is actually free. Segismundo says, “My God, please, if this is your promise of the future, keep it!” (Rivera 37). In this moment, Rivera suggests the possibility that the legacy of the Old World might be made manifest today.

Along with Segismundo, Rosaura also represents or embodies a link between the Old World and the New World. Their marriage at the end of the play effectively binds both Old and New Worlds symbolically. Likewise, their identity incorporates manifestations of both worlds in a hybrid fusion. According to Taylor, “Mestizaje (mestizagem) refers to a concept of biological and/or cultural fusion. As used in Latina/o

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30 According to research on Latin American immigration to Spain, conducted by Emma Martín Díaz, Francisco Cuberos Gallardo, and Simone Castellani, “Latin Americans, though defined in this discourse as preferred in terms of migration, have at the same time been the most exploited in the labour market in times of the Spanish economic boom” (815). For more information on representations of Latina/o immigrants in Spain, see Alicia Arribas’s Thesis/dissertation (Ph.D.) from Western Michigan University, 2008, Representations of Latin-American immigration to Spain in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century narrative and cinema.
Americas, it has a history, it *tells* a history and it *embodies* a history” (94). The second scene of Rivera’s adaptation begins with Rosaura and Clarín, in much the same way that the Calderón play begins. However, what is interesting is the information that Rivera chooses to include and exclude. Rivera specifies that this scene is exactly twenty-five years from his induction scene, and that Rosaura is twenty-five years old, which would make her the same age as Segismundo. In making this change, Rivera inevitably establishes Rosaura as the connecting factor, symbolically linking the Old World with the New World. The reader would notice this, but it is not made clear how an audience might understand this information. However, this textual detail may be understood and used by directors making casting decisions and choices in rehearsal that take into account the fact that Segismundo and Rosaura are the same age. Rivera also includes this detail about age in order to set up a radical change at the ending of the play where Segismundo marries Rosaura instead of Estrella.

**MAN VERSUS BEAST AND LATINA/O OPPRESSION**

Segismundo struggles to understand his true identity. In many ways, Segismundo represents the New World, or contemporary *Latinidad*. However, the nature of his identity also hinges on whether or not he is viewed, by himself and by the reader or audience, as a man or a beast. When Segismundo grabs Rosaura, she struggles and cries out, “If you were indeed born a man and not a monster, I know all I have to do is kneel before you and you’ll give me mercy” (Rivera 17). Segismundo lets go of her face, but still holds her arm and sniffs her. This presents some confusion. Because he lets go of her face, we see that he shows some mercy, but by not fully releasing her, and instead sniffing her like an animal, there is a sense that Segismundo is somewhere in between a
man and a beast, both not completely one or the other. His identity is confused. He has
yet to realize the truth, or question, as the reader and audience might as well, whether or
not he will create or redefine his true identity.

While comprehending the full extent of Segismundo’s character, readers and
audiences imagine both sides of his identity, and thus the identity of contemporary
Latina/os. In Cruz’s play, Astolfo suggests that there is a difference between living in a
remote mountain and a palace and exits. Rivera provides a different focus. In the same
moment, Rivera writes that Astolfo says, “There’s a difference between men and animals
(41). Earlier in the play, Rivera gives specific scene directions that Segismundo should
appear as “a wild man dressed in animal skins, arms and legs bound with chains” (16).
This implies that there are times when it is important for the reader or audience to see
him as an animal, rather than a man. Like Cruz’s interpretation of Segismundo, Rivera
also presents us with the image of Segismundo as a prisoner. If it is accepted that
Segismundo represents the New World or contemporary Latina/os, then portraying him
as a beast effectively demonizes an aspect of his character. Rather than show Latina/os
as more savage than their ancestors, Rivera implies that they are held prisoner by
prescribed or pre-constructed identities from imperial Spain and/or contemporary United
States oppressors. Even though the United States is part of the New World, Rivera
targets the Spanish Golden Age as well as contemporary U.S. oppression.

One of the most engaging moments in Calderón’s original story is when
Segismundo murders a servant for challenging his authority by throwing the servant out
of a window. Rivera adapts this scene to portray Segismundo as a complex character that
resists easy identification as either a human or a monster. In doing so, Rivera further
shows Segismundo as a character capable of embodying duality, and thus capable of representing both the Old and New Worlds. Rivera uses very specific language, found neither in Cruz, nor in other more literal translations. For example, Rivera has the Servant say that what Segismundo is doing “violates every single convention.” (40). In comparison, Cruz simply writes that the Servant says, “I advise you not to be so forward” (30). A few lines later, Rivera has Segismundo say, “I am the Law now. I am convention” (40). Cruz has Segismundo simply state “I’m not interested in what you have to say!” (30). In both of these examples, Cruz employs a formal tone and language that comes across as matter-of-fact, whereas Rivera elaborates and elevates the tension in the scene by having Segismundo label himself as a symbol of absolute power. In this way, Rivera’s Segismundo is more like a beast and a tyrant. However, Rivera alters this scene by having Segismundo blind the Servant instead of killing him. Rivera also includes additional dialogue to better explain why Segismundo mutilates the Servant. Rivera writes dialogue for the Servant suggesting that Segismundo’s power is limited. In order to prove that he can do whatever he wants, Segismundo gouges out the Servant’s eyes. In Cruz’s adaptation, nobody actually states that Segismundo can’t do what he wants, but Rivera adds dialogue, having Segismundo say, “I can’t? Did you say I can’t?” (40). As a result, Rivera’s Segismundo comes across as a complex character, both human and beast, with a balance of tyrannical monstrosity and cunning manipulation.

Once back in his tower prison, Rivera writes that Segismundo considers for a moment that the servant he blinded probably “had a house full of grandkids – kids he’ll never see again” (46). This type of awareness is not something an animal or monster would be aware of. Rivera presents Segismundo as a man that has reason to be angry at
his father, and thus, very much a man; but his actions toward Rosaura make him appear more like a beast. Segismundo grabs Rosaura and implies that he can harm her if he wants to. Rosaura struggles and calls him an animal, Segismundo threatens her as he tears at her clothes. Although it is not stated in Rivera’s play that Segismundo rapes, or sexually assaults Rosaura, he does abuse her. Furthermore, in the sequence when Rosaura calls him an animal, he refers to himself as both God and an animal. It is possible that Segismundo is simply angry and is speaking of himself in a descriptive style, or it is possible that he possesses elements of both a man and a beast.

Even Segismundo himself is aware of his dual nature. When he tells Clarín that he blames Basilio for making him what he is, the words he uses to describe himself include “mixed-breed, a hybrid – half man, half animal” (Rivera 43). In another example, Clotaldo responds to Basilio’s question about what’s become of his son with, “Closer to the animals than to God” (Rivera 56). Basilio immediately responds that Segismundo is a “demolished prince.” Both comments conflict as to whether Segismundo is a beast or a man. Later, when Segismundo wakes up and delivers his famous “life is a dream” speech, Rivera has him begin by saying, “let me bury my animal side” (57). In Cruz, however, there is no mention of an animal or a human side. Rivera creates a complicated character, which like all the characters in the play, embody contradictory impulses.

FATHER AND SON

Many of the issues between the New World and the Old World mirror the relationship between a father and a son, where the father, Basilio, is often portrayed as foolish or ignorant in comparison with his son, Segismundo. This may be read as both a
critique of imperial Spain, as well as an expression of hostility or anxiety. Basilio’s first line, and the first line of the play, is “His horoscope tells us he’ll be born a monster” (Rivera 11). In this opening scene, Rivera adapts Calderón’s characters, like Basilio, to portray him as a fool that must rely on horoscopes for advice, rather than rational thought or common sense. Not a man of science, he is more inclined to trust in magic or fortune telling. Basilio refers to himself as an astrologer, and not, for instance, an astronomer. Also, by his descriptions of what is happening in nature, there have been some natural disasters. Rather than study these events or search for a rational explanation, this Basilio is unable to understand or explain natural events. He believes the sun is weeping blood.

Furthermore, this opening scene sets up the audience to question the father/son dynamic. The relationship between Basilio and Segismundo may be read as a reflection of a possible relationship between contemporary Latina/os and imperial Spain, or the Old World. On one hand, the opening scene introduces the idea that Latinidad is connected to Spain through heredity. Clotaldo’s line about Segismundo having Basilio’s eyes implies that the two men are genetically linked. In a way, Latina/os “have the eyes” of Spaniards from the Old World due to a shared heredity or legacy. On the other hand, heredity may be determined by factors other than genetic markers. Humanities scholar Earl Shorris points out: “Any history of Latinos stumbles at the start, for there is no single line to trace back to its ultimate origin; Latino history has become a confused and painful algebra of race, culture, and conquest; it has less to do with evidence than with politics” (7). It is therefore necessary to clarify how legacy and heritage influence the father/son relationship, while at the same time, exploring the tension felt from the generations of Spanish colonial repression. When Rivera writes Basilio’s dialogue, it is
as if Rivera is giving voice to the Old World in relation to living Latina/o ancestors, now cut off from Spain, just as the servant character describes Segismundo and his mother: “The boy burst through her body, cutting her off from the living world” (12). With this line of dialogue, Rivera exposes both the rift and it’s familial, or genetic connection. Finally, Rivera has Basilio state, “God of Love, how do I solve this?” (12). This question is not answered directly, but concerns how to resolve and construct a connected Spanish/Latina/o identity. Basilio continues, “How do I rewrite this creature’s destiny? How do I save Spain – and myself?” (Rivera 12). This moment is the key to understanding the adaptation.

Rivera uses Basilio’s monologue to expound an idea about what may have happened historically between the Old World of Spain and the New World. Basilio says, “A New World was given to us by God and we’ve depopulated it completely, pulled the last golden turds from its exhausted asshole, and have nothing to show for it but syphilis, the Reformation, and the disdain of history” (Rivera 26-7). This comment seems very much out of context with the rest of his speech, and meant specifically as something that the audience would recognize as Rivera’s point of view, spoken almost as an aside to the audience. It is clear that Rivera is hostile towards Spain, seeing it as the source of disease, murder, exploitation, and repression. In addition, Basilio refers to his son as “it,” “this creature,” and labels the newborn baby a “murderer,” none of which has any equivalent in Calderón’s play, or any other translation. In her writing on the mestizo, Taylor explains, “there was little joy at the birth of this ‘new’ race, which was accompanied by political, social, and cultural displacement” (95). Segismundo’s birth is very much like the birth of the mestizo that Taylor describes: “The father cannot name
the child or allow space for her or him in his vocabulary. In fact, if not in theory, the mestizo and mestizaje are inseparable from conquest and colonization” (95). What is interesting is that after Basilio’s speech about Segismundo, we hear a voice over of Clotaldo repeating his line from the first scene, “He has your eyes, sire” (Rivera 27). This line reminds the audience that in addition to Rivera’s fixation on the vilification of the Old World, the relationship between father and son is complicated. However, just as Segismundo will grow to usurp his father, Taylor states that the “mestizo would outgrow the derogatory designation of bastard to become a model for the cosmic race” (98). This also serves to remind the audience that despite aggression or past violence, the Old and New Worlds are inextricably connected in a violent and complex relationship.

The relationship between father and son changes and develops in a curious manner. Whereas Basilio originally appears cold and violently detached from his child, his character develops into a father that is much more capable of change. Compared with other translations, Rivera’s Basilio appears more willing to show real love and affection towards his son. For example, Basilio addresses Segismundo as “son”; other translations and adaptation never have Basilio use words to address Segismundo as a member of his family. According to Rossini: “While two individuals sharing an ethnicity are connected by that ethnicity, the nature of that connection is rarely precisely articulated and assumptions about the connection lead to impositions and misunderstandings” (159). With this in mind, Rivera establishes a relationship between father and son by wrighting a caring and affectionate Basilio, a correction suggesting that the father and son are more connected that perhaps originally thought. Rivera’s Basilio is not cold and dismissive, but speaks about how Segismundo’s actions make is difficult to show love. In Cruz’s
play, Basilio mentions that he cannot embrace Segismundo, but the word “love” does not appear as it does in Rivera’s adaptation. Rivera’s Basilio is a more sympathetic father who internalizes Segismundo’s failure as a reflection of his own failure. As Clotaldo says, Segismundo has Basilio’s eyes, and Segismundo literally removes the Servant’s eyes. The eye-gouging is effective because it gives Basilio’s statement that Segismundo has blood on his hands a literal as well as figurative meaning, but more importantly, it reminds the reader or audience of the importance of eyes as a symbol of familial relationships, and a physical marker of heredity and identity.

Rivera’s treatment of the father/son relationship offers the possibility that the rift between Old World and New World cultures might be mended. Certain moments may be read as contributing to the rebuilding of a connection. When Basilio feels Segismundo has failed to subvert the prophecy, after having been restored as the prince, there is a tone of real sadness and loss in Rivera’s adaptation. With Cruz, the tone comes across as cold. Cruz’s Basilio seems to be more calculating and accusatory. When Segismundo responds in Cruz, he is full of venom and spite. Because Rivera uses terms such as “father” and “son,” readers and audiences are encouraged to feel the devastation of the rupture between the two. Rivera appeals to the audience to pity and fear the relationship breakdown, and to reflect on how this compares with their own families, their own fathers and sons. Rivera includes dialogue for Segismundo not found in any other version of the text: “I used to ask Clotaldo: what does “father” mean? And he’d define it for me a hundred different ways. And I never got it, Father! You’ve kept me from your side…I’ve been no more than an animal to you…you’ve treated me like a malformation…an embarrassment…a godless spirit deprived of teaching, of laughter, of
the violent colors of nature, of experience, of time and destiny” (42). Rivera’s emphasis on the father/son relationship encourages the audience to see how Golden Age Spain is like a “father” to contemporary Latina/os.

The theme of the relationship between the father and the son also applies to the characters Clotaldo and Rosaura. Near the end of second scene in the play, Clotaldo confesses his belief that Rosaura is his son, which reinforces the important nature of parental relationships throughout this play. Even though the reader or audience knows that Rosaura is a woman, dressed as a man, the characters in the play behave as if she were a man. According to Quintero, “The paradoxical creatures of the beginning of the play – the man dressed as a beast and the woman dressed as a man – are quite literally seeking the Lacanian *nom du pere*, the identity of their fathers so they can reclaim their own identity” (137). When Clotaldo thinks he has found his son, rather than respond with hatred, fear, or anger, Clotaldo trembles. He is loyal to the King. He knows that it is his duty to report Rosaura to the King, and that she will likely die for breaking the law. Rather than continue to treat Rosaura as a criminal, Clotaldo explains what he must do and says, “Even if…my own dear son…were to break the law…and die as a consequence of my actions, my duty is to my king” (Rivera 23). Clotaldo uses the term “dear” to describe who he believes is actually his son looking directly at him. This is a loving term, but the reality is very harsh. Despite the fond sentiment, the connection and obvious relation, Clotaldo chooses not to advocate for the person he believes to be his own child, and elects to arrest her/him, knowing this will likely result in her/his death. Clotaldo is troubled by his choice. His actions reveal and describe the relationship between Golden Age Spain and contemporary Latina/os living in the United States, as
depicted by Rivera, and the parallel comparison between the father and the child, in that some Latina/os may be looking to Spain as a father figure, or rather, as a source of heritage and ethnicity.

**LANGUAGE CONNECTIONS AND COMEDY**

Along with an examination of the father/son relationship, careful consideration of the language employed by Rivera, including his use of comedic elements, encourages readers and audiences to re-evaluate connections between contemporary U.S., Latina/o, and Spanish Golden Age cultures. Much of this language reveals Rivera’s ability to first imagine the connection and then adapt the dialogue accordingly. Quintero points out that the word “sueño” means “dream,” but it can also be translated as the noun “sleep” or the verbal form “I dream,” which suggests that this play is Rivera’s dream, and thus emphasizes his right to dream up – to reimagine – his own interpretation and transformation (Quintero 130). Basilio monologue in the opening scene explains and mirrors historical events from the Spanish Golden Age. Basilio says, “She’s killed by her son! He’s baptized in her blood! This creature is already a man, Clotaldo. He’s repaid goodness with cruelty. His first living act was murder” (Rivera 12). When broken down into individual thoughts, Basilio’s words seem to reflect how the New World became self-sufficient, but as gold and silver exports diminished, the Spanish empire fell into decline. The baptism in blood conjures images of the violent conversion of indigenous peoples in the New World, while the comment that this creature is already a man suggests that *Latinidad* is a fully developed and significant presence in the New World today (i.e. Latina/os in the Americas). This scene outlines Rivera’s thesis and shows that Rivera acknowledges heritage as a connection that exists biologically, which allows him to
wright back to Spain. Also, this Clotaldo has compassion for Segismundo, and sees that father and son are connected. He is not afraid to tell the King that his son is a reflection of him. Despite his desire to dissociate heritage and ethnicity, this scene presents conflicting information, suggesting the connection between contemporary Latina/os in the United States and the Old World.

Rivera’s criticism is not without a sense of humor about itself. In fact, many of the comedic moments in the play that appear simply for the sake of a joke are actually metatheatrical references to the Spanish Golden Age. For example, in the third scene of Act 1, Astolfo gives a great deal of exposition explaining how he and Estrella are politically involved with Basilio. To set up his speech, Astolfo says, “Okay. Here it gets baroque” (Rivera 24). Astolfo acknowledges his exposition as something necessary in order to understand Calderón’s story. In addition, Rivera combines moments that are surprisingly faithful to the language of the original with moments where, as Quintero notes, he “tries to outdo Calderón’s ‘verbiage’ with rhetorical flights of his own” (134). The modern-sounding dialogue used by Astolfo and Estrella may be comedic, but runs the risk of pulling the audience out of the moment. Rivera allows Astolfo and Estrella the ability to use language that sounds more modern than the setting of the play. Estrella points out that Astolfo’s claim to the throne “rests on the accidental fact that you were born with a penis” (Rivera 25). The fact that she says the word “penis” out loud, or even that she challenges him in such a crude and direct manner, is out of character for a woman in seventeenth century Spain. Likewise, when Astolfo says, “Perhaps in some future, distant century – the postmodern 18th or 19th centuries – a penis will not matter” (Rivera 25). First, the term “postmodern” was not in use during 1635. This is a joke
because Astolfo identifies the postmodern era with the incorrect century, but it is also interesting because of the fact that Astolfo speaks like a character from the postmodern era. This sort of dialogue pulls the audience out of the moment, but also works to distinguish and highlight the distance between contemporary language and what might be considered a more “classic” style. The incongruity of Golden Age characters telling jokes in a contemporary idiom encourages audiences to consider the relationship with the Spanish Golden Age without explicitly referencing any connection.

In many of these cases, Rivera writes comedic dialogue specifically for characters representative of the New World. These isolated lines do not suggest that Rivera’s goal is to put distance between the Old World and the New World, but instead present an overall tone that laughs mockingly at the Spanish Golden Age, suggesting that nothing is sacred, a style that invites rather than limits possible connections. According to Gilbert and Tompkins, “Post-colonial stages are particularly resonant spaces from which to articulate linguistic resistance to imperialism” (166). When Basilio sees that Clotaldo is on the verge of crying, the sarcastic king remarks, “Why is it we old men are always on the verge of crying?” (Rivera 29). Rivera does not make Basilio sympathetic, but portrays the Old World as negatively as possible. However, Rosaura’s dialogue also exposes a coarse side to her New World character. In the moment after Clotaldo tells Rosaura and Clarín that they are free and will not be killed, due to Basilio changing his mind about the law, Rosaura gets on her knees to kiss Clotaldo’s feet. When Clarín refuses, she shouts at him to “get down and start kissing” (30). This dialogue seems incongruous with her character and is likely to be found laughable.
In certain moments, Rivera writes dialogue that labels characters in order to establish clear identity markers, making Segismundo appear as different or “Other” than the characters representative of the Old World. These attempts to distinguish character identity effectively highlight difference, and in doing so, guide audiences to consider how Latina/o identity might be constructed as different or independent of a Spanish identity. When Astolfo and Estrella enter to pay their respects to Segismundo, their words of praise imply either a sarcastic tone or an ulterior motive. Astolfo labels Segismundo saying, “Soul of Spain! Subduer of the Maya! Tamer of the Taino! Sovereign of the Old World, the New World, and the Next World! You have emerged from the hot belly of those mountains like Christ clawing his way up from hell: a human sunrise, a resurrected hope, a Spanish Orpheus” (Rivera 39). Estrella also calls Segismundo the “Majestic Father of the Spanish Civilization” (Rivera 39). These labels, specific to Rivera’s adaptation, imply more than a simple representation of Segismundo as the Old and New Worlds. He is a Christ-like symbol, or savior for both. It is worth noting that Astolfo specifically mentions the Maya and the Taino together with Spain, likely to flatter Segismundo in order to manipulate him, as well as express Rivera’s sentiment. Segismundo then labels Estrella as both a princess and a fallen angel, which may be delivered using a sarcastic or demeaning tone. These labels are negative and express Segismundo’s feeling that there is no hiding her off-putting Old World identity.

Certain dialogue in Rivera’s adaptation alludes to historical events that parallel events in the play where identity is complicated by tension. In discussing how Latina/os recognize various elements of identity within language, scholar Leslie G. Espinoza writes, “language is the vehicle by which others know us and by which we know
ourselves” (19). Before being sent back to his tower prison, Segismundo speaks about his identity saying, “In the dirty war you’ve waged against me, in my two decades as a political prisoner, you have desired nothing less than my total mutilation” (Rivera 42). This language conjures up images and ideas associated with political turmoil and violence that occurred in Latin American countries during the twentieth century. The Dirty War comment evokes images of violence in Argentina during the 1970s and 80s. The language used makes the situation seem more like a contract negotiation or a legal battle. Segismundo’s speech leads to a verbal argument with Basilio that mirrors a typical argument that may very well occur within an intimate father/son relationship. Segismundo lashes out and calls Basilio the tyrant, even though, and perhaps because Basilio first implied that Segismundo was tyrannical. As representations of two different cultures and eras, this argument suggests a connection between Latina/o identity and the Old World that is fraught with confusion and anxiety.

Rivera’s choice to write Spanish dialogue for certain characters affects readers and audiences in a variety of ways. Margaret E. Montoya recalls that hearing her mother use both English and Spanish “gave emphasis to what she was saying. She used Spanish to talk about what was really important: her feelings, her doubts, her worries” (436). Likewise, characters in Rivera’s play often use Spanish to direct the audience to information that deserves greater emphasis and attention. Once freed by the soldiers, Segismundo speaks in Spanish to Clotaldo. This appears to be done on purpose to establish that a moment, or a character in a moment, is legitimate or authentic. However, the Spanish may indicate that Segismundo’s merciful actions are virtuous and worthy of
imitation. It is also possible that with his new freedom, and finding that he is in control of his dream, Segismundo is free to speak Spanish, show mercy, and embrace Clotaldo.

HONOR REVEALS IDENTITY

One of the more fundamental elements of identity shared by characters in Spanish Golden Age plays is the concept of honor. According to Spanish Golden Age historian Henry Kamen: “The concept of ‘honor’ was fundamental to the social stability of all pre-industrialized countries. To possess honor meant to possess the respect of others within one’s social and status group, to lose honor meant to lose that respect” (75). Rivera’s criticism of Spain is directed at both the Spanish Golden Age honor code and the dishonor resulting from suffering that Latina/o descendants have suffered at the hands of imperial Spain. Kamen points out: “When honor was respected, social norms were being observed and there was peace and stability. On the other hand, an attack on honor meant that a serious conflict or crime had been perpetrated, such as theft, insult, disobedience, bodily injury, or sexual violence” (75). When the Third Guard slaps Clarín and drags him away, Rosaura complains to Clotaldo saying, “What kind of dishonorable nation insults and injures a harmless old clown?” (Rivera 22). Notice that she does not ask what kind of a person commits these dishonorable acts, but what nation. Rivera’s work often criticizes the country of Spain, rather than the Spanish people.

Just like the opening scene of the play, the final scene of the first act is a purely original creation by Rivera, not found in other translations. With this scene, Rivera directly addresses the concept of honor. The notion of honor may be used to objectify Latina/os, or may be used by Latina/os to explore elements of cultural identity. Rivera presents the notion of honor as a metaphor, rather than a code of behavior. In this way,
he shows how archaic ideas from the Spanish Golden Age continue to exert influence today. This scene plays out as a dramatization of the moment, at the top of the second act in Calderón’s play, when Clotaldo speaks with Basilio. Rivera’s scene is significant because, like the opening scene, it reveals a commentary on the Spanish Golden Age, with Clotaldo representing the Old World and Segismundo representing the New World:

*SEGISMUNDO* stares out a small window, crying. *COTALDO,* wearing a mask, enters with food, drink, and books.

Clotaldo. I won’t leave until I see you eat and drink.

Segismundo. *(wiping his eyes)* Is there anything greater than freedom, Clotaldo? If there is something – is it honor? If I had my honor would I be able to endure this?

Clotaldo. I can’t answer that.

Segismundo. What is honor? How do I know I have it?

Clotaldo. Honor is…like that eagle you see flying out there…who disdains gravity and flies from the earth to the heavenly ether like a quick fire, like lightning escaping the hollow clouds, like an ascending rocket.

Segismundo. I understand it now. Honor is a metaphor.

Clotaldo. Drink. *(COTALDO offers the drink. As SEGISMUNDO drinks, the drug affects him quickly. The lights begin to fade on him the sleepier he gets.)*
Segismundo. What is honor to a prisoner? There is greatness in me,

Clotaldo! Armadas and armies in me! I am a prisoner only
by force. If I had my freedom, I’d bow to no man…I’d
bow to no man…I’d bow to no man…

(SEGISMUNDO passes out. CLOTALDO looks at him as the masked GUARDS
enter.)

Clotaldo. (to SEGISMUNDO) It’s going to be a dark night, my
prince. And all I can see in this terrible darkness are clouds
and eclipses and amnesia. It’s like a calming, killing gas is
blanketing the sky… (Rivera 32-3)

Rivera promotes the idea that honor is a metaphor, rather than a code of behavior from
the Spanish Golden Age. In this scene above, Clotaldo’s story of the eagle is not meant
to plant an idea in Segismundo’s head so that if the prophecy is accurate, Basilio may
place the prince back in prison and convince him that it was all a dream. Instead, the
soaring eagle is a metaphor for honor. Rivera moves away from the theme of illusion vs.
reality, and embraces the concept that honor both greater than freedom and very much a
quality determined by an individual, rather than by a culture or society. Rivera
demonstrates that honor is a value that still endures from the time of the Spanish Golden
Age, but that the Old World honor code does not hold any value in contemporary society.
For Rivera, honor depends on the individual. Segismundo recognizes that despite being
in prison, he has greatness in him. What is really interesting is that Rivera uses the word
“armadas” to represent the greatness that Segismundo feels. This conjures up an image
of the great Spanish Armada from the late sixteenth century, and shows that that which is great then connects with that which is "great" today. Clotaldo’s final line in this scene is more than foreshadowing. The clouds of calming, killing gas and amnesia resonate with the realization that so much of what is great and honorable from the Spanish Golden Age has been lost, forgotten, or hidden by centuries of violence and repression.

Many of the changes made by Rivera point to the fact that honor is a relative concept. In the scene where Segismundo rebukes Clotaldo, but then shows him mercy by letting him go to fight with Basilio for being loyal, Rivera adds an extra line of text. Neither Cruz nor Racz include an equivalent line of dialogue. Rivera has Segismundo say, “every man has his own definition of honor” (64). Rivera wrights back to Spain explaining this very idea. If Segismundo’s commentary on honor reflects a New World point of view, then Basilio’s diatribe of insults hurled at Segismundo’s army may be read as Spain’s judgment of the New World. Basilio calls the rebel soldiers “Inflamed adolescents! Gangsters and sycophants!” and Astolfo adds to this, calling them “unclean paupers” (Rivera 65). However, Rivera also writes that Basilio fights tears, later cries, and ultimately blames himself and the stars for punishing him. Only at the end of the play does Basilio admit to destroying his own kingdom. As a result, it is possible to connect Basilio’s punishment with the fate suffered by the Spanish Empire during the decline of the Golden Age.

The concept of honor is one that seems to have survived over the centuries, and in the case of Rosaura’s honor, Rivera does not feel the need to adapt or change how it is derived or depicted. At the beginning of the second act, Clotaldo learns that Rosaura has changed her identity by deciding to dress as a woman, and has lied to the court, saying
that she is his niece. However, Clotaldo is pleased and says, “As her uncle I can
legitimately be responsible for her honor. She’ll derive her honor strictly from me”
(Rivera 35). “Latino identity is imagined not as the negation of the non-Latino, but as the
affirmation of cultural and social realities and possibilities inscribed in their own human
trajectory” (Flores 190). Rivera writes honor as a social convention to explain how the
Spanish Golden Age honor code might be understood and appropriated as a part of
Latina/o cultural identity. Rosaura (as Astrea) tries to deflect Segismundo’s advances by
saying, “Even if fury overcomes you, it can’t destroy the respect and honor convention
demands you have for me” (Rivera 46). Segismundo responds by shouting,
“Convention!” This emphasis on convention is curious. It is possible that Rivera uses
this word to describe social conventions that would otherwise be understood as honor if
viewed through the lens of the Spanish Golden Age, or it might be read as a protest
against the hollowness of social conventions that prioritize form over substance.

Rivera writes the concept of honor to help distinguish contemporary notions
from the Spanish Golden Age code of honor, as well as provide a means of securing a
position of power and authority for Latina/os. Hall suggests, “Far from being grounded
in mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will
secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the
different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the
past” (236). Rivera uses Rosaura in this moment to write a perception of honor in
contemporary Latina/o culture by downplaying the significance of the Spanish Golden
Age honor code. For example, Rosaura’s line, “we know how bad offense is around
here,” relegates the Spanish Golden Age honor code to a simple human emotion of taking
offense (Rivera 51). This presents an impression that honor is a value or attitude, rather than a complicated system or code that affects and informs a culture and society. Rosaura later says, “honor depends on blindness!” (Rivera 51). This dialogue reminds the audience of the moment when Segismundo blinded the servant, an action that parallels blindness with the inability to see or acknowledge a contemporary relevance. Despite the fact that this play is set in the seventeenth century, the intended audience views it through a twenty-first century lens. Rivera wrights honor, downplaying the notion that honor is a code, which may encourage contemporary audiences to view these characters as representations of Latina/os, capable of valuing and behaving honorably, and therefore positioning them within mainstream society.

A HOPEFUL NEW WORLD

From this position of power, many of Rivera’s changes impact the perception of Latina/o identity, attitudes towards cultural assimilation, and creation, or revision, of a New World. Within the play, a sense of hope for a revised New World is signaled early on in the opening scene when Clotaldo asks if there’s any milk in the castle for the baby Segismundo. Rivera reminds us at the end of the scene that even though emotions within families are often fraught with anxiety, just as there is tension involved with questioning and challenging contemporary notions of constructing Latina/o identity, there is a gentle reassurance and hope that everything is alright…that the baby will be fed. At the end of Rivera’s version, Segismundo will marry Rosaura and Estrella will marry Astolfo. This radical change is far from arbitrary and deserve special consideration for how it reflects a sense of hope for the future, or for a new world.
In order to reinforce his radical alternative ending, Rivera includes changes to plot details earlier within the play. For example, Rivera has Clarín remind Segismundo twice that Estrella is his cousin, likely included for a contemporary audience that may view incest as taboo. Rivera provides additional support for his choice of ending by having Segismundo grab Estrella’s hand and kiss it violently. It is important to note that he does not kiss gently, or woo her as a respectable gentleman, but instead acts like an animal in simply taking what he wants. Segismundo’s actions prompt readers and audiences to view his relationship with Estrella as negative or incompatible, in order to justify Rivera’s alternative ending. Comparison between Rivera’s play and Cruz’s play indicates that Rivera places greater emphasis Segismundo’s love for Rosaura. When Clotaldo asks Segismundo about his “dream” of the castle, Cruz has Segismundo respond, “I was the lord of all, / and I wanted to take revenge / for what was done to me. / I felt love for one woman. / Now everything is gone, / and I still feel that love within me” (43). Rivera writes, “I learned I had always been Prince. So I sought revenge on everyone responsible for my years in exile. (Beat) Except for one. A woman I loved. Loving her must have really happened to me. Hers is the one memory I still have on my skin…not the eyes of the poor man I crippled” (57). Rivera inserts a beat and has Segismundo provide more intimate details about his love for Rosaura. This is likely emphasized because Rivera chooses to have Segismundo wed Rosaura in the end.

The marriage between Segismundo and Rosaura does little to suggest a hopeful future. Instead, it seems that the focus is on resolving tension between Latina/o identity and contemporary society in the United States. This process requires some imagination. According to Flores, “The search for a name, more than an act of classification, is
actually a process of social imagination. And in that sense the search for Latino identity and community, the ongoing creation of a Latino imaginary, is also a search for a new map, a new ethos, a new America” (191). Rosaura’s long speech in the third act imagines the possibility that conflict may be resolved with a new life, or perhaps, a new connection between cultures. In this speech, Rosaura says to Segismundo, “Generous Prince! You’ve been reincarnated from shadows and awakened to a new life, like a new sun over a glorious New World” (Rivera 68). Notice that the word “new” appears three times in that sentence, along with “reincarnated” and “awakened.” There is a distinct tone of rebirth and renewal connected with Rivera’s sentiment towards the New World all embodied within Segismundo. Most of Rosaura’s speech follows the same expository format as other translations and adaptations, but in Rivera’s play, it is interesting that she states, “I decided this cycle of rape and abandonment would end with me” (69). The Old World did in fact rape and conquer the New World. That we know from history. However, the play suggests that Spain, as a father, or as a source of heredity and history, has abandoned him and Latina/os in general.

Along with a message of hope, Rivera adapts in a way to signal a warning against assimilation. Clarín speaks out about how many people choose to assimilate and/or ignore the tension between Latina/os and Spain when he says, “Ugh, look at yourselves. All that waste. Shame on all of you! I better shut up and get my ass to some safe hiding place – away from all this unrestricted hooliganism and machismo” (Rivera 70). Even though Clarín dies in Calderón’s version as well, Rivera is able to re-direct his death into a warning that those who try to avoid the problem will meet with death. Near the end of the play, Rivera offers a possible reconciliation between the Old World and New World
tension. As a representation of the Old World, Rivera’s Basilio reacts as a coward, whereas Racz and Cruz have him bravely contemplating his situation. In Rivera’s version, Basilio realizes that he is losing the fight and says, “We must escape to the New World before Segismundo finds me” (71). In Cruz, Basilio says, “The losers are the cowards who escape battle. The winners are the fighters who combat their enemies till the end. Let us fight the inhuman cruelty of a tyrannical son!” (58). Racz says, in the exact same place for Basilio, “The battle thus desists / To make of victors loyalists / And traitors of the losing side. / Let’s flee our tyrant son and his / Inhuman rage, Clotaldo, flee / His savage wrath and cruelty” (112). Notice how Racz and Cruz follow a similar line of thought, whereas Rivera goes off in a totally different direction. Rivera’s writing suggests that the only solution is to escape to the New World. This detail is important because it shifts focus away from thinking about these characters as fearful, weak, and archaic, but more as products of the contemporary world. The solution Rivera provides is to suggest a perspective that views the Old World through the lens of the New World.

In addition, Rivera’s adaptation inspires readers and audiences with shocking moments and dialogue not found in other translations or adaptations. For example, in the stage directions, he has Rosaura actually stab and wound Astolfo with her father’s sword. Rivera shows this revenge violence on stage, prompting Rosaura to retaliate. Her attack inspires a righteous indignation against imperialism itself, a recognition of the violence committed, and a call to clarify, correct, and revise understanding of the interrelationship between Latina/o identity and Spanish Golden Age culture. When Rosaura attacks Astolfo, she yells, “Rapist!” (Rivera 72). On one hand, we are led to believe that Astolfo cheated on Rosaura, but there is no indication that he necessarily raped her literally.
However, the force of the word “rapist” also conjures up imagery of the violence committed on indigenous peoples of South and Central America by the Spanish.

Returning once again to the final scene of the play, this moment reiterates and encapsulates the idea of building on the past and starting over in the New World. Interestingly, Rosaura delivers the final speech in the play, rather than Segismundo, as is the case in most other versions. In this speech, Rosaura says that she doesn’t actually believe that life is a dream, but that instead we make life what we want. She goes on to say, “We stay and build on the past. Or we forego royalty and go to the New World to start over,” and concludes by saying, “This is the only life there is” (Rivera 75). Rosaura’s words imply that Latina/os have erased the past to start over in the United States, but it is impossible to rebuild without a connection to the past.

**PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE**

Although Sueño was not published until 1999, it was produced by the Hartford Stage Company in Hartford, Connecticut, on 20 February 1998, directed by Lisa Peterson. Later, in the summer of 2000, director José Carrasquillo presented his interpretation of Sueño at the Olney Theatre Center for the Arts as part of the Potomac Theatre Festival 2000. My analysis of these two productions involved comparison of reviews of the Peterson production and a viewing of the Carrasquillo production, recorded on DVD and located at the Washington Area Performing Arts Video Archive on the campus at the University of Maryland, College Park. After having viewed and compared this performance with reviews of Peterson’s production at Hartford Stage, I found that the two differed greatly in terms of world, agents, and reception. Unfortunately, I was not able to interview any of the artists responsible for either
production, and therefore was not able to directly ascertain primary research concerning the world or agents for each event. However, by focusing on the elements of reception from Postlewait’s historical inquiry model, it is possible to discuss these productions as events within a narrative context.

Since I was unable to see Peterson’s production, my impression of the world of the play was primarily based on reviews that praised the concept and design. According to a review written by Alvin Klein, set designer Michael Yeargan created a “picture perfect” world in eclipse, with the sun, moon, and stars set against a tortoise shell in the background (1). However, Klein’s praise for Peterson’s direction was not so effusive. “Lisa Peterson’s staging runs amok with much yelping, shrieking and overall mayhem in an unwieldy battle scene” (Klein 1). Along with conceptual decisions made directors and set designers, the costumes played a key role in constructing the world of the play. Ed Morales reviewed the same production for American Theatre magazine. Morales focused more attention on Rivera’s text than the production elements, but did mention that the costumes appeared “faithful to their origins in Spain” (42). This piece of information reveals that the Hartford Stage production respected Rivera’s decision to set his play in Spain, instead of selecting a word, idea, or image from the text at random to create a world for the play.

According to Klein’s review, the acting was not entirely negative, but did convey a sense that the production quality suffered due to choices made by individual actors. In Peterson’s production, actor John Ortiz played the role of Segismundo, Damian Young played Astolfo, Alene Dawson played Estrella, and Jan Leslie Harding played Clarín. Klein praised Ortiz, suggesting that the role of Segismundo was written for him, but
wrote that Young and Dawson gave performances “encased in artifice,” and critiqued Harding for giving a “dreadfully whined and mugged display” (1). There was no indication in this review that Peterson, or any of the actors, made choices based on information not found in Rivera’s play. Ed Morales referred to the Hartford Stage production as a “wild theatrical ride” that “starts out impressively” (42). Based on the Morales review, the Hartford Stage production combined elements from the Old and New World, but with much better organization than Carrasquillo’s production. Morales writes: “For Rivera, this zigzagging between the old and the new in some ways mirrors the ambivalence of the Hispanic phenomenon, and may explain Latino interest in the Hartford Stage Production. (The fact that the theatre coordinated a major community relations drive didn’t hurt either.) According to Rivera, while Hispanics may not feel directly connected to Spain, they still relate to intrinsic elements of the culture” (43). In general, the reception of Peterson’s production at Hartford Stage was much more positive than Carrasquillo’s production.

My overall impression of the world of the play Carrasquillo created for the Potomac Theatre Festival production was that there was not a single, clear directorial concept. Instead, it appeared as if Carrasquillo threw together random and disconnected elements. Even before the performance began, I was alert to the fact that the director took liberties interpreting Rivera’s text, because the DVD included a title sequence, ending with a caption that specified the setting to be Spain, but the time unknown. Rivera clearly writes that his play is set in 1635. The play opens, as expected, with Rivera’s original scene depicting Segismundo’s birth. Recorded echoing sounds of a woman moaning and then a baby crying can be heard as the lights come up revealing a
set made up of moving, colored orbs. There was an orange orb, with the shadow of a fetus inside, and a yellow/green orb that moves behind the orange orb, like a moon or planet eclipses the sun. It seemed that the set design concept was taken from information on the first page of the play, with the “ferocious moon” and the Sun that weeps blood. However, Rivera writes that Basilio (Mitchell Hébert) is interested in astrology, not astronomy. A more appropriate design would incorporate horoscope signs, rather than stars and planets. In addition, the costumes in Carrasquillo’s production were confusing in that they appeared to be inspired from sources not connected with any elements found in Rivera’s play. Astolfo (Christopher Lane) appeared with red hair, wearing a woman’s kimono and yellow boots, while Estrella (Desireé Marie) wore a purple prom dress. There was not a single production element that addressed the distinction between the Old World and the New World, which led me to conclude that world of the play had been, in a way, been colonized by Carrasquillo.

The random incorporation of seemingly disconnected elements and general lack of cohesion in Carrasquillo’s production influenced not only the world, but the actors within this play. As agents involved with this production, the actors made confusing choices to exacerbate the lack of cohesion between Old and New Worlds. Furthermore, here appeared to be no attempt to establish a connection between the Spanish Golden Age and Latinidad. When Clotaldo (Michael W. Howell) appeared from a trap door under the stage, medieval zombie guards entered from the wings. An audience unfamiliar with the text would have had no idea that this was the same character from the first scene, because Howell adopted a melodramatic acting style and spoke with a vocal tone imitating Darth Vader from Star Wars. There seemed to be no real justification for Howell’s vocal
choice, other than the fact that the set design incorporated elements from space, and Star Wars is a movie set in space. The rest of this scene played out as if the actors were intentionally performing in a low-budget science fiction movie typically seen on the Mystery Science Theatre 3000 program. All dialogue concerning Rosaura’s sword was cut; Carrasquillo directed all the actors to move in slow motion at random, and certain actions were performed without props using mime, despite the fact that props were used for actions in other scenes.

Perhaps the most confusing aspect of Carrasquillo’s production was the fact that his direction seemed inspired from sources other than Rivera’s text. It was as if he used Rivera as a jumping off point to create an entirely different play. When Basilio speaks with Astolfo and Estrella about his plan to release Segismundo, actors Lane and Marie moved downstage and sat on the floor. As Basilio spoke his dialogue, Lane and Marie performed a variety of actions. They clapped for him obnoxiously, then stopped and appeared confused, cowered in fear, gasped for breath, fainted in a comedic fashion, writhed and wretched on the floor, pretended to be robots, and even behaved like animals. Carrasquillo added dialogue not found in Rivera’s play for this moment. When Basilio (Hébert) said the word “tiger,” actors Lane and Marie pretended to be like tigers. Later in the play, Segismundo (Luna) woke up inside of an orb, surrounded with yellow and blue clouds, instead of in the castle. Instead of throwing the servant out the window, or blinding him by gouging out his eyes, Luna reached towards the sky and mimed as if he were pulling something from the air. He then thrust his hands toward the servant in a pose similar to Ken from the Street Fighter video game, and knocked the servant to the ground with a magic spell, or some invisible thing that supposedly came shooting out of
his fingers. He also magically choked Clotaldo (Howell), just as Darth Vader does in Star Wars, and finished off the scene by laughing like a madman. The final battle scene was played out as a slow-motion wizard kung-fu movie with all red lights and shadows. Admittedly, this scene was visually stunning, but sadly, many of the key lines were dropped in favor of action movements and creating a visual image.

From the moment Basilio (Hébert) and Clotaldo (Howell) began speaking, I was astonished at the choices they made. Hébert played Basilio as if he were Captain Kirk from Star Trek, and Howell rushed his lines, speaking like a servant from a B-rated monster movie. In the following scene, the audience was introduced to Rosaura, played by Vera Soltero, and Clarín, played by Christopher Walker. Whereas Soltero spoke with a Spanish dialect, Walker did not. There was no sense that these two were connected in any way. In fact, the director did not seem to provide any indication that Rosaura and Clarín had a known relationship. Both actors performed as if these two people were strangers who had recently met. Even more frustrating was the fact that Walker did not make sense of his dialogue. He made no attempt to find the natural humor in his lines and played Clarín not as a comic servant, or as a Spanish Golden Age gracioso, but as a simple, average man. This performance made it impossible to invest in these characters because there was never a moment when they seemed to represent a specific Old or New World culture.

Within the DVD viewing room at the University of Maryland’s library, I was unable to observe the actual performance conditions or the audience response for this festival show. Instead, my experience viewing this production was limited to a lens that literally was a camera lens. In my opinion, the Potomac Theatre Festival production was
far from impressive. From my perspective, the confusing mime performance appeared to be the result of a missed cue, or perhaps because someone made a mistake backstage. Regardless, the odd mimed movement was effective in pulling the audience out of the moment. The actors’ random and often dancelike movement was bizarre and the overall design was disorganized. The Potomac Theatre Festival production did not attempt to communicate anything related with issues concerning Latina/o identity, and the incorporation of random accents bordered on the offensive. Near the end of the play, it occurred to me that the adaptation may be altered so much that there is no longer any remnant of the tone, style, or theme of the original. In a sense, both Peterson and Carrasquillo colonized the adaptation, distorting elements to the point of erasing a connection between the Spanish Golden Age and Latinidad.
Chapter 4 – Octavio Solis’s *Dreamlandia* and the Borders of Identity

Octavio Solis is a first-generation Mexican-American playwright, born in El Paso, Texas. His parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico just a few months before he was born. After studying playwriting at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, Solis moved to California to establish a career as a playwright. Some of his most important works include *Man of the Flesh* (1990), *La Posada Mágica* (1994), *El Paso Blue* (1994), *Santos & Santos* (1995), *El Otro*, (1998), *Dreamlandia* (2000), *Bethlehem* (2003), *The Ballad of Pancho and Lucy* (2005), *Gibraltar* (2005), *Marfa Lights* (2006), *Lethe* (2006), *June in a Box* (2008), *Lydia* (2008), which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and *Ghosts of the River* (2009). Most recently, Solis completed the book and lyrics for South Coast Repertory’s production of *Cloudlands* in May 2012. His plays have been performed throughout the United States for theatres such as the Mark Taper Forum, Yale Repertory Theatre, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Dallas Theatre Center, South Coast Repertory, and Teatro Vista in Chicago. In addition, Solis has been the recipient of numerous awards including an NEA playwriting fellowship for 1995-97, the Roger L. Stevens award from the Kennedy Center, the 1998 TCG/NEA Theatre Artists in Residence Grant, and the National Latino Playwriting Award in 2003. Although many of his plays focus on themes related to the Mexican-American experience in the United States, his work also touches on larger issues involving American culture and identity.
When compared with Cruz’s and Rivera’s plays, Solis’s adaptation *Dreamlandia* exemplifies the extent to which Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* may be adapted, with major changes to the characters, themes, language, and setting. As a more radical adaptation, this work pushes the boundaries of how Calderón’s four-hundred-year-old play might be reworked, and encourages readers and audiences to examine how Latina/o identity is expressed through these four theatrical elements. Comparisons between the characters and themes in *Dreamlandia* and *La vida es sueño* reveal how, through the act of adaptation and parody, Solis invites a relationship with the Spanish Golden Age that is progressive, open, and secure, such that Mexican-American identity may be viewed as both influenced by and yet independent of Spanish heritage and legacy. Analysis of the language in *Dreamlandia* shows that code switching and various forms of labeling support the construction of Latina/o identity by appropriating a classical Spanish Golden Age text to reinforce, reflect, and redefine notions of borderland culture for all Latina/os regardless of social and economic class. In addition, relocating the setting to the U.S./Mexico border allows Solis to explore how movement across literal and metaphorical boundaries, within border spaces, can encourage reflection on the nature of Mexican American identity. Finally, a production of *Dreamlandia*, produced at Teatro Vista in May 2008, will be reconstructed to demonstrate that rehearsal and performance contribute to building a relationship between *Latinidad* and Spanish Golden Age culture.

In a personal interview, Solis explained that he was inspired by the fact that one of the main characters in Calderón’s play, Rosaura, first appears after having crossed the border from Muscovy into Poland, seeking revenge against Astolfo, a nobleman responsible for seducing her and thus stealing her honor. Thinking about Rosaura’s
border crossing and subsequent arrest led Solis to consider relocating the setting for his adaptation to the border between Mexico and the United States. Once he made the choice to re-imagine Calderón’s play in this way, Solis said that all sorts of comparisons with illegal immigration and border issues began creeping in, including NAFTA, *maquiladoras*, drug smuggling, and the disappearance and murder of women in border towns. These comparisons show that *La vida es sueño* may be radically adapted to discuss issues affecting the border, and also encourages audiences and readers to consider how Latina/o identity is created. In showing how various characters respond to their environment on or near the border, *Dreamlandia* contributes to a transcultural process whereby imperial Spanish literature is revitalized while concurrently informing the construction of Mexican-American culture and identity.

In order to tell this contemporary border story, Solis transforms the characters and themes in Calderón’s play. In Solis’s adaptation, King Basilio becomes Celestino, a powerful druglord. Lazaro parallels Segismundo, Pepín mirrors the character Clarín, and themes involving dreams versus reality, or fate versus free will, all echo patterns found in *La vida es sueño*. Solis adapts these components to create a new play that explores issues of border politics and Mexican-American identity. *Dreamlandia* begins when Celestino’s wife, Vivian, dies giving birth to their son Lazaro. Celestino then blames the tragedy on Dolores, the midwife. In a fit of anger, Celestino forces Dolores to cross back into Mexico. Dolores then places a curse on Lazaro that he will grow up to betray his father. Consequently, Celestino banishes his son to an island sandbar in the middle of the Rio Grande, the physical border between the United States and Mexico. What Celestino does not know is that Dolores is pregnant with a child from a secret affair with his
brother-in-law, a border patrol officer, Frank. After many years, Dolores dies while trying to cross the Rio Grande to find Frank. Her daughter, Blanca, also decides to cross the border, with her brother Pepin, to find their father. She disguises herself as a man to avoid trouble, not knowing that the clothes are actually Frank’s. In the meantime, Celestino learns that Dolores is dead, and believing the curse to be lifted, sends Frank to bring Lazaro home. Blanca and Pepin are caught crossing the border and brought to Celestino, who places Blanca, disguised as Alfonso, in charge of tutoring Lazaro. In fits of confused rage, Lazaro lashes out at everyone around, including Blanca, who defends herself. Celestino sees Blanca/Alfonso pull a knife on Lazaro and has her deported. Blanca reappears as a worker in Celestino’s factory. Now in Mexico, Celestino and Lazaro prepare for a big drug deal. The action unfolds as Lazaro fulfills the curse, Blanca discovers that Frank is her father, and characters come to terms with their identity.

**ADAPTATION OF CHARACTERS AND THEMES**

Despite the many cultural variances embodied or experienced by Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans that separate them from other Spanish-speaking cultures and countries, there is still a shared heritage that comes from Spain. According to Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda, “common ancestral ties to Spain manifested in language, religion and various traditions suggest an underlying cultural commonality” (8). This balance between cultural difference and ancestral commonality is exemplified in a variety of elements related to the characters and themes in *Dreamlandia*. Likewise, Solis illustrates how Mexican immigrant and Mexican American characters struggle to overcome the tension created by border politics in order to fully realize who they are and where they come from. This tension is felt in contrasting ways. Some characters express
an attitude that may be felt by readers and audiences in support of immigration reform that would facilitate greater ease in helping undocumented workers gain citizenship, without cultural determinism and ethnic labeling. Other characters perform actions that reflect a counter attitude that sees immigration in terms of legality and encourages policies that might destroy economic freedom, even for legal citizens. It is impossible to ignore the border, but it is equally impossible to stop people from crossing, moving, and choosing to assimilate, or reject, the dominant U.S. culture. The history of the Mexican American experience is shaped by how, unlike Puerto Rico and Cuba, Mexico shares a 2000-mile-long border with the United States, and by how a large portion of the southwest United States was once Mexico.

Soliswrights back to Spain, and subsequently the United States, using characters that correct and revise contemporary notions of how the Spanish Golden Age culture informs border politics and the struggle for Mexican Americans to negotiate an identity. Solis’s wrighting involves a process that may be viewed from the perspective of a causal relationship. First, Solis preserves aspects of La vida es sueño by writing an echo, or a haunting, of the Spanish Golden Age. Imperial Spanish culture plays a significant role in the contemporary Mexican-American imagination by providing a source of heritage and a legacy. Second, Solis carefully selects moments to radically adapt. Because these deviations from Calderón’s text are so extreme, the audience is more likely to recognize an allusion to contemporary experience. As a surrogate for imperial Spain, the United States represents both cultural hegemony and colonial power. It is possible to recognize a relationship with Spain from a perspective of redistributed power and equality by examining how characters choose to accept, reject, or assimilate to the American Dream.
Due to the border tension between Mexico and the United States, Solis uses parody to carefully broach volatile subject matter. According to Linda Hutcheon, parody “can be a serious criticism, not necessarily of the parodied text; it can be a playful, genial mockery of codifiable forms. Its range of intent is from respectful admiration to biting ridicule” (15-16). As a combination of both humor and homage, readers and audiences are guided to view the content of Solis’s play without taking offense or feeling the need to defend conflicting ideals. Through parody, Solis provides a relaxed forum to explore border tension, empathize with characters from either side, and imagine a transcultural relationship in which Latina/o identity may be celebrated.

**AN ECHO, OR HAUNTING, OF LA VIDA ES SUEÑO**

In *Dreamlandia*, Solis carefully preserves specific elements from the plot of *La vida es sueño*. I consider moments from various scenes that are similar in both plays in order to analyze how they exist as an echo, resonance, or a haunting of Calderón’s text, and how this helps bridge contemporary Latina/o culture with literature from the Spanish Golden Age. As Marvin Carlson writes, “the bodies, the materials utilized, the language, the space itself, is now and has always been haunted, and that haunting has been an essential part of the theatre’s meaning to and reception by its audiences” (15). This haunting consists of similarities in identity and relationships between characters from different periods in time. Carlson refers to this phenomenon by the name *ghosting*, or the presentation of the identical thing that an audience has encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context; thus, a “recognition not of similarity, as in genre, but of identity becomes a part of the reception process” (7). In *Dreamlandia* and *La vida es sueño*, it is possible to see many correlations between the characters, such as Lazaro and
Segismundo. Just as Calderón’s Segismundo is spoken of as if he were a beast or a monster, the same can be said for Solis’s Lazaro character. This is apparent from the opening scene, when the character Vivian dies while giving birth to Lazaro. In the scene, Vivian calls her unborn child a “thing,” and Dolores says that, in giving birth to Lazaro, Vivian has “el Mal de Ojo” or the “Evil Eye.”

In both Dreamlandia and La vida es sueño, Segismundo and Lazaro share many similarities in action and characterization, and in many ways Lazaro is an echo of Segismundo. After living the majority of their lives secluded and in chains, they both wake up in a beautiful home, surrounded by people. Both men are told that their experience in captivity was a dream, but the audience knows this to be a lie. At one point, Lazaro reflects on the ghosts of his ancestors that slip out through cuts in his skin, which brings to mind the idea that one of these ghosts might indeed be Calderón’s Segismundo (Solis 13). When Dolores pinches Lazaro, after he has been drugged and kidnapped, it is clear to the audience that he is awake in reality. Both Segismundo and Lazaro wake up, notice that their chains have been removed, that they are well dressed, and that people they knew while imprisoned also exist in this new environment. In addition, both characters react by violently lashing out at others nearby. According to Bert O. States, “If something is to be remembered at all, it must be remembered not as what happened but as what has happened again in a different way” (119). Solis writes that Lazaro kills a servant like Segismundo, and also has him bite off Frank’s ear, which helps to communicate that Lazaro is just as much like a wild animal as Segismundo. Moreover, both Segismundo and Lazaro are told that their experience while being locked
up was all part of a dream. Like Segismundo, Lazaro tries to understand what has happened to him by thinking through the dream to get to the truth.

In addition, the characters Celestino and Basilio share many similarities. As in Calderón’s play, the relationship between father and son is estranged because of Basilio’s belief in fate. Although it may seem easier to pity Celestino because he had a curse placed on him, both he and Basilio interpret prophetic information on their own. Celestino, like Basilio, also consults star charts for guidance and information. When Frank tells that he saw Dolores, Celestino is busy consulting charts and peers through a telescope, as Basilio would. This type of information connects the identities of both characters. The fact that Celestino asks his son to be a centaur is explained by the fact that the centaur was a half-man, half-horse monster. Celestino, like Basilio, had an intimate knowledge of astronomy and constellations. This reference is further explained when Celestino talks about how the constellations appear as if they are all having sex. When he says that his “Centaur mounts the Lady,” he refers to the stars, even though at that moment, Lazaro is literally mounting Sonia, and thus fulfilling a part of Dolores’s curse. Finally, at the end of Dreamlandia, Celestino submits to Lazaro, just as Basilio submits to Segismundo. Lazaro takes his father’s hand saying, “Señor, levanta, dame tu mano” (Solis 84). Just as Segismundo forgives Basilio, so does Lazaro forgive Celestino.

In some cases, what appears to be the ghosting or resonance of superficial elements, actually serves to solidify a connection between classical and contemporary characters. One of the most striking similarities between both Dreamlandia and La vida es sueño is the fact that cross-dressing plays a major role in helping both Rosaura and Blanca. Anita K. Stoll and Dawn L. Smith write that despite the fact that there was no
prohibition of female actors seventeenth-century Spanish theater, hundreds of plays reflected a preoccupation with gender roles, which included the figure of a woman dressed as a man; the theatrical use of cross-dressing highlighted the wider interest in the subject of gender among writers of the period (11). The cross-dressing in La vida es sueño is echoed in Dreamlandia when Blanca disguises herself as Alfonso. According to Melveena McKendrick, Rosaura dresses as a man not only to give herself the freedom and mobility she needs to re-establish her identity, but as an indication that she has assumed the stance of the active, self-respecting male (155). In Dreamlandia, Blanca says that Lazaro’s life is all a lie, in that he does not know or understand the truth about his identity. However, both Blanca and Rosaura are living a lie in a more outward manner. Just like Rosaura, Blanca “lies” by assuming the identity of a man in order to safely cross the border, find her father, and discover her true identity.

Blanca’s quest to learn the truth about her past reflects the search within Calderón’s text for possible identity revelations. Similarly, the experience that Mexican Americans face in negotiating the reality of their identity, as it relates to United States and Spanish culture, mirrors Segismundo’s and Lazaro’s experience in attempting to discern whether or not the events in their lives are real or simply part of a dream. In one scene, Lazaro returns to his island to confront the truth about his past. This moment plays out similarly to the scene from La vida es sueño in which Segismundo delivers his well-known monologue about life and dreams, after having been placed back in the tower cave in the end of the second act. According to Carlson, “when recycled characters appear without a specific accompanying recycled narrative, audiences are encouraged to focus not so much on changes in the new versions but, on the contrary, on what has not
changed, that is, on the predictable quirks, characteristics, and interpersonal relationships of the character or characters being recycled” (49). Just as Segismundo questions whether or not his experience in the castle was a dream or reality, Lazaro also questions, “What have I been living? ¿Y porque?” (Solis 50). In this shared moment, Segismundo speaks to himself about restraining his anger, because even a king or a rich man will someday die, and that life itself seems like an illusion, or a dream. Solis recycles this moment while introducing changes such that Lazaro sees that his island is real and falls to the ground weeping, as if he shares Segismundo’s feelings of isolation and hopelessness. Even though one character is in chains and the other is not, and even though one believes life to be a dream while the other stares reality in the face, both recognize that they have never fully understood or reconciled their true identities.

PARODY OF CHARACTERS & THEMES

Having explored the ways in which Solis’s play echoes Calderón’s, it is worth noting that many of the characters and themes in Dreamlandia are unequivocally distinct from those in La vida es sueño. Solis establishes a relationship between Spanish Golden Age culture and Mexican American identity through the act of adaptation and parody. In some cases, adapted elements may be read as a parody of U.S. and Spanish cultures, which invites speculation concerning the relationship between these two plays, and between the Spanish Golden Age and contemporary Mexican-American identity. As Carlson suggests, “Dramatists often utilized familiar stories to relate their work to a tradition or because the retelling of a familiar story allowed emphasis to be placed on subtle variations, thus providing the author with a convenient means of stressing certain matters of content and style” (27). Hutcheon’s theory of adaptation and theory of parody
provide a foundation that may be used to understand how this play operates as both an adaptation and a parody. As an adaptation, *Dreamlandia* emphasizes new contexts and contextual schemas, and alternative interpretations of abstract concepts and character relationships. Understood as an adaptation that parodies *La vida es sueño*, there is less of an emphasis on paying tribute to Calderón’s text, or bringing him down a peg by immersing his characters in a world of druglords and materialism, than there is on utilizing his work as a means for communicating a specific message.

This connection between two cultures, via two works of literature, is apparent from the opening scene of Dreamlandia: there are three distinct instances when Solis’s play departs from the plot of *La vida es sueño*. First, the opening scene is completely original. We never see Segismundo’s birth in Calderón’s play. Basilio speaks about the birth of his son, but only to blame Segismundo for his wife’s death. However, Calderón did not write a scene in which the Queen gives birth to Segismundo. Second, this moment actually shows the violence and pain being experienced by the characters on stage. The audience is immediately bombarded with dialogue and imagery that is painful, disturbing, and unsettling. Third, Celestino does not blame Lazaro for his mother’s death. Instead, Celestino blames Dolores and calls her a *bruja*, or witch. This sets up Celestino to have Lazaro confined to a sandbar prison, not because he is responsible for his mother’s death, or because of a prophecy that he will grow up to be a tyrant, as Calderón wrote. Solis writes that Celestino imprisons Lazaro in the middle of the Rio Grande to protect him from Dolores’ curse. Celestino believes that once Dolores dies, the curse will die as well. Adapting a philosophical prophecy as a witch’s curse, or changing a king into a druglord, constitute elements of a parody of *La vida es sueño*.  

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According to Hutcheon, parody often becomes synonymous with play structure that acts as an internal self-reflecting mirror, or as a mode of auto-referentiality (20). As a self-reflecting, auto-referential mirror, Solis’s play connects contemporary and Golden Age cultures while providing an opportunity for revision, or criticism, of contemporary Latina/o identity. However, whereas it is doubtful that readers and audiences without previous knowledge of an original work will be able to recognize an adaptation as an adaptation, it is equally unlikely that a parody will help to create connections without overt hints and references to the original source.

In order to understand or appreciate Solis’s play as a parodic adaptation, previous understanding of Calderón’s play is necessary. As Hutcheon suggests that if we do not know that what we are experiencing is an adaptation, or if we are not familiar with the particular work that it adapts, we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work; to experience it as an adaptation, however, we need to recognize it as such (120). The same idea applies to a work that is parodied. According to Hutcheon, “The pointing to the literariness of the text may be achieved by using parody: in the background will stand another text against which the new creation is implicitly to be both measured and understood” (31). Without previous knowledge of the literature being pointed to, the original work will likely remain lost in the background. In the same way that Solis invites his audience to consider and speculate whether or not certain moments on stage are actually dreams or reality, the significance of Calderón’s philosophical question concerning how our lives are like dreams may be lost on an audience unaware that Solis’s play is based on La vida es sueño. For example, to an unknowing audience, Blanca acts as Lazaro’s tutor and teaches him about what is actually real and what is actually a
dream. She explains that the island is real. This does not happen in Calderón’s play. Nobody ever really explains the whole truth to Segismundo. Similarly, Blanca and Lazaro were both denied the truth of their identity. Solis parodies the relationship between Rosaura and Segismundo by writing Blanca and Lazaro as cousins, both having been born to one Anglo parent and one Mexican parent. Before realizing this fact, Lazaro attacks Blanca/Alfonso and asks, “Am I soniando? Is this real?” (Solis 38). In the previous scene, Lazaro wondered if his life on the sandbar was a dream. Lazaro questions if his experience in the United States is real, or if he is dreaming, and Blanca/Alfonso confirms that it is real.

The differences between how characters reconcile the idea that they are living inside of a dream, and how this might be communicated to the audience, highlights an important aspect of writing an adaptation. Hutcheon describes the process of adaptation as repetition without replication in order to dispel the implied assumption that adapters simply aim to reproduce a text, or that fidelity to the original should be the criterion of judgment or focus of analysis (6-7). From this point of view, characters in Dreamlandia may be analyzed and interpreted as both similar entities of the same character idea, repeated with modifications, or new contextual schemas, and not as replicated copies from the sixteenth century. For example, whereas Segismundo is incited to anger because a servant says that he can’t do whatever he wants, Lazaro lashes out because Frank says that he’s not ready to see the rest of his family’s house. Another difference is that when Lazaro reacts with violence, he also begs to be put back in chains and returned to his island. This reality is all that he knows and any new environment scares him. For Hutcheon, parody also involves repetition with difference, and specifically, imitation
with critical ironic distance, where “ironic versions of ‘trans-contextualization’ and inversion are its major formal operatives, and the range of pragmatic ethos is from scornful ridicule to reverential homage” (37). In Dreamlandia, the characters’ commentary on the relative nature and difficulty in discerning dreams and reality falls along this spectrum, closer to respect and homage than ridicule of La vida es sueño.

According to Hutcheon, “Many parodies today do not ridicule the backgrounded texts but use them as standards by which to place the contemporary under scrutiny” (57). Whereas Hutcheon argues that the parodied text is held up in homage or tribute, it is worth noting that parody may also be read as a critique, or simply an alternative voice open to inquiry. Regardless of its purpose, both an adapted and parodied text communicate a specific message, designed from reinventing ideas within the source text.

Solis adapts by conceiving new scenes that blend dream-like elements with reality such that characters are able to understand and control the chaos. Hutcheon explains that adaptations may be viewed as a process of creation in which the act of adapting involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation (8). When Basilio hides the truth from Segismundo, telling him that his reality is in fact a dream, Segismundo is confused at first, but ultimately accepts his fate. Basilio, too, is convinced that his actions are controlled by destiny. In contrast, Celestino coaches Lazaro to believe that he can make his dreams a reality. He says, “As if que si, as if que no, they said a dream, but I don’t believe it” (Solis 33). Unlike Segismundo, Lazaro rejects the notion that he is powerless to control his dreams and his reality. Solis also creates alternative interpretations for character relationships. In other adaptations of Calderón’s play, by Cruz and Rivera, the Segismundo character refers to Basilio as his father, and does so with hostility. However,
Lazaro begins by calling Celestino “papá,” a familiar and intimate term, and later calls him “padre,” to show respect. Solis creates a unique relationship that is distinct from Calderón’s vision of the father/son tie. Celestino, more so than Basilio, is desperate to bring his son closer to him. At the end of the play, instead of ending with marriages, there are family reconciliations that communicate the idea that even though a simple resolution is not possible, relationships have been restored. Whereas Basilio seems able to control his fate, Celestino is depicted as more of a victim of fate. Celestino’s actions could have prevented the curse. He could have shown Dolores mercy. In a way, Celestino deserves his fate. After dreaming of his son’s birth he says in a monologue: “If I could, I would’ve sucked you in and held you till the right day the right moon the right sun and then released you to your mother” (Solis 13). He realizes that he is in control of his actions and his ultimate fate.

The most significant adaptive choice involves how various characters understand the concept of fate versus free will. Basilio believes in fate and devises a plot to test Segismundo. Solis adapts this by having Celestino believe that, with Dolores’s death, the curse no longer exists. He welcomes his curse-free son back into the family without testing fate, which helps to contextualize the concept of fate for a contemporary audience. In the moment when the heavens part and Celestino teaches Lazaro about Texas and economics in the United States, Celestino shows that he does not share Basilio’s preoccupation with fate. He delivers a wild rant saying, “Texas History, Texas Monthly, Austin City Limits, Dallas Cowboys, price of oil per barrel, EDS, Bill Moyers, Wall Street Journal, Beemer 500 series” (Solis 44). Instead of believing that the world is controlled by destiny, Celestino attempts to separate heaven from the earth and explain
that although fate is inscribed in the heavens, it is his duty to teach Lazaro. In his mind, the two are segregated, but connected into one Organism, and thus may be controlled. Celestino’s eccentric monologue invoking iconic Texas images may be read an irreverent mocking of Calderón. However, unlike Basilio, Celestino does not consider how he might be testing fate because he believes that Dolores’s curse has been lifted.

On the one hand, the question of fate versus free will that Calderón poses is replaced with questions concerning family and identity, which suggests that Calderón’s text is more of a vehicle for respectfully communicating a positive message than an object deserving homage or tribute. On the other hand, in the same scene, Celestino speaks to the audience saying, “Up there, the gods of antiquity slam down shots of Patron with the dioses de mi own mythology” (Solis 44). Although Celestino refers to a brand of tequila, the word “patron” means “boss” or “ruler” in Spanish. Harold Bloom suggests that the father/son relationship in literature mirrors the relationship between a contemporary author and his literary forefathers. Bloom refers to the dismal or unlucky days, or apophrades, when “the mighty dead return, but they return in our colors, and speaking in our voices, at least in part, at least in moments, moments that testify to our persistence, and not to their own. If they return wholly in their own strength, then the triumph is theirs” (141). However, instead of hinting that Calderón is the “patron” or “mighty dead father” to contemporary adaptors of his work, or that the father/son relationship in La vida es sueño mirrors the relationship between Spain and Latinidad,

31 According to http://www.religionfacts.com/greco-roman/glossary.htm, the apophrades were impure days of the Athenian calendar, associated with the Plynteria, homicide trials, moonless days, and other inauspicious events. During this time, temples were closed and other major undertakings were avoided.
Solis imagines a scene where the ancient and contemporary worlds are both represented as gods, sharing a drink as equals. There is no need for Solis to free himself from the chains of literary convention in order to adapt a Golden Age text, because his writing is the chain that links contemporary Mexican-American with the Spanish Golden Age.

Finally, because Solis intended to write an adaptation, differences between Lazaro and Segismundo may be interpreted to suggest a contemporary message or meaning. For example, Lazaro may be read as representative of those Latina/os who prefer to dwell between borders, and not on one or the other. Neither character wants to sacrifice one identity for another, because the negotiation of Latina/o identity incorporates the Spanish Golden Age legacy. In Lazaro’s first big speech, he talks about shadows and ghosts that come from inside of him, specifically from cuts and punctures. Indeed the characters from Calderón’s play are like ghosts that haunt this play: they “slip out” from cuts, or sources of pain. Solis explained in the interview that part of Lazaro’s hallucination comes from the drugs, as well as from simply being alone. However, this moment also suggests that the Spanish Golden Age legacy comes from a place deep within, and may only be released with painful remembering of Spanish colonization and the conquering of the indigenous people in Central America. Lazaro is an example that assimilation is not a simple issue of acceptance or resistance, but instead involves the negotiation of complex factors, often resulting in a situation where people, like Lazaro, exist in between.

SPANISH GOLDEN AGE CHARACTERS REIMAGINED

In the middle of the play, there is a moment when Lazaro, Frank, and Sonia arrive at the physical border between the United States and Mexico. Each character takes turns describing his or her impression of Ciudad Juarez in a poetic, rhythmic style. Frank
refers to Mexico as an “illegitimate culture,” and Lazaro surmises that the city is an “old world in a new dream” (Solis 61-2). These statements connect to the fact that on the border, Mexican and U.S. cultures co-exist like stepbrothers in a family. Lazaro’s reference to the Old World and the New “American” Dream suggest both a connection between imperial Spain and contemporary Mexican Americans, and suggests that the culture and tradition from the Spanish Golden Age persists within the people living in areas near the border between Mexico and the United States. This moment forges a *Latinidad* developed from a transcultural identity, which includes the Old World of Spain, the indigenous peoples of North America, and the dreams of individuals living in Mexico and the United States, rather than a linear, chronological history originating from Spain. When Dolores appears and says, “Embryos inside embryos inside embryos,” the repetition of the word “embryos” reminds the audience that identity may be traced through an individual’s ethnicity and heritage (Solis 28). All people, like the characters in this play, come from parents, who came from their parents, all the way back through decades and centuries of generations. Our identity is linked to our family and ancestry. For the characters in this play, heritage may be traced back to Calderón’s *La vida es sueño*; for Latina/os, it may be discovered by mapping individual family genealogies back to Spain.

Solis introduces the character Bustamante, the drug smuggler, to illustrate how cultures are able to connect with each other despite gaps in time and space. Bustamante’s monologue sparks the imagination of the audience or reader, transporting them to a time when Spanish colonizers first encountered the indigenous people living in Mexico. Bustamante takes out a cell phone and references how she is connected, not to those
Mexicans in her organization, but all Mexicans…”*los Mexicanos*” via satellite. The following exchange slips into a poetic, musical rhythm, as if we have slipped from the reality of the scene into a dream, in order to comment on how contemporary border politics and the events within this play contribute to a larger context that affects all Mexican people. Bustamante calls the satellite Solidaridad, or Solidarity, and describes it as an electronic Quetzalcoatl, a reference to the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. According to history scholar Camilla Townsend, this significant because, to the Aztecs, “Quetzalcoatl was, as his name indicates, a feathered serpent, a flying reptile (much like a dragon), who was a boundary maker (and transgressor) between earth and sky” (668). Bustamante’s description shows that the satellite both unites all Mexican people, as its name, Solidaridad, indicates, flies in the sky above the Earth, like the ancient Aztec God, and is symbolically associated with creating and destroying boundaries. Conjuring the image of Quetzalcoatl transgresses the boundaries of time, and connects our understanding of Mexican culture today with a culture that existed before and during the Golden Age of Spain. Bustamante tosses her gun to Lazaro as a sign of solidarity, as an expression of confidence in the possibility for all Mexicans to assume ownership of an identity that has been theirs for generations. When Bustamante dials her phone, Lazaro’s phone rings. The moment he answers his phone, he is immediately connected both with Bustamante and every person in Mexico. Again, this seems like a symbolic conversation. The words on the phone line are unclear at first, with noise and static, while words such as “despair” and “slaughter” come through to describe the condition either in Mexico or among Mexican people. Lazaro’s comment that he hears “a million people of indeterminate flesh” indicates that although Mexican identity resists simplistic forms of categorization,
there is potential for a shared, collective identity. However, this interpretation is problematic in that it could fall into the trap of homogenizing Mexican identity with labels such as “Hispanic” or “Latina/o.” Instead, it is preferable to imagine Latina/o identity as individual and nuanced, while recognizing the solidarity of collective support from a shared heritage.

Along with Bustamante, other characters resonate or echo elements from the Spanish Golden age more directly. Pepín is very much like the Spanish Golden Age gracioso in that he provides information and commentary for the reader/audience. Pepín is a mentally challenged child, but he also delivers commentary and wisdom as a Spanish Golden Age gracioso might. In this way, Solis maintains a deep connection with Spanish Golden Age tradition and culture. The lost Pepín enters, sees the audience, and delivers a monologue to them, very much like a Spanish Golden Age gracioso. His message is very direct. He pulls the audience out of the play and suggests to them that the problems found on the U.S./Mexico border may be solved if people were to switch countries. It is humorous, yet also serves as a Brechtian device to alert the audience to see how this play is not like La vida es sueño, but more about a very real contemporary domestic issue.

When Blanca, as Alfonso, and Pepín are brought to Celestino, having been caught by Carl and Seth, Frank asks, “Which one of you’s the retard? (No response.) All right. Which one’s the genius?” (Solis 26). Pepín responds after the second question, “Me, señor.” This is humorous, because in the Spanish Golden Age tradition, the gracioso is indeed both a fool as well as the most witty and often most intelligent, or at least aware of the other characters’ secrets and able to comment on the action of the play.
Because *Dreamlandia* is such a radical adaptation, Solis chooses to include overt references in the form of direct quotations and messages from ghosts so that the reader or audience easily recognizes the connection to the Spanish Golden Age. In the scene where Pepín and Celestino wake up as if the previous action was a dream, Celestino questions, “Is that all it was? A dream?” and Pepín responds, “Sueños sueños son” (Solis 10). Pepín is simply answering Celestino that dreams are only dreams. However, he is also quoting Segismundo’s monologue from the end of the second act in Calderón’s *La vida es sueño*. This is more than a clever reference to the classical Spanish culture from which Solis adapts. It is a conscious acknowledgement that this adaptation is indeed connected to Calderón. In addition, Solis adapts by using ghosts to represent ideas and characters from *La vida es sueño*. In order to find Celestino, Pepín must remember what his dream looked like, and so he wanders around as if in that dream, which seems crazy to Blanca, until Dolores’s ghost appears to her. All this is very magical, especially when Dolores appears to Blanca as a ghost. Dolores is the character in this play that takes the place of Calderón’s prophecy. When she appears to Blanca, she states that Lazaro lives to spite their family, rather than to destroy or tyrannize a country. In this way, Solis makes the Calderón story more personal and specific to these individual characters.

Solis then goes one step further and incorporates metatheatrical elements where the characters become aware of their connection with *La vida es sueño*, and their role as a representations of the past. At one point, Pepín tells the audience that he recognizes the correlation between his character and his counterpart in Calderón’s play. Later, when Pepin sees immigrant ghosts crossing the border, at the beginning of the second act, his speech connects the characters in *Dreamlandia* with both real Mexican immigrants and
their Spanish ancestors, who continue to cross over through memory to inform identities today. It is Pepín who, like a Spanish Golden Age gracioso, exists in the world of the play as a fool, but is actually the voice of reason and wisdom. In referencing *La vida es sueño*, McKendrick writes, “there is no weak link in this astonishing play – even the gracioso’s role is tightly woven into the fabric of ideas” (157). Pepín guides the audience to a liminal dream within a dream space, where dreams and reality meet and the living and the dead connect. When Celestino fires his gun, he accidentally shoots Pepín. Before dying, Pepín breaks away and speaks towards a vision somewhere offstage, or perhaps out at the audience. He says:

*Mi gran sueño!* The dream that dreamed me first. Look through the hole in my chest at the gold of *Dreamlandia, vatos.* Ghostcrossers in a Spanish play played many nights before, before the before. Strangers passing through each other’s corazones. I see them. A King. A Prince. A Royal Lady. An old Duke. But where’s the Fool? Gotta have a Fool. (Solis 84)

This reference to *Dreamlandia* may be the United States, a space that many immigrants view as a land where future dreams come true. It might also be a dreamland of the past, where the source of identity is located. Pepín mentions the characters found in Calderón’s play and suggests that the bullet hole through his heart is somehow a tunnel or passageway back into the past of the Spanish Golden Age. Perhaps he suggests that we must feel with our hearts in order to realize the truth about our identity, and that this truth is held in the words of ghosts from a play written over four hundred years ago.

Solis pushes the limits of the dream metaphor by introducing characters that did not exist in Calderón’s play and using them to comment on the nature of fate and free
Solis carefully names Celestino’s second wife, Sonia, an allusion to the Spanish verb *soñar,* which means “to dream.” In a fantastic moment full of plot twists where Celestino discovers Lazaro and Sonia plotting against him, as Dolores foretold in her curse, Celestino decides to spare his son and punish Sonia by leaving her stranded in the Mexican desert. He explains to Sonia that she was the “unfortunate wedge between fate and free will” (Solis 78). This is an important element of the play because it connects to the focus of Calderón’s play, the literal and metaphorical relationship between dreams, fate and free will, and may also be considered a metatheatrical reference or joke. Sonia is left for dead, but just before disappearing, shadowy ghosts from the past, perhaps from all the way back to the Golden Age of Spain, surround her as she cries out in fear and explains to the audience these ghosts were drawn to her. “It was her scent that drew them to her. Not Estee Lauder. Not Mirabella. Not even Calvin Klein. The essence of Sonia. *Soñar. To dream. Sueños sueños son*” (Solis 79). Sonia is literally caught in the middle between the fate of the curse and the free will of both Lazaro and Celestino.

Alternatively, the idea that fate can be controlled, or that people may change the past, or their identity, by their own free will is nothing more than a dream. Sonia embodies this idea. Her last words are an echo of a moment from the beginning of the play when Pepín says “*Sueños sueños son,*” and also from Segismundo’s famous monologue from the end of the second act in *La vida es sueño.* The concept that *Dreamlandia* exists as a haunting, a resonance, or an echo of the Spanish Golden Age past, is exemplified just before Celestino leaves Sonia in the desert to die. Sonia begs to be told where he is taking her, and Celestino responds, “*Mira. Dots of dead ice.* We study these sad flecks to understand how we started, to measure something of our future
in them” (Solis 78). He refers to “echoes of light” and says “if we’re observing the light of stars long ago put out, then what do they see, but the light of our sun already millions of light years dead?” Solis understands that we must study the past to understand the future, and that the Spanish Golden Age, like dots of dead ice, tells us or reveals clues about how the past is connected with the present and the future. The memories of Latina/o ancestors from the Spanish Golden Age are like the light from stars that have died, but continue to be visible today. It is also revealing that Solis writes about this light using the word “echoes,” which gives memory a visual as well as auditory means for receiving and understanding the legacy left behind.

Not only do the characters refer to Calderón’s plot, but Solis introduces the metatheatrical notion that the art of theatre itself has the power to take stories from the past and adapt them to enact change in the present. Near the end of the play, Celestino says, “This is how we conquer fate.” Frank continues, “In story. Old dramas long ago played out” (Solis 85). Pepín slowly dies, and as the audience hears the sound of rain, the lights change to signal that everything witnessed on stage was all a dream. The stage direction states that the characters should seem to wake as if from a dream, embarrassed and helpless. When Blanca asks how to wake up from this nightmare, Frank says, “Maybe we don’t,” and Celestino says, “Maybe he just did.” Solis does not provide a simple commentary on the reality of death, or that life is like a dream that we wake up from when we die. Instead, he lets the audience to decide.

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH DIALOGUE

One of the most engaging, as well as perplexing, elements of Solis’s adaptation involves the use of language. The characters’ dialogue incorporates code switching,
various types of labeling, and *caló*, a form of contemporary Mexican slang, as an expression of identity. On one hand, this style brings new life to a classical masterpiece, making it accessible to readers and audiences that might otherwise overlook Spanish Golden Age literature. With its long passages, polymetric form, and archaic word choice, Calderón’s writing is likely to alienate a potential audience that may truly enjoy and appreciate the story. In this way, the language in *Dreamlandia* alters something foreign to suggest that Calderón can belong to everyone, not just the elite. On the other hand, the ultimate effect of substituting common slang for beautiful poetry may be degrading or demeaning both to the literature and culture of the Spanish Golden Age. In appropriating Calderón’s poetic, classical Castilian Spanish, changing it into a working-class Mexican-American dialect, Solis destroys something that some may believe ought to be preserved and performed today.

Given these two modes of thinking, it is difficult to reach a clear middle ground, to suggest a connection between Solis and Calderón, or to argue for a single, unchanging relationship between the Spanish Golden Age and contemporary *Latinidad*. If anything, these relationships are constantly changing, depending on the perspective of the reader and audience. An understanding of this instability requires consideration of Solis’s use of patterns of dialogue, Spanish words, and ethnic labels. Suzanne Oboler describes how ethnic labels, such as Latino or Hispanic, create a homogenized sense of identity that may stigmatize a group from the dominant ideology, or be used to forge a sense of unity, or Latinismo (4-5). Oboler’s ideas concerning ethnic labeling provide a perspective on how readers and audiences interpret the identities of characters that Solis constructs through his writing. Analysis of the dialogue used to establish relationships between characters
affects the construction of Latina/o identity by exposing how language invites or resists assimilation. Overall, Solis utilizes code switching, contemporary word choice and dialect, along with various forms of labeling to construct a Latina/o borderland identity for all people, regardless of social class.

**DIALOGUE AND CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS**

The use of Spanish words and phrases, and the unique style of dialogue, help to distinguish and segregate characters from one another. At the beginning of the play Pepín says, “A night big as the state of Tejas with Pepín inside” (Solis 7). This opening line signals to the reader and audience that code switching between English and Spanish is likely to occur throughout the play. In the opening scene, Vivian screams as she is giving birth using macabre yet poetic dialogue such as “My insides are all black!” “Pain filling me with flies, millions of flies,” and “My breath become smoke” (Solis 7-8). Eventually, she starts screaming and swearing, but this dark poetry is unusual and comes at the same point when the other characters around her are speaking both English and Spanish. We later learn that Vivian is Frank’s sister. She is Anglo and does not speak Spanish at all in this scene. It is left unclear if she is able to speak Spanish or not, but Solis does not give her any Spanish dialogue. As a result, her character appears as different from other characters that do speak both Spanish and English. We know that Pepín, Celestino, and Dolores understand both languages and easily incorporate code switching. This helps to align these characters on one level, and establish them as capable of understanding the distinction between these two languages.

In addition to helping to distinguish or segregate characters, dialogue and code switching is frequently used to connect characters with each other. Sociolinguist Shana
Poplack defines code switching as “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent” (208). Using this definition, it is possible to identify specific examples of code switching and discuss its usage and meaning. In a scene where Pepín describes one of his dreams, which actually reflects information that is true within the world of the play, he explains how he heard Dolores calling Frank “Sincero.” Pepín speaks about Frank saying, “this big chingon, Mr. Migra, stood by the Rio like the sheriff of pinchi Walmart” (Solis 12). This code switching and word choice communicates that Frank works for the border patrol and is considered to be an important or high-ranking officer. It is significant that Pepín describes Frank with Spanish words, as if to associate him with Mexican culture, rather than segregate him as an Anglo-American who can only be described using English words. Pepín’s code switching suggests that Frank is connected with characters from Mexico and respected by some of them, instead of isolated and despised as a generic signifier of unjust power.

Spanish words may also communicate an imbalance of power among characters. Border patrol agents, Seth and Carl, use dialogue suggesting that Mexican immigrants have less personal agency than Anglo-Americans when constructing identity. Seth mentions the chupacabra and Santería when explaining that Pepín has to go back across the border to Mexico. These images are forms of evil that exist in Mexican folklore. The fact that Seth is knowledgeable of this aspect of Mexican culture shows that culture and identity are not exclusive to a place, but instead to a person. More importantly, Seth’s knowledge exemplifies the fact that Anglo-Americans possess the freedom to appropriate Mexican culture, without any negative repercussion. In the same scene, Carl’s dialogue also reveals a desire to make Pepín into something different or “other” than what is
acceptable, which becomes the basis for denying him the freedom to choose his home, and thus his identity. Carl says, “We got no power to make you one of us. Only power we got is to make you one of them” (Solis 67). This is an extremely interesting moment, because it suggests that Carl is so disinclined to help Pepín that he admits to being powerless. Carl uses the excuse that he is only responsible for doing his job. In this scene, Seth and Carl are free to discuss Mexican culture, but Pepín is grouped into the “other” that must be deported. As an outsider, Pepín is denied the freedom to embrace the American Dream. Stuck between cultures, he is left to create a new, hybrid identity.

Solis often writes dialogue using caló, a hybrid form of language, or Spanish slang, that developed in the Southwest United States and is common in parts of South Texas. This slang dialogue helps establish connections between characters from similar and different ethnicities, but may also be used as a tactic for manipulation. According to Gregory Rabassa, “the most difficult aspect of translation is the necessary but often futile attempts to preserve or convey a cultural milieu and its concomitants through words” (10). This is exemplified in a scene where Celestino and Pepín discuss how words contain a variety of cultural meanings and experience a moment of miscommunication, before arriving at an understood connection. The conversation is driven by Celestino’s desire to force Pepín to confess what he knows about Alfonso (Blanca), and learn more about Pepín’s relationship with Frank. To do this, Celestino lures Pepín by pretending to be his friend, admitting to being a Mexican, and joking with him about farting. When Pepín says “No puedo,” Celestino thinks he says “No pedo.” Pepín then asks if Celestino is a mojado, unaware of how the use of this word might offend Celestino. Rather than respond with anger, Celestino ignores Pepín’s question and changes the subject back to
the word *pedo*. The scene ends with Celestino explaining how the word *pedo* may be used in Mexican slang. He says, “*Pedo* is a fine Spanish word, meaning gas to some, drunkenness to others, bullshit to yet other people. But the translation of *pedo* I prefer is trouble. *VA VER PEDO SI NO ME DICES DE ALFONSO*” (Solis 69). This translates as “There’s going to be trouble if you don’t tell me about Alfonso.” Rabassa explains that within the Spanish language, meaning changes depending on region and interpretation. For example, a Puerto Rican in Buenos Aires who innocently announces that he is going to catch a bus (*Voy a coger la guagua*) would be arrested as a child molester (Rabassa 10). When comparing Spanish with English, Rabassa gives the example that in English, when we insult someone’s maternal descent, we call them a “son of a bitch,” while in Spanish, an *hijo de puta* does not arouse much more than a ripple of indignation (3).

Celestino’s actions and dialogue show that some words in Spanish, as in all languages, contain multiple meanings, may be interpreted differently, and may be used to both establish a shared identity, as well as to deceive and manipulate.

Primarily, Solis uses code switching and other dialogue as a means to connect characters with one another. Just before Blanca meets with Lazaro to tutor him, both characters appear in separate areas on stage and share a moment where they trade lines, back and forth, without recognizing the other person. They speak about a birth, which may be Blanca’s, but it also recalls Lazaro’s birth, an exchange that connects the two characters. Blanca and Lazaro were both denied the truth that they are the offspring of an Anglo parent and a Mexican parent. When the two characters finally see each other, Blanca adopts a style of language to ensure that she is perceived as a male, Alfonso. Her dialogue includes repeated profanity, the word “bro,” and the nickname “Laz” for Lazaro.
Rather than attempt to assume a dominant position over Lazaro, which would require more formal language, Blanca/Alfonso uses dialogue that establishes her/him as a friend and equal. As such, she/he is able to teach Lazaro values such as respect, charity, goodness, love, faith, and truth from a perspective that is alternative to Celestino. These lessons help to humanize Lazaro and provide a sense of what is true or real, so that he is able to discern reality from his dreams or imagination. Later in the play, Bustamante and Lazaro speak with each other using a style of street slang, with phrases in English such as, “you mah bitch.” In a similar way, the dialogue creates a bond between these two characters and communicates a sense of solidarity between them. Bustamante suggests that the Mexican people have an advantage because they possess hope, a word that Solis writes in bold to emphasize that Anglos will never be able to take it away from them.

Celestino also uses language to express his identity and ingratiate himself with Lazaro as a father figure. He employs code switching when he says, “Up there [heavens], the gods of antiquity slam down shots of Patron with the dioses de mi own mythology,” (Solis 44). Celestino uses Spanish when talking about a brand of tequila and to say “my Gods.” His “Gods” are all related to the United States economy, but Patron is a product of Mexico. This is interesting because Celestino denies his own ethnicity when publicly labeled as a Mexican, but when teaching his son privately, he incorporates Spanish to describe personal ideas appropriated from the cultures of both the United States and Mexico. In addition, the fact that Celestino connects the Gods of antiquity with his own personal Gods, suggests that as an American, he has the power to establish his own beliefs as legitimate and enduring. After Blanca is deported and Celestino is alone in his home with his family, he speaks to Lazaro completely in Spanish saying, “¿Buenos días,
mijo, como estas?” (Solis 58). It is significant that Celestino speaks affectionately with Lazaro in Spanish. However, Celestino is conflicted. Early in the play, he instructs his son to identify himself as a Texan. He later labels Lazaro a maricón when he catches him attempting to kiss Blanca-as-Alfonso. Finally, he switches again and returns to speaking Spanish. These moments establish a confused identity for Celestino. His inability to clarify his relationship with his son conveys an inability to understand his own identity. Near the end of the play, this theme is carried to fruition when Celestino embraces his Mexican ethnicity, along with his desire to fashion himself as a legitimate American.

**HIDDEN ELEMENTS OF LATINA/O IDENTITY**

Language also operates to reveal significant information about plot, action, and characterization to the audience, often foreshadowing future events. Each of these components contributes to Solis’s building, or uncovering, elements of Latina/o identity.

In the opening scene, Celestino does not want to take Vivian to a hospital because, as he says, “No one can know! No one can know anything!” (Solis 7). We learn later that Vivian took cocaine, and would expose his involvement with drug dealing, which is why Celestino states that no one can know. The emphasis on the word “anything” suggests that there is something else Celestino is hiding. We know that Celestino has the power to make Dolores a legal citizen of the United States. He has a great deal of power, but is afraid of being exposed. His identity is based on how others perceive him. He focuses on appearance and clout, and not on his actions or behavior. Blanca expresses a key fact about her identity when she finds Dolores and attempts to revive her mother’s dead body. When Pepín reveals that Dolores was going to Texas to find their father, Blanca says, “Síncero. That name es mi destino. Without Ama, what home, what country, do I live
in? All the country I got left is Sincero” (Solis 12). This dialogue reveals character identity by connecting ideas and foreshadowing future events. It is Blanca’s destiny to find her father, and Sincero (Frank) is her father. She believes this event will answer the question about where she belongs, or where she will find a home. To Blanca, family is the source of identity, and without it, she believes that she loses all connection with the idea of home, connection with a country as a source of identity, and connection with a place in the world.

Dialogue may also provide information by allowing characters to hide their true identity for various reasons. When Celestino compliments Sonia, saying that she’s bilingual, Sonia replies, “English and html.” Later, we learn that she does speak Spanish. This devaluation of Spanish is key for her identity construction, but it also reflects a very real devaluation of Spanish in the United States. In a collection of memoirs and plays written by Teatro Chicana, Laura Garcia describes a humiliating incident when she came to the United States, entered elementary school, and was placed three grade levels behind the students her own age simply because she had trouble speaking English (31). In the same work, many other women share similar experiences being singled out, held back, physically abused by teachers, and discriminated against. Virginia Rodriguez Balanoff recalls how she was chastised for speaking Spanish, and explains her frustration having realized how much Spanish she had lost (65). Conversely, in Dreamlandia, Pepín uses negative or derogatory language to subvert expectations and disarm racist border patrol agents. Pepín hears how Seth and Carl talk negatively about Mexican immigrants, and agrees with them saying, “He’s a dream mojado!” Rather than use this term to insult and degrade another human, Pepín uses it with a matter-of-fact tone, which changes how
audiences might perceive this insult. Although some audiences may not know how this word translates, those who know this word means “wetback” will notice that Pepín takes ownership of the word. Whether or not this diminishes or encourages racist sentiment is not as important as the fact that Pepín disarms the border patrol officers and prevents them from assuming a position of power over him.

Moreover, the dialogue in Dreamlandia exposes aspects of various characters’ humanity, which may range from information concerning personality to traits that drive a character’s actions. In the case of Pepín, his dialogue reveals an identity that may be interpreted as foolish, comical, or innocent and childlike. Pepín speaks about the river using multiple images referring to the human mouth, such as “lip” and “tongue.” Pepín’s description of it as having a black tongue that licks shoes, helps to explain Pepín’s identity. He sees a simple thing like a river in an abstract manner, perhaps like a child, or perhaps like an adult artist. He sees it as black, which could refer to the fact that it is dark and the water visually appears black, or it could refer to an ominous or foreboding doom present within a raging current. The first time we see Lazaro, he “charges out from his lair screaming like an enraged animal until the heavy chain on his neck jerks him back” (Solis 12). This action depicts Lazaro as a monster, but his dialogue reveals his humanity and identity. The first time he speaks, his dialogue is a mix of Spanish and English, which makes sense because he is the bi-racial child of Celestino and Vivian. He screams, “¡Escuchame!” to demand that we recognize him as an individual, fully aware of his humanity. Sadly, as soon as Celestino hears his son, he walks off stage, as if choosing not to listen. Lazaro continues to speak using both Spanish and English, just like the other characters in the play.
The dialogue created for Seth and Carl makes them into crude targets of derision. In a scene where they are both put in charge of monitoring Pepín, these two men use horribly offensive language. Carl refers to Pepín saying, “Retardo’s a wet, too, in case you forgot” (Solis 40). Seth’s argument that Pepín can escape persecution by applying for asylum is said sarcastically, and both men trick Pepín into going through the motions of pledging allegiance and becoming a citizen-patrol chief. Seth and Carl also demonstrate how, in the United States, two low ranking Anglo-American officers occupy a dominant position, capable of manipulating Mexican immigrants. Seth continues to tease Pepín. His bullying reveals a distinct racial prejudice when he instructs, “Now you’re authorized to use whatever method it takes to nab your mojado. The method I recommend is D & D. You gotta set your trap in order to detain, and once he’s in custody, you determine his status and deport his ass back” (Solis 40). Words such as “nab” and “trap” portray the border patrol as an organization whose actions are hostile and inhumane. Solis writes as if La Migra illegally hunt Mexicans, rather than legally enforce the law. The language used by Carl and Seth, such as “deport his ass,” shows that the men responsible for enforcing immigration laws are vulgar. However, Pepín responds to Seth and Carl with dialogue that reinforces his ingenuous nature. At first, he mistakenly calls Seth and Carl by the names Thirsty and Carol. Like a child, Pepín is socially unaware that this is offensive, and continues to call Seth and Carl by these names on purpose, sometimes switching out Carla for Carol. In this way, Pepín strips the officers of their identity and turns the situation around so that the Anglo American characters, rather than the Mexicans, are the subject of insult and derision.
Celestino’s dialogue also reveals information to the audience about his troubled identity. In the scene in which Blanca pulls a knife on Lazaro as he tries to hold onto her, Celestino misinterprets the moment, thinking that Blanca/Alfonso attacked Lazaro. Celestino responds with what appears to be a scathing critique of the immigration system on the surface, but may also be interpreted as parody. His dialogue is both ignorant and racist, but subtly incorporates Spanish to show that he cannot hide from his ethnicity. He says, “New lesson. Beware the illegal. The most disposable. The most invisible. They slip in through our lawns, our kitchens, our hoteles y restaurantes. They lack identity so they abuse ours. America can’t afford to be soft on them” (Solis 49). Blanca points out that Celestino is a Mexican immigrant by calling him a “wet,” which he denies. The fact that he speaks Spanish while verbally insulting Mexican immigrants shows that he distinguishes himself as different not only because he is an American, but because he is a legal immigrant. The irony is that despite his desire to segregate and legitimize himself, he is deeply involved in illegal drug dealing. The most disturbing statement he makes is that Mexican immigrants lack identity so they abuse ours. Clearly, no person lacks an identity, but Celestino’s dialogue resonates with a prejudice, shared by some people in the United States, that view Mexican immigrants as invisible, worthless, or as “aliens” that lack humanity. This dialogue may also reflect a fear that Mexican immigrants are actually perceived as a very real threat. Likewise, audiences or readers may question if Celestino’s prejudice reflects a refusal to accept or embrace ethnicity, or instead, a type of assimilation resulting from hostility towards elements of identity that an individual may wish could be altered or eradicated.
Having observed and processed his father’s racist sentiment, Lazaro makes a decision to embrace his father’s ideology concerning immigration, though. He might be doing this to trick Celestino by feigning loyalty to gain his trust. What is interesting is that he mimics his father by repeating his exact words when talking about the character Pepín. He says, “This is an illegal. A burden on this land. The most disposable. The most invisible. These people are a world removed, verdad, Papa? Isn’t that what you said?” (Solis 59). In a following scene, Lazaro also asks to visit Mexico and see his father’s factory. When Celestino questions if Lazaro will be his centaur, Lazaro says, “Whatever you want me to be, Padre.” His dialogue expresses a new formality, which indicates a change in character that is likely due to some deceptive plan. This type of manipulation on Lazaro’s part reflects his father’s deceptiveness, and promotes the idea that identity is affected by learned behavior as well as by genetics.

Throughout the play, the motif of finding a home suggests that a person’s home is a key factor in constructing identity. Much of the dialogue reveals how different characters either reject or embrace their home as a defining element of their identity. At one point, Lazaro explains to Sonia, “I’m a son of the USA.” He realizes that he was actually born in the United States, and thus, he identifies with the United States. Lazaro uses this information to create his identity. Pepín hobbles in, having been beaten and says, “I told him! [Celestino] How in my sleepies I see Dreamlandia calling all of us home” (Solis 74). This “home” could be the United States, life after death, or even a place within our dreams. Overall, the important factor is that a person’s home is a source of identity that we are called to search for and find for ourselves. According to Oboler, identity should not be measured by ideological assumptions or beliefs of superiority, but
rather by birthplace or self-definition (40). In contrast to Lazaro or Pepín, Frank does not identify with Mexico. As a citizen of the United States, Frank rants about Mexico in negative terms, calling it a theme park near to hell. He does not see Mexico as his home, and questions who would want to live in Mexico, much less identify with Mexican culture. However, when he says in broken, ungrammatical Spanish, “¡Yo estar mucho borracho!” the audience or reader understands that he has assimilated the language, not to abuse people or demean the language itself, but in order to communicate.

There are a few moments in the play when language has multiple meanings linked with character identity. Once inside the factory, Blanca works to construct a television and create a new identity. When she says, “My new world order,” a comment that may remind readers and audiences of a speech given by George H.W. Bush in reference to the status of the United States following the Cold War, there are many other possible meanings. Blanca might refer to the literal orders being shouted over the speaker, the larger context and worldview of Latina/os in North America, or possibly her own conscious construction of identity. In addition, Solis uses names very carefully in this play. When Blanca begins searching for her father, she calls him Sincero, because that is the name Dolores used. Sincero is an allegorical name meaning sincere, or frank. Likewise, Blanca’s name highlights an aspect of her ethnicity. When she learns that her father is Frank (Sincero), at the beginning of the second act, and that she is ½ white and ½ Mexican, the realization sparks a violent reaction. Blanca does not identify with being white, or Anglo. When Frank tells her that he is her father, she responds, “¡Gringa! Everything I ever hated! ¡Soy pinchi gringa tambien!” (Solis 56). Blanca then runs into the Rio Grande in a desperate attempt to wash away the part of her that is white. She
states, “Drown this body, erase me! Suck the whiteness off!” (Solis 56). Blanca’s identity is a major issue for her to struggle with in the play, but whereas some Latina/os may consider being white as a negative characteristic, often associated with oppression and imperialism, others may identify as White.³²

ETHNIC SLURS & THE LABELING OF SELF AND OTHERS

Throughout Solis’s play, characters knowingly and unknowingly use words that label themselves and others according to contemporary perceptions of ethnicity. In some scenes from Dreamlandia, characters use ethnic slurs to express hostility, anger, or prejudice. According to Timothy Jay’s psycholinguistic study on cursing, “In cultures where there are haves and have-nots, in-groups and out-groups, or minorities and majorities there is bound to be social tension and anger that focuses on these group differences” (80). However, there are moments when characters express anger and hostility by labeling themselves with words that focus on ethnicity, yet without a derogatory implication. Blanca’s violent reaction upon learning of her own ethnicity is an excellent example of how characters use dialogue to label themselves. In Dreamlandia, Blanca calls herself a gringa, a slang word that may be translated as yankee, foreigner, Anglo, blond, North American, or simply be used to label someone who is white. As the child of an Anglo-American and a Mexican, Blanca’s name does not completely fit with her identity. According to Patricia Zavella,

³² Sociologist Ginetta E. B. Candelario writes: “It is a truism that to be Latina/o in the United States is to be non-White and by extension to be barred structurally and symbolically from the privileges of Whiteness: opportunity and advantage in the pursuit of human, social, cultural, political, and economic capital. The racialization of Latina/os as non-White is historically rooted in nineteenth-century U.S. expansionism and imperialism” (337). In addition, Candelario’s research on the 2000 Census reveals that 42.2% of reported Mexican immigrants consider themselves White (344-45).
when referring to ourselves within a white context, we often prefer more generic
terms, like Las Mujeres, or the combination Chicana/Latina, in opposition to
Hispanic, which is often seen as inappropriate; when speaking among ourselves,
we highlight and celebrate all the nuances of identity – we are Chicanas,
Mexicanas, Mexican Americans, Spanish Americans, Tejanas, Mestizas, and the
terms vary according to context. (187)

Blanca only identifies with the part of her that is Mexican and experiences an identity
crisis. The essential question posed in this moment involves how Blanca will now re-
define, re-create, and re-construct her identity, and whether or not she will embrace or
reject the fact that her name labels her as “white.” The violent nature of Blanca’s
reaction suggests her profound and immediate need to disassociate from anything that
might be considered “white.”

Blanca’s impetus for labeling herself a gringa may have been born out of
frustration and anxiety, but the motivation to label herself stems from a much different
source. When Blanca tells Celestino that she is his contrabanda, there is the implication
that, like cocaine, she is illegal. However, she arrives, like a savior, to set Lazaro free
and see that the truth is told. She opens a jar and we hear a long cry from Dolores. When
Celestino blames her for cursing him, the heavens respond with a clap of thunder. Here
at the border, there is no distinction between white and brown, Anglo and Latina/o,
Mexico and United States, ghosts and the living, emotions and weather, or even the past,
present, and future. The only thing that remains is the truth, and as Blanca states,
“LOVE.” Celestino fights against this idea, but then he sees the ghost immigrants
crossing the river. He talks about how they are “crying for the homeblood” and says,
“The blood is voz. The voz has mouth. Mouth has wound. Wound is…” (Solis 83). This river and mouth imagery is similar to what Pepín talked about at the beginning of the play, and is almost verbatim what Lazaro says in his first big speech. This dialogue signals that Celestino may be about to change how he perceives his own identity.

Like Celestino, many other characters use dialogue to label themselves, as well as others. When Frank refers to Celestino as “sir,” we understand that Celestino is a man of power and commands Frank’s respect, as if Celestino were in a position of authority over Frank. Celestino says that he would have cut Frank loose, which lets us know that he employs Frank. We later learn that Frank has his job only because he is Celestino’s brother-in-law. Otherwise, the two men would have nothing to do with each other. Frank identifies himself as a Baptist, because religion is part of his self-constructed identity. More importantly, when he calls Celestino a “Mexican,” there are no immediate repercussions. Earlier in the play, Dolores refers to Celestino as a “wetback,” mostly out of anger and as a result of being forced to cross back into Mexico. It is interesting, though, that Celestino emphatically denies that the truth that he is a Mexican. He rejects any label that connects him with Mexico, regardless of whether or not it is accurate or derogatory. Even though the word that Dolores uses is highly derogatory of her own culture, she does not use this word to label all people from Mexico. Instead, her comment is meant to hurt Celestino after what he did to her, because she knows that Celestino identity is a source of conflict and insecurity, as it is for many people.

Although some might rationalize the use of ethnic slurs and labels by suggesting that others should recognize when the intended use of a word is meant to be literal, the connotation is often extremely demeaning. A good example of this occurs when
Celestino blames Dolores for his wife’s death. He forces her to cross back into Mexico by swimming across the Rio Grande at night. For this, she places a curse on him and calls him a *mojado*, or a wetback. She labels him out of spite, knowing that Celestino does not identify with a derogatory term for Mexican immigrants. Celestino is never seen getting wet while crossing the border, and neither does he toil in the heat, dripping wet with sweat. Blanca refers to the United States as “that damn country,” clearly indicating hostility towards the United States. Her reference to the United States as “Yankeelandia” is another label used to homogenize the United States. Even though this label may engender resentment, the term is much less offensive than “Hispanic.”

However, when used by a Mexican immigrant to label a native Texan, who may or may not be a Mexican American, the label “yankee” may likely provoke hostility. Many Texans identify themselves as being from the South, the Southwest, or what was once the Republic of Texas, and understand the term “yankee” to label a person from the northeastern parts of the United States that is culturally separate and substandard.\(^{33}\) In the context of *Dreamlandia*, “yankee” is used to homogenize the United States in the same way that Anglos use “Hispanic” to homogenize people from various countries in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

Many of the words used to label others possess a specific rationale that helps to reveal character identity. Lazaro refers to Frank as Tio Sugar, or Uncle Sugar, because

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\(^{33}\) According to Geoffrey Hughes’s *An Encyclopedia of Swearing*, the term “yankee” was first used by Lord Horatio Nelson in 1784 to stereotype all Americans, usually with an edge of contempt, but also with a connotation of cleverness, cunning or cold calculation; Francis Grose wrote in his *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* in 1785 that a “yankee” was “A booby, or country lout; a name given to the New England men in North America,” but the term acquired its greatest force when used by the Confederate Army during the Civil War (1861-1865) to speak contemptuously of all Northerners (515-16).
he knows that Frank is not his father and the cocaine that Frank gives him looks like sugar. When Lazaro says that the chain is his father and the water of the river is his mother, it is because they are what he knows best. He does not really know his real parents, but if the river and chains are symbolic and represent his legacy, then it is, in a way, a signifier for his parents. Blanca calls Lazaro “brother” as in “buddy,” but in reality they are cousins. She promises to set him free, even after he explodes, calls her a bitch, and yells for her to “get her ass back!” This outburst clearly shows that his is still very aggressive and bestial. He calls her a “dreamfucker.” Also, Frank calls Lazaro “pilgrim,” instead of by his name. This label is more than just a nickname. It implies that Lazaro is on a journey, like the first Dutch settlers of the United States. Pepín labels Blanca/Alfonso as a cowboy, and refers to the Texas side of the border as the Land of Billy Bob, playing on the stereotype of Texans as cowboys with ridiculous nicknames.

While most of the dialogue used to label others does explain how various characters are perceived, some ethnic slurs are explicitly offensive. When Carl calls Blanca a “greaser,” Celestino corrects him saying that in his home, the term used is “Mexican.” Celestino has some personal pride for his true ethnicity, but when Carl responds by saying “Messican,” Celestino does not correct him any further. This indicates that he either does not wish to challenge Carl further, or he does not value his personal identity enough to correct Carl’s offensive pronunciation. Nevertheless, as Oboler points out, from the perspective of the dominant society, Hispanic ethnicity is seen as a social problem, ridden with welfare abuse, AIDS, drugs, dropouts, teen-age-pregnancy, and yet at the same time identified as a lucrative market segment, or a powerful voting block (14). The Anglo characters, including Frank, may not specifically
reference these issues, or use the term “Hispanic,” but labels such as “greaser” and “Messican” alert readers and audiences to consider how Mexican ethnicity is viewed by some Anglos. According to Geoffrey Hughes, “Ethnic insults are the most obvious linguistic manifestation of xenophobia and prejudice against out-groups. They are usually based on malicious, ironic, or humorous distortions of the target group’s identity or ‘otherness’” (146). When Frank sees Blanca (as Alfonso) and insults her (him) by calling her (him) José, *mojado*, and saying that (s)he’s lower than a dog, Solis is actively drawing attention to the xenophobia and prejudice against Mexican-Americans that exists today. As Oboler notes, “Persistent discrimination against groups based on long-held stereotypes about ‘foreign Others,’ rather than any serious consideration about the reality of the persons involved, continues to shape the ‘channels of opportunity’ actually open to all individuals identified as its members” (98). In response to Frank’s abusive comments, Blanca/Alfonso responds by calling Frank a *pinchi gringo*. The hostility used by both sides to insult and label each other significantly affects each character’s and the audience’s perception of identity and ethnicity.

Furthermore, characters go beyond simply labeling others and use dialogue to label Mexico in a way that communicates a certain level of hostility or resentment. When Dolores appears to Pepín, he notices that they are standing on the physical borderline between Mexico and the United States. Pepín labels Mexico when he says that they are standing on the boundary “between U.S. and U Lose” (Solis 54). This type of labeling reinforces the lack of opportunity in Mexico, and explains the desire for immigrants to dream about a better life across the border. In a frustrated moment, Sonia says that everyone is “running on Chicano time” (Solis 70). This is the first time Solis mentions...
the term “Chicano” to label people from Mexico, and it is used in a derogatory sense to refer to the fact that people are late. Zavella points out that although the assumption that there is a coherent Chicano cultural heritage (that values, customs, and rituals form part of a tradition that all Chicanos are socialized into) is based on a stereotype that culture is determinant of behavior, some scholars maintain that Chicanos often base their behavior and decisions on these traditional norms (188). Sonia’s comment reinforces a negative Chicano stereotype, but as a Mexican American character, her use of the term “Chicano” instead of “Mexican” indicates that her critique is perhaps not self-referential.

RELOCATING TO THE U.S./MEXICO BORDER

The challenges that the characters in Dreamlandia face are similar to those that thousands of Mexican immigrants confront, having crossed the border in search of their dreams. Jorge Huerta writes that plays focused on the diaspora of Mexicanos and Mexicanas who have immigrated to the United States may be viewed as a theatre of exile, relocation, and negotiation, or about how to survive in a hostile society (39). The movement within border spaces invites alternative means for constructing Mexican-American identity as a result of relocation. In Dreamlandia, Solis relocates the setting to the border separating Mexico and the United States. It is worth noting that the title of Solis’s play, Dreamlandia, literally means “land of dreams,” which may refer to either Mexico, the United States, the physical border between Mexico and the United States, the metaphorical border between Mexico and Spain, the metaphorical border between dreams and reality, or an ironic commentary that the American Dream is an illusion for many people. The title invites speculation and suggests that the border is indeed a liminal space that blurs the distinction between reality and illusion, or between waking life and
dreaming. Each possible interpretation requires careful analysis of setting, movement, and the relationship of space to the construction of cross-border subjectivity.

The confusion, or blurring of reality, that surrounds the border space in the play, as well as all theatrical space, supports an environment where individual characters may examine and rethink their identity. English scholar Una Chaudhuri suggests that border spaces are like landscapes, which may be understood as either environments within the real world, or as a form of discourse: a representation, idea, or conceptualization about what might be “out there” in space (12). Given the definition of a landscape as discourse, it is possible to conceptualize theatrical space as a representation or idea. According to Elinor Fuchs, “Every dramatic world is conditioned by a landscape imaginary, a ‘deep’ surround suggested to the mind that extends far beyond the onstage environment reflected in the dramatic text and its scenographic representation” (30). When applied

*Dreamlandia*, the deep, imaginary landscape incorporates multiple environments, inhabited by Latina/os moving along and across the border. As a self-described border crosser and “border brujo,” performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña refers to his work as a search for other Mexicos, other selves, and describes the act of border crossing as revisiting many overlapping, marginal communities (8). Laurietz Seda describes the work of Gómez-Peña as a form of trans/acting, or “the conscious use of performance and negotiation of strategies to reinvent and redefine the art and politics of living in-between cultures,” by questioning and subverting categories (228). Like Gómez-Peña’s work, Solis’s play involves the negotiation and reinvention of prescribed notions of Latina/o identity by exploring the inherent liminality and overlapping communities within the border landscape. In *Dreamlandia*, this occurs at three specific sites within the play: on
Lazaro’s island prison in the middle of the Rio Grande, at the Robles’ estate in Texas, and inside the NexMex factory in Ciudad Juarez. Each site may be seen as a part of a larger, encompassing border area where movement across literal and metaphorical boundaries encourages subjective interpretation of Mexican-American identity as a hybrid culture. However, depending on the specific border site, the locus of political power changes to determine the degree of subjectivity allowed each individual.

**LAZARO’S ISLAND PRISON & THE SHORE OF THE RIO GRANDE**

As dreams and illusions mingle with reality throughout the entire border area, including parts of Mexico and the United States, the focal point of the physical border is the Rio Grande river. In *Dreamlandia*, a sandbar in the middle of the river, where Lazaro is held prisoner, represents this physical space. Although this space is Lazaro’s prison, the island is also a unique site for discovery, transformation, and identity construction, because it is situated directly on the physical border between two countries. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, “the borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (25). This is reflected in the play by the confusion over whether the characters are real or not. Lazaro and Blanca first meet when Blanca, attempting to cross the border, appears out of the water on Lazaro’s island. Lazaro believes that she is something that he dreamed up, which may lead the audience to question whether other images in the play are also figments of Lazaro’s imagination, or actual people within the world of the play. Lazaro is not able to tell the difference between a vision and a real person. He knows that Blanca is different, but calls her a ghost. Not fully knowing what to make of Blanca,
Lazaro says that she comes from his sores, just like the ghosts of his ancestors, which is interesting because she is indeed a part of his family, and thus, his identity.

In order to fully communicate that the island is a site where the boundaries between dreams and illusions are confused, characters speak about the realistic setting using poetic metaphors. Lazaro describes his wound as a mouth. “The mouth has voice. Voice has blood. Blood is home. Home bleeds Lazaro” (Solis 13). In my interview with Solis, he explained that he wrote this poetic sequence to be performed as if Lazaro might repeat it endlessly in a circular structure. This creates a cycle of associations where each word connects one idea with another. Lazaro describes the wound, the place where the shadows, ghosts, or “dreamfuckers,” as he calls them, as having come from a mouth. Whether or not Solis meant to imitate Calderón, this pattern appears to follow the rhythm of Calderón’s poetry, which tends to create cycles of repeated imagery. The appearance of this poetic pattern, spoken by a character on the border, shows that the island is a site where Calderón’s style appears in the form of a parodied imitation, an echo of the original, or simply a respectful homage.

Pepín also uses mouth imagery to describe the Rio Grande, which is the physical border and a symbol of that which is mysterious, hidden, dangerous, and immense enough to “swallow” or encompass both sides of a border. As a mouth with “lips” and “tongue,” as Pepín describes, the river is an ever-flowing site where anyone immersed within can articulate their own identity. When Pepín says, “river and night become one,” he may say this simply to let us know that the scene takes place at night, or to indicate that the river, despite being a physical border, is also a symbol of the spiritual or psychological boundary where identity is created and constructed. It is as if Lazaro
knows that the haunted shadows of his past spring forth from a mysterious, hidden, and even dangerous psychological boundary, just like the river. From this place, Lazaro feels the connection to his home, or the place where his identity makes sense. He recognizes this tragedy when he states, “all the time the voices are saying only no” (Solis 13). He feels that he will never be released from the middle of the river to find his true home or identity. To be trapped inside or on the border is to be tormented by the ghosts, without being able to cross one way or another.

The only means available to Lazaro for relating to the world beyond his island is through fashion magazines that Frank gives to him. Lazaro’s relationship with commercial print media challenges how Latina/os are influenced by media from the United States as a means of constructing an American identity. When we first meet Lazaro, he frequently talks about magazine ads for perfume and other products. His knowledge of these ads provides a foundation for communicating with Frank and Blanca, as well as to think about his own identity. Lazaro recognizes that he is a man, talks about his manhood, and sees that the glossy images are female. He also recognizes that he is treated as an animal, which implies that he knows he is not. When Lazaro explains his knowledge of Italian leather, it is clear that he is aware of something outside of himself or more meaningful than his experience. Without a clear sense of identity, Lazaro cries, “Black me out, ese!” When Blanca, appears out of the river searching for Pepín, he can only relate to her through his magazine collection. We learn that Lazaro has learned everything from magazines. He sniffs Blanca’s bow and recognizes the scent from perfume ads, but he says that all of them remind him of her. He may be able to discern one scent from the other, but he has never really seen or met a woman. He thinks that all
of them smell like perfume, and since Blanca smells like a perfume, then all of the ads are like her. When Frank visits the island sandbar, he has Lazaro cut up an image of a woman from a magazine, and forces Lazaro to drink it as if it were water or juice. In this way, Solis suggests that becoming an American involves, or requires, that people consume and embody images from the media to construct their own identities. This idea becomes even more prevalent later in the play when Lazaro is kidnapped from his island.

From the immediate space on Lazaro’s island sandbar, the supernatural boundary where dream-like visions and reality are blurred extends to include the surrounding area of the river and the riverbank. This becomes apparent when Pepín and Celestino wake up on either side of the Rio Grande, both having dreamed the opening scene of the play. Although this idea is not explicitly stated, it is likely that the audience will discern that the event of Lazaro’s birth took place at some point in the past within the world of the play. It is likely that Pepín and Celestino share the same dream because they both experienced the same event. Still, there is some confusion as to what is real and what is dreamed. Frank doesn’t question where this person might be, because he believes it really was just a drug-induced vision. When Carl finds Blanca’s ribbon that fell accidentally, it is confirmed that Blanca is real. Frank suppresses a reaction about the ribbon, but questions what it is doing on the sandbar, as if he suspects there is a real person that met Lazaro.

The shore of the Rio Grande exists as a space where characters search and refine their understanding of personal and collective identity. In this space, Blanca embraces the idea that her identity is connected with her father. This occurs in a moment just before Blanca crosses the border when her mother, Dolores, emits her last breath, which
Blanca inhales. This transference of breath symbolically transfers Dolores’ identity to Blanca. It is now up to Blanca to see that her mother’s curse on Celestino comes to fruition. Dolores says that she has to die in order to stop Blanca’s pain. In Spanish, “dolores” means “pain.” The pain that Dolores felt, being separated from the man she loves, having been deported by Celestino, is transferred to Blanca, who feels the need to ease the pain and discover the truth of her own identity by returning and finding her father. Along with her brother Pepín, Blanca must be the one to cross the border, because her identity is connected with both cultures from both sides of the border. When Blanca crosses the border, she calls out to her mother, Dolores, saying, “you always walked the water” (Solis 12). The reference to walking on water conjures up the image of Christ as well, equates the act of crossing with something spiritual, and aligns both Dolores and Blanca as Christian sojourners.

Within the space that contains the island, the river, and its shore, characters in Dreamlandia perform a series of border crossings. This action of physically and metaphorically crossing the border is significant in that it incorporates movement from one place to another. According to Ramón H. Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young, “border performances frequently feature bodies on the move. When bodies walk, drive, sail, or fly, their movements blur the here and there, constantly reorganizing spatial relations and negotiating the consequences of their crossings” (7). Standing along the edge of the river, Pepín sees a vision of Mexican immigrants crossing the border as he plays and pretends to work for La Migra. Instead of seeing these people clearly, with his eyes, Pepín is aided by night-vision goggles given to him by Carl and Seth, the two border patrol agents. Solis writes in the stage directions that as Pepín describes what he
sees, shadowy figures emerge around him on the stage. Because of the goggles, we know that Pepín’s vision is altered from reality. In addition, Pepín refers to these people as “ghost crossers.” These individuals may represent past, present, and future immigrants, as well as the souls of those who have died attempting to cross. When Dolores appears among them, the audience or reader realizes that these people are not faceless individuals, but are real people, similar to the characters we already know. They have an identity.

Given the supernatural space surrounding the border, including the island, the river, and the shores of either side, there are specific moments in the play when literal and metaphorical border crossing may be interpreted as a factor connected with assimilation and how it affects the construction of Latina/o identity. One example includes the opening scene of the play, a dream that Celestino and Pepín share while sleeping on separate shores of the river. Both characters dream of an event that occurred twenty years earlier, when Lazaro’s birth led to the death of his mother, Vivian. This moment is significant as a form of crossing from one world, or state of being, to another. As Dolores says later in the play, the “son comes for his second birth” (Solis 50). This Christian metaphor is emphasized when Dolores comments how the marks on Lazaro’s head from her fingernails are like a crown of thorns. Even the name Lazaro is connected with the Biblical Lazarus, who was dead but crosses back into the world of the living like Christ. In Solis’s play, Lazaro is reborn in a powerful moment where he stands to his full height and swears revenge. By embracing reality, Lazaro is now able to be reborn, to re-create his own identity, and to offer hope that the same might be true for all Latina/os.

In writing about another play by Solis, El Otro (The Other), Jon Rossini explores both literal and metaphorical border crossing. Rossini writes that these physical and
mental journeys help elucidate the negotiations of identities in relationship to geopolitical
and metaphorical boundaries (141). Solis’s “wrighting” of the literal and metaphoric
border demands that the audience recognize the presence of a new space that is
understood as El Otro, and even when the literal border is not crossed, this presence
becomes a transformational site for the Chicano male coming to grips with the realities of
his own complex identity formation (Rossini 145-6). The same exploration of literal and
metaphorical border crossing is found in Dreamlandia. The play stages the island and
the border as a transformational site for constructing identity, which allows readers and
audiences to investigate, define and negotiate multiple layers of Latina/o identity.

One of these layers includes recognition of the significance that an individual’s
outward appearance has on his or her identity. Solis adds a fantastic detail that Blanca is
wearing Frank’s clothes when she first sees Dolores’ ghost on the shore of the Rio
Grande. Dolores appeared because she thought Blanca was Frank. In this case, Blanca’s
intention is to re-invent herself, but she does so with something that is already a part of
her inner identity. Blanca asks who her father is, and Dolores promises to tell her if,
dressed as Frank, Blanca will dance with her. As they dance, Dolores remembers Frank,
and at one point describes him by saying that he “touch[es] the place where you are being
formed” (Solis 21). This does refer to the physical place where Blanca was formed:
Blanca places her hand on Dolores’ stomach. The gesture also reveals the idea that a
personal identity is something that is formed and developed, rather than absolute and
already existing. When Blanca says that her legs obey the trousers, there is an indication
that her body recognizes how identity, which genetically comes from Frank, is connected
with the clothes she is wearing, which were also once worn by Frank.
In addition to a person’s home, family is a major contributing factor in constructing identity. When Dolores appears, Blanca recounts her experience dressing in Frank’s clothes and how this made her feel intimately connected to her father. By putting her arm through his coat, Blanca is able to touch Dolores, a ghost, as Frank. Blanca becomes an extension of her father, connecting the family as well as the dead and the living. This image communicates just how much all people are eternally connected, including those who are dead and those whose skin is lighter and those who we may resent but are still part of our blood. As Blanca talks, the audience understands that it is actually Frank talking. When Blanca removes the coat, becoming herself again, she says, “That was him that spoke, Ama, but it was me, too” (Solis 80). Blanca’s action allows the readers and audience to imagine how Latina/os living in the United States today might connect with and understand their dead ancestors from Mexico, Spain, or some other Spanish-speaking country. The island is not only the site where Blanca and Lazaro begin their journey for self-discovery; it is also where their journey ends. At the conclusion of the play, both characters return to the island. Lazaro asks Blanca which side of the border to cross to. Blanca takes his hand and guides him into the river, saying that they should let the river and their heart decide which land needs them most, and together they step into the water. This hopeful moment connects the idea that relationships and family are an important source of personal identity with the physical space on the border, near Lazaro’s island.

**CELESTINO ROBLES ESTATE IN THE UNITED STATES**

While the island creates confusion between dreams and reality, the Robles estate in Texas serves as a second liminal space where dreams become reality. In the world of
the play, this is made possible by assimilating a U.S. identity. In contrast with Cruz, Solis addresses issues of assimilation through the use of parody. Unlike the other characters that are deported or must cross the border, Lazaro is drugged, placed in a sack, and taken to Celestino’s home in Texas. Solis’s plot echoes Calderón’s in that Celestino, like Basilio, tries to convince his son that his life, up until now, was a dream. However, Lazaro’s experience in this new space, in this new world, is unlike Segismundo’s. Now at the Robles Estate in Texas, Lazaro meets Pepín. He believes that Pepín is a dream that escaped from his mind to walk around and speak with him in reality. Lazaro’s desire is to control his dream, and in this case, force Pepín back into his head. Pepín introduces the idea that perhaps his life in the United States is a dream. Keeping in mind that Lazaro’s birth is presented to the audience as Pepín’s dream, both characters are confused about the difference between dreaming and reality, but Lazaro desires to turn his dreams into a reality. Now in the United States, Celestino invites Lazaro to assimilate ideas, values, and even appearances that reflect a desire to obtain an unobtainable American Dream. As Lazaro filters input and negotiates a new identity, it appears as if it is in his best interest to engage in a process of assimilation, rather than reject and retreat back to his island prison. According to Ruben Garcia, “assimilationism confers a psychological benefit upon members of mainstream society, privileging the notion that the immigrant should aspire to American culture and deny his or her own culture” (121). This is exactly the tactic that Celestino promotes when Lazaro is brought to the United States. Celestino hires Blanca/Alfonso to tutor Lazaro, and teach him to become more like an American. Celestino is intent on making his own dreams a reality, by encouraging Lazaro to assimilate, but it is unclear if Lazaro shares his father’s dream.
Solis continues to bend reality by offering an alternative perspective on how dreams become reality, and subsequently shape identity within the space of the Robles Estate. On the estate, according to a stage direction, the ghost of Dolores appears over the sleeping Lazaro (28). As mentioned earlier, Dolores says, “Embryos inside embryos inside embryos. Your dream is your chrysalis, a flicker of the eyelid your wing, your waking a pinch of this skin” (28). It is difficult to discern the difference between illusion and reality during Dolores’ speech. There is a magical quality to this scene that opens the reader to consider the limits of consciousness within a dream, as well as within individual perceptions of identity. When she pinches him, it is unclear if he wakes up in reality, or if she invites him to dream that he is waking up, yet still in a dream. An embryo is like a chrysalis. We know that people grow and heal while they sleep; by saying that the embryonic state of human development is like a dream suggests that each night when the characters sleep, they grow, heal, and develop as they once did in the womb. This development is related to how people construct identity. Although this can happen during waking moments, it is our dreams that allow us to explore possibilities not hindered by borders or boundaries. In our subconscious we are free to face enemies and obstacles that bind us, just like Lazaro’s chains.

Within the world of the play, on the Robles Estate, one of the most insidious chains affecting the identity of characters in Dreamlandia involves the struggle to build a positive self-image, despite the pervasive idea that a lighter skin tone is inherently more desirable. When Sonia enters and asks if Lazaro has been washed, she continues, “Your body is unclean to those who misunderstand you. You are your pigment. You’ll be reminded of and judged by it for the rest of your pinchi life” (Solis 42). Sonia provides
this point of view, because she is a Mexican-American, living with Mexican man who rejects his ethnicity, desiring to be known simply as an American. In her writing on diversity, Zavella notes that within Chicana communities, skin color is commented on, with las güeras (light-skinned women) being appreciated and las prietas (dark-skinned women) being admonished and devalued; because it is impossible for most Mexican women to “blend in,” to opt out of their racial/ethnic status and pass for white, we see examples of U.S. citizens being mistaken for undocumented immigrants and being deported based on skin color (190). Solis reminds the audience that people consider skin color a factor in determining human value, but is also critical of how Latina/os devalue themselves by believing a lie that they are “unclean.” When Sonia complains about how skin color is used to label and judge others, it seems as though she is critical of her own opinion. Nevertheless, this is significant because it reveals how Latina/os may think and discuss skin color amongst themselves.

Unfortunately, negative stereotypes affect and permeate the cultural milieu of Latinidad. The negative power of stereotypes is exemplified when Sonia opens up a case of make-up supplies and states that to truly become an American, one must apply cosmetics to change appearance from dark to light. Sonia explains that working with make-up gave her power to make old faces new, but what she really means is that she could make brown faces white. Her thinking reflects Albert Memmi’s ideas that “the first attempt of the colonized is to change his condition by changing his skin” and that “love of the colonizer is subtended by a complex of feelings ranging from shame to self-hate” (120-1). Lazaro interprets the make-up in a different way. He sees the make-up as objects from his what he believes to be his dream. For Lazaro, make-up is a tool for
understanding the world and constructing a personal identity. For Sonia, unfortunately, beauty is Anglo, and it is even more damaging to Lazaro that she encourages him to change by becoming more like the ads in magazines (i.e. more “white”). Consider the play on words in Sonia’s line, “Remember, you’re not a beast, a savage, a heathen, you are now fully Christian… Dior” (Solis 44). The separation of Christian from Christian Dior not only shows how Sonia believes that morality and integrity is exclusively Anglo, but it also reflects that there is a commercial part of Lazaro’s identity that is responsible for making him human, or at least not a beast.

Along with print media and make-up, Solis emphasizes how specific stage properties may be used to affect appearances and perception. The night-vision goggles are an important property, because they are meant to enhance vision. The irony is that Pepín is blind to how Seth and Carl are treating him. Once hidden behind false eyes, Pepín becomes La Migra, as if to imply that the immigration police are indeed blind to the truth. When Lazaro puts on the goggles, similar to the pair Pepin played with earlier in the play, masked drug smugglers appear on stage and are captured by Frank. There is a sense that this action might have happened in the past, or may be a reenactment, but it is important to recognize that this action all takes place on the U.S. side of the border. Frank jumps from one part of the stage to where the smugglers are, which may cause some confusion as to the use of space, but it is important to recognize that he is able to control and manipulate space on the U.S. side of the border. In a similar manner, the goggles give Lazaro a heightened sense of vision within the United State, and allow him an alternative perspective on reality.
Like the other characters that cross the border into the United States, Lazaro represents the struggle to resist a kind of assimilation that negates or controls an individual. When Lazaro wakes up in Celestino’s house, he reacts with violence and begs to be put back in chains and returned to his island. His new environment is frightening and confusing. His desire to return suggests that he prefers to exist in-between and on the border. He prefers not to choose an identity. When Memmi wrote about the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in the mid-1960s, he described how the mechanism of remolding a colonized population consists of a series of negations (83). In this way, assimilation is something that the colonized immigrant has no control over, and involves a stripping away of identity, rather than describing or creating an identity. However, Lazaro’s situation is unique because of the confusion involved with being kidnapped. When Lazaro awakes tied to a bed, he says, “No memory of my hole, my chain, my isla. But this room. This bed. These ropes. They remember me” (Solis 36). This seems confusing because in the previous scene he screams, “WHERE IS MY ISLA!” He obviously remembers the island, but later says that he has no memory of it. He then talks about certain objects that are new to him, as if they remember him, and have the ability to remember the past. Lazaro finally realizes that his past was not a dream when he returns to see his island, while standing on the U.S. side of the border. From this moment, Lazaro builds an identity by taking from both Mexican and American cultures. This perspective encourages, or permits, ideas and theories to be synthesized in a manner to allow the creation of a framework to discuss transcultural identity construction.
Despite the confusion between what is real and what is a dream, the characters on the U.S. side of the border have the power to choose their reality. Celestino explains to Lazaro that the Rio Grande separates and binds El Paso and Juarez to what he calls “the Organism.” From the United States, Celestino is able to control the drug cartels. He hands Lazaro a pair of night-vision goggles that allow him to see masked drug smugglers. When Celestino demands that Lazaro be the one to say fire and have the smugglers killed, Lazaro is confused as to what he should do. He says, “This can’t be real!” Celestino responds, “THEN MAKE IT REAL!” (Solis 46). This exchange suggests that assimilation involves a series of choices, some of which may be rejected or modified depending on the individual, but we learn that power to control dreams and reality resides with characters that have a distinct U.S. identity. Lazaro is granted the power to decide what is real by Celestino; like a servant, Blanca must deliver Lazaro objects connected with his new identity, objects that he did not earn: a degree from SMU, membership to the El Paso Country Club, a Texas Driver’s license, and others items. The final lesson that Blanca teaches Lazaro is that power does not reveal identity. She suggests focusing on where a person is from, or where they make a home. Blanca accepts the fact that her home is real, and complains that the people in Juarez have “more reality than they can take. They live, eat, sleep within dreaming distance of this theme park called America. It draws them across the river like moths to the marquee. Then it burns them” (Solis 48). Once on the Mexican side of the border, the “American Dream” is exposed as a fantasy.

THE FACTORY IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, MEXICO

After crossing into Mexico, the characters in Dreamlandia discover that dreams become reality in this country not by assimilating, but through a complex intermingling
of ethnic solidarity and transculturation. In the play, Celestino travels to Juarez with Sonia, Frank, and Lazaro, and arranges a meeting near his factory with a drug dealer named Bustamante. Solis introduces this character Bustamante to explain that the border is a physical obstacle to be overcome. Bustamante delivers a message that los Mexicanos can burst through “walls, fences, and surveillance towers,” suggesting that solidarity is the key to breaking through borders and boundaries in order to redefine and construct a new identity. Along with this sense of solidarity, Bustamante describes a series of images, such as “poor children trading ATM cards for coca,” to create a new cultural vision where the distribution of social and political power is both redistributed and confused to the extent that all people, regardless of race, will renegotiate and reconstruct identities. In her writing on ethnic labeling, Oboler writes that instead of a single Hispanic identity, individuals view their identity as being influenced or shaped by a pastiche of cultural input (6-7). We can see Oboler’s pastiche in what Bustamante calls “a dance between two countries” (Solis 73). Throughout the scene, even the dialogue between Lazaro and Bustamante overlaps as if caught up in the dance:

Lazaro.    Noise.
Bustamante. That’s right.
Lazaro.    Corruption.
Bustamante. Go on.
Lazaro.    Pops and wheezes.
Bustamante. Sounds of hunger.
Lazaro.    Despair.
Bustamante. Slaughter.

Lazaro. Call-waiting.

Bustamante. Wait no more. Listen. Listen.

Lazaro. I hear…insurgence.

Bustamante. Yes.

Lazaro. Coming on a wide bandwidth.

Bustamante. Digital aliens.

Lazaro. A million people of indeterminate flesh.

Bustamante. Roaring into your ear. (Solis 71)

This moment reveals that in Mexico, aspects of culture including art, music, folklore, food, and even language extend beyond simple definitions prescribed to one country, community or individual.

This cultural cacophony is exemplified in the character of Blanca. She reappears in Mexico, hoping to discern and reinvent herself by taking a job in Celestino’s factory. Blanca enters the scene, putting on a white smock, white rubber shoes, hairnet, and surgical mask, and says to the audience, “In this maquila, rebuild yourself. Out of parts imported from the north, make yourself new. This time without the raza” (Solis 60).

Having learned that Frank is her father, and that she is half White (Anglo), as her name suggests, Blanca experiences an identity crisis. The part of her that is Frank is from the north, but Blanca’s desire is to rebuild an identity that cannot be labeled with racial terms. Blanca is limited by the harsh reality of the working conditions in the factory, but the decision to work is her own. Blanca’s decision to work in the factory suggests that
Latina/o identity might be re-created with “parts from” the United States, but her ultimate decision to return to the island, at the end of the play, reveals a desire to resist assimilation.

It is easy to misunderstand Blanca’s message in her monologue concerning race. Blanca enters and begins to put on her factory costume while she says,

“What am I? What race dries up and another grows? I saw him, saw the blood with blood matched up and it was mine. I’m a white lie, lie of this Sincero, his half-truth, half-breed, half Blanca, all desmadre! My father with his raza stripped mine off and slipped me half of his and left me with no race at all. (Solis 60)"

In this moment, Blanca does not mean that being mixed is worse than being all from one race, but instead communicates that it is impossible to view a person in any way other than as a whole. Anthropologist J. Jorge Klor de Alva suggests focusing on identity as relational, as continually being reconstructed as a result of ongoing historical processes, and as subject to constant negotiation and reinvention, in order to distinguish between (and within) cultures when neither unity nor continuity can be assumed (55). Blanca cannot be divided into parts and measured, but instead embodies aspects of race that are indeed relational and under continual reconstruction and reinvention. When she asks, “What am I? What race dries up and another grows?” (60), she asks a rhetorical question concerning her racial identity, which may lead the reader or audience to question how different aspects of Latina/o identity exist in conflict. She knows that she shares the blood of a man that is responsible for committing violence against people with whom she also shares a blood relationship. This conflict drives her assume the role of a factory worker to literally build televisions and metaphorically to re-build her identity. Even
though she is in a factory, she puts on a surgical mask to show that this new identity requires her to cut open and remove that which she has embodied for so long. It also emphasizes that what is inside of her gives life, and thus should not be removed.

Various scenes in *Dreamlandia* may be read as commentaries on contemporary social issues or problems in Mexico. In the scene where Blanca begins working in Celestino’s *maquiladora*, she embodies a new representation: the female factory worker. Her comments address issues concerning how many female workers in Mexico are underpaid for doing a tedious job, how the police shoot union leaders, how their living conditions are very poor, and how many go missing, are raped, and are sometimes murdered. At one point, Blanca talks about the televisions she assembles. “Dreams shine in these boxes, American dreams *para gente importante* like you” (Solis 65).

Mexicans assemble televisions; on the U.S. side of the border, these objects show programs that spark imagination and allow people to dream. However, on the Mexico side of the border, many people dream of crossing into the United States, the land of dreams, the *Dreamlandia*, so that they might continue to work hard and build a better life. Like the television, the dream is born, or assembled, in Mexico. On the U.S. side of the border, the dreams are marketed, advertised, and sold. Additionally, the scenes where Carl and Seth playfully bully Pepín also serve as a commentary on Mexican immigrants and the perceived (il)legality of immigration in general. By having Seth and Carl insult and make fun of Pepin while also watching him carefully, the border patrol in Texas is made to look like an oppressive and demeaning organization that treats human beings poorly. Seth says that Pepín’s dream “violated the borders of that territory,” meaning the border of Pepín’s skull and his imagination, but also referencing the literal border. Seth
surmises, “You just don’t do that!” (Solis 39). Seth and Carl then discuss Pepín’s dreams as if there were illegal aliens, which illustrates how United States law enforcement interprets, prescribes, and controls Mexican people and culture within an Anglo context to the detriment of all Latina/o Americans.

Given the many connections in the adaptation between the reality in Mexico and the American Dream, I asked Solis in an interview if he felt there were also strong connections between Latina/o identity and the heritage or legacy from Spain. Solis explained that this play has less to do with Spanish culture and more to do with what it means to be an American, regardless of what side of the border a person, or character, comes from.34 At each of these sites, on or near the border, reality mixes with dreams and illusions to allow for characters to confront the powers that control how they define themselves, often in terms of proximity with being or becoming more American. Analysis of the border setting, Spanish dialogue, and characters and themes that echo Calderón’s play, reveal a complex, adaptable relationship between Mexican identity and the Spanish Golden Age. This play suggests that Spanish heritage and legacy, along with the negotiation of political tension with United States on the border, equally participate in the contemporary Mexican-American imagination by structuring Latina/o identity.

**DREAMLANDIA AT TEATRO VISTA IN CHICAGO**

Solis’s play Dreamlandia has enjoyed numerous productions, including a workshop production and a fully-mounted, main stage premiere at the Dallas Theatre

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34 According to research conducted by Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda, “without regard for differences in the historical context of the migration, reception factors in the new society, or the migration process itself, ethnic groups are evaluated by how they fare in becoming American” (7).
Center in May 2000, both directed by Richard Hamburger, and another production by
Teatro Vista at the Greenhouse Theatre Center in Chicago, Illinois, in May 2008, directed
by Cecilie Keenan. While reading and analyzing the text, there are numerous questions
that arise concerning how to best conceptualize and create a moment, invested with a
dynamic and believable action. After interviewing Keenan, I found that there are a
variety of ways to fully realize the potential of this play and provide audiences with
insight for understanding and enjoyment. Along with a selection of questions that the
text poses, quotes and commentary derived from these interviews, and an examination of
the interpretive possibilities found in production, it is possible to reconstruct the staging
of Keenan’s production at Teatro Vista in Chicago using Postlewait’s historical inquiry
model, where world, agents, reception, and artistic heritage help to place events within a
narrative context.

The world of the production at Teatro Vista involved a specific, intended
audience. Keenan explained that the selection of Dreamlandia for the 2008 season was
made with consideration of previous audiences, which were roughly 45 percent Latina/o,
40 percent Caucasian, and 10 percent African American. In addition, Keenan mentioned
that she selected Dreamlandia because she loved the play and had the right actors
available to do the show. In talking about his play’s meaning and significance, Solis
summed it up by saying, “We’re dealing with more than just a border between the United

35 For the Dallas Theatre Center production of Dreamlandia in 2000, Hamburger directed
a workshop production for an audience devoted to new, experimental work, and a fully-
mounted main stage production, with a more specific marketing strategy to reach Latino
audiences. Hamburger explained in an interview that there was an Hispanic initiative at
the Dallas Theatre Center to diversify the audience, and the Latina/o audience was an
important part of that.
States and Mexico. We’re dealing with the border between dreams and reality, a border between genders, a border between classes, a border of perception, and even a border between the original play and mine.” When Lazaro first appears on his island prison, he has the names of fashion designers and other commercial brands written on his skin with magic marker and eyeliner. Keenan said that the character description specified that Lazaro be covered in tattoos, such as “DKNY” and “McDonalds,” like graffiti written on walls along the border, only instead of showing how people write on a wall, Keenan chose to show how corporate labels mark the identity of consumers. In addition, Keenan traveled to Baja, California and recorded desert footage to display during transitions for her production.

Keenan’s production effectively conveys Solís’s construction of Latinidad through a variety of agents. These agents helped shape the context of this production through a combination of design choices, conceptual choices made by Keenan, and a collaborative interpretation of Solís’s text. For example, the play opens with a stage directions for “pounding rain, punctured by lightning,” and transitions from a scene at Robles estate to the banks of the Rio Grande river with stage directions that simply read, “lightning, then black, then a riverside” (Solís 7-8). In production, Keenan utilizes a flash of lightning and temporary blackout. The set vanishes and in less than a second, the audience is transported to the actual Texas/Mexico border on the Rio Grande River. In addition, the stage directions explain that Pepín is a mentally handicapped child. However, Pepín is able to speak about the river using multiple images referring to the human mouth, such as “lip” and “tongue.” It is unclear if this character is a realistic child with a mental handicap, or if he is a caricature, a clown, or some other non-realistic
character type. It is equally unclear if his dialogue is meant to be delivered directly to
the audience, as a narrator, or if he is talking to himself. He does not respond like a child,
and especially not like a mentally handicapped child, but narrates in a calm, journalistic
manner, yet referring to Dolores as “Mami” the way a child would. In production,
Keenan explained that her vision of Pepín was “much more like a handicapped child,
kind of like the kids that eat fire and sell stuff along the roads in Mexico.” Keenan put
Pepín on two paint cans tied to his shoes to give the impression that his sense of being is
standing part way in the dream world, and part way in reality. Keenan reflected: “in
hindsight, I think I would have not given him a physical handicap. I had it so that one of
his arms was shortened and one of his feet had a limp. I think it ended up being a
distraction. I don’t think it helped at all. I think it would have been better to play him as
a simple clown.” In addition, Keenan blocked Pepín so that he directly addressed the
audience, rather than appear to talk to himself.36 “It was a small stage, so he really didn’t
have a space where he went that was distinctly separate from the rest of the action. There
was a tree that he would climb up in, with a sort of Incan stair step design, but it was not
specifically for him.”

Analysis of Keenan’s production further communicates Solis’s construction of
Latinidad despite alternative interpretations for key moments in the play. Immediately
after the opening scene of the play, Solis writes that Pepín and Celestino wake up on

36 In Hamburger’s production at the Dallas Theatre Center, Pepín was much more
childlike and directly addressed the audience. There were two different actors, one for
the workshop production and one for the main stage production. In a personal interview,
Hamburger pointed out his interpretation that the character Pepín “saw things that other
people don’t see, not having the sophistication or guile of other adults, while you’re not
certain if he’s a fool, or the most brilliant in that particular world…a little like Lear’s
fool.”
separate shores of the Rio Grande, as if all the previous action was a dream that both these two characters each dreamed separately. Both men dream the same thing, and in the stage directions it says that it is now twenty years later. This is a unique moment, communicated differently for individual productions. In Keenan’s production, the river was created with blue material, held and shuffled by stagehands off stage, so that it seemed like a river. It was a simple, but theatrical effect.37 When both characters wake up from their shared dream, the audience realizes that the previous moment was also a real event that these men once experienced in reality. Celestino questions, “Is that all it was? A dream?” (Solis 10). The text blurs the distinction between the dream world and reality, and Celestino’s line opens the possibility that there is another reality within the world of the play. Keenan described this moment in her production as a nightmare.38 When faced with the challenge of how to portray the ghost of Dolores, Keenan explained that Dolores’ ghost represents the dream world and that when her ghost is on stage, we are entering into a dream space. This was communicated by placing the actress playing Dolores on stilts with a long skirt, so that the stilts were not visible, for scenes after she becomes a ghost. In this way, the ghost of Dolores appeared to walk above the rest of the characters. “We also used double imaging with video behind, so that you could see her face really big behind her. It was a beautiful image.”

37 For Hamburger’s workshop production, the river was created using an empty space with light and other distilled objects.
38 Hamburger explained that the use of space in the workshop production was fluid. The audience was arranged using alley staging, with the river separating both sides of the audience. The main stage production at the Dallas Theatre Center utilized proscenium staging.
Keenan’s production also employed design techniques to build upon Solis’s theme of crossing borders and exploring boundaries. When Celestino teaches Lazaro about his company and the commercial world of Texas, a vision of the heavens appears. The feel is non-realistic, as if the boundary between heaven and earth is combined into one space. Keenan explained that her husband Wayne did the sound and helped with a video for this moment in the play. “It was hysterical. We did it with a video, and it got bigger and bigger. It was like a monster truck ad. At one point, a graph appears with a green arrow, similar to what might be displayed in a business presentation; at the end there was a bell ringing to parody Wall Street. The whole montage appeared above the actors, with Celestino addressing the audience as if they were corporate shareholders.”

Keenan also described how, due to the small theatre space, the video provided lighting in addition to other lighting instruments from the side. The design of her production utilized more color during dream-like sequences, less color for scenes in Mexico, and blue light when Pepín puts on the night vision goggles.

When asked about production rehearsals, Keenan discussed how the script developed and changed, and gave details about their own unique process. Keenan talked about how Solis was very collaborative during rehearsals, and may have changed a line or two, but did not present her with any major script changes.39 In my interview with Solis, he explained that when working with a new director on the script, “there are adjustments that we make, but they’re more adjustments rather than wholesale revisions.”

39 Hamburger also expressed sentiment about the wonderful collaboration with Solis saying, “Octavio was there throughout the rehearsal process, and worked extremely collaboratively all of the time and unusually so. Octavio is really an asset in rehearsals…we had many discussions and worked on the script. He was always trying to make it work for the actors.”
Keenan also provided some detail about work that the actors underwent. She explained how the actor playing Dolores had to learn to walk on stilts and Lazaro had to lose weight and put on muscle, which both required a great deal of physical work. Keenan described a moment during rehearsal when the actor playing Dolores had to practice appearing quickly on stage. Keenan needed her to be on stilts quickly, but she couldn’t get them on in time following her previous exit in order to re-appear, so Keenan made her jump on another actor’s shoulders and pop her head up over the back of an area upstage hid with a black curtain, say two lines, and then jump down to put on the stilts and re-appear on stage later on.

Near the end of the play, Pepín sees a vision of the characters from *La vida es sueño*. Keenan and Solis collaborated to create a moment where the music changes to a more classical Spanish sound, and the actors adopt a new posture and gestures to subtly indicate that they have become like the characters in Calderón’s play, but not so much that it would confuse audience members not familiar with the Spanish Golden Age text. With respect to elements of reception and artistic heritage, Keenan’s production received mixed reviews, regardless of its vibrant message connecting the contemporary Latina/o world with the Spanish Golden Age. Theatre critic Chris Jones of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote that Keenan made an “honorable effort,” felt that the production as a whole lacked an aesthetic focus, and stated, “some of the younger actors don’t delve precisely into the text” (www.chicagotribune.com). However, critic Craig Keller wrote that despite Solis “stuffing in too many themes,” the production incorporated “provocative staging,” and the video-projection helped “anchor the convoluted story” (www.timeoutchicago.com).
Notwithstanding the play’s reception, Keenan effectively harnessed key elements in the text to produce a visually striking production.
Chapter 5 – The Latinidades of Cruz, Rivera, and Solis

Since I have argued that Cruz’s Life is a Dream, Rivera’s Sueño, and Solis’s Dreamlandia each express a contemporary U.S. Latina/o identity and establish a connection with the Spanish Golden Age, it is important to address the connections or overlap among the Latinidades created by these three playwrights. In particular, Solis’s adaptation compares with Cruz in regards to the treatment of assimilation. Whereas Cruz’s play may be understood as a product of assimilation, Solis’s play suggests that assimilation involves a complex series of negotiations, and highlights characters that choose to resist assimilation. Lazaro and Blanca represent the struggle to resist assimilation that negates or controls an individual. Lazaro reacts with violence when forced to adjust to his new life in the United States. Blanca’s decision to work in the factory in Mexico and her violent attempts to wash away her Anglo ethnicity in the Rio Grande reflect a desire to resist assimilating mainstream U.S. values and Anglo culture. Celestino’s prejudice against his own race reflects a refusal to embrace assimilation, and his attempts to teach Lazaro how to be more “American” encourage readers and audiences to view Celestino negatively, as if he had taken on the role of the colonizer. Solis also uses border crossing as a metaphor for the construction of identity. In contrast with Cruz, Solis does not model a process of assimilation, or create an adaptation that might be considered a production of assimilation, but instead reinforces that assimilation involves the negotiation of complex factors, often resulting in a situation where people
exist in between.

When compared with Rivera’s adaptation, Solis’s play is similar in that it contains a contemporary style of language. In fact, many of the words used by Rivera and Solis communicate feelings of anger veiled in the form of a joke. Although Rivera uses graphic or explicit words to express feelings of anger, whereas Solis’s characters use labels and ethnic slurs to demean individual characters, both adaptations include language that masks hostility with humor. According to Sigmund Freud, when the purpose of a joke is not an aim in itself, it is either a hostile joke or an obscene joke (96-97). Freud’s *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* provides a starting point for future research and inquiry into the use of graphic language and ethnic slurs in adaptations of Spanish Golden Age comedias. Freud suggests, “By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him – to which the third person, who has made no efforts, bears witness by his laughter” (103). In Rivera’s play, the “enemies” are characters that represent the Old World of Spain. By contrast, except for one moment when Pepín redirects the humor to make Seth and Carl the “enemy,” the Mexican characters are the ones made small, inferior, or despicable with ethnic slurs and labeling. According to Freud, “A joke will allow us to exploit something ridiculous in our enemy which we could not on account of obstacles in the way, bring forward openly or consciously” (103). In this way, both Rivera and Solis share a similar purpose. However, while Rivera’s language exploits the ridiculousness of Old World characters, Solis uses ethnic slurs to bring forward and criticize how minorities are exploited in the United States.
Within my research, I have delineated three types of *Latinidades* constructed in relationship to Calderón’s classic Golden Age play *La vida es sueño*: an assimilated *Latinidad* that strives for universality in Cruz’s adaptation, a *Latinidad* that shouts back at Spain in Rivera’s adaptation, and a border *Latinidad* that negotiates identity across literal and metaphorical boundaries in Solis’s adaptation. These adaptations, however, are just three of many different types of *Latinidad* expressed in dozens of works of cultural production. These three *Latinidades* are, in a sense, in conversation with each other and with other works that construct other *Latinidades*. Part of this conversation touches on how each play imagines Latina/o identity in relationship to the past, the present, or the future. With this temporal focus, each of these *Latinidades* communicates an idea concerning the development of what it means to be a U.S. Latina/o living in the United States today. Cruz’s *Latinidad*, for instance, may be viewed as a progressive signal for the future of Latina/o dramatic literature, promoting the potential for future U.S. Latina/o achievement.

While the notion of multiple *Latinidades* recognizes the impossibility of a single Latina/o identity, Cruz’s adaptation considers the different experiences that U.S. Latina/os have with assimilation, and presents an assimilated *Latinidad* that both encourages and resists identification as a Latina/o play. With this in mind, analysis of the text and productions of Cruz’s adaptation led to the development of my principle argument that although Cruz wrote to discourage obvious references to Latina/o identity, his adaptation is itself a product of appropriation and assimilation, which may be identified as both Latina/o and as an echo of the Spanish Golden Age. Of the three play texts in this dissertation, Cruz’s adaptation bears the most resemblance to Calderón’s text.
At the same time, the non-specific setting created by Cruz raises questions concerning whether or not allusions or references to Cuban-American culture may be found embedded within the text, or if certain elements are intentionally left vague and open to interpretation. Textual changes used to create a compact, fast-paced play and production support the argument that although audiences may interpret social, political, or cultural messages within the play, there is no clear proof that these messages were intentional. After having wrestled with Rossini’s concept of “wrighting” ethnicity and how it might apply to Cruz’s adaptation, I concluded that Cruz does not engage in a process of wrighting back to Spain, but instead, he writes from the position of U.S. Latina/o with an assimilated identity. In addition, after closely analyzing Phelan’s research on unmarked representation, I came to the conclusion that Cruz’s writing allows for the potential for a variety of readings, which include both a marked and unmarked reading. These ideas helped to formulate an argument that Cruz establishes a dynamic and contradictory engagement between U.S. and Spanish Golden Age culture through an adaptation that may be read as a product and a process of assimilation. Having arrived at this understanding, I suggest that Cruz’s assimilated Latinidad communicates a message of potential and possibilities, encouraging Latina/os to redefine and discover new alternative interpretations for Latina/o identity. The number of U.S. Latina/os that have gained power and recognition in the mainstream, including Cruz himself, attests to the fact that developing an assimilated identity may sometimes ensure security and prosperity.

The aggressive or hostile Latinidad expressed by Rivera might be seen to contrast with Cruz’s Latinidad by rejecting all forms of assimilation, but instead, Rivera complements Cruz by suggesting that a complete understanding of what it means to be a
contemporary U.S. Latina/o involves recognition and remembrance of past violence. Rivera communicates a message that the construction of a contemporary U.S. Latina/o identity relies on the ability to remember the past and resist reductive or oppressive notions of ethnicity. He constructs a *Latinidad* that expresses anger and hostility towards the Spanish Golden Age by positioning the Old World and the New World as forces in opposition. Rivera’s aggression towards the Old World and its cultural traditions leads to the conclusion that his message is far from a celebration of Spanish Golden Age *comedia*. Rivera uses the father/son relationship between Basilio and Segismundo as an analogy for the Old World and the New World, and consumes Spanish Golden Age culture for the purpose of “wrighting” a new cultural Latina/o identity. In addition to his play text, Rivera also included a note to the reader in the Dramatic Publishing version of the play, published in 1999, in which he explains that the story of an adaptation is the story of a relationship, and through his work it is possible to clarify and discuss how Puerto Ricans and other Latina/os relate to Spain and the United States in the process of constructing an appropriated identity. Criticism of Rivera’s linguistic style and word choice allows for additional discussion concerning the rationale for his use of language. Rivera’s hostile *Latinidad* is both an expression of Latina/o anger towards Spain as well as a legitimate claim to Spanish heritage.

Building upon Cruz’s ideas for the future and Rivera’s call to remember the past, I argue that Solis contributes a border *Latinidad* with a message for the present. Solis’s *Dreamlandia* exemplifies the extent to which a Spanish Golden Age play may be adapted, and suggests how the construction and embodiment of multiple Latina/o identities are guided and limited by the literal and metaphoric boundaries. Solis keeps his
work focused in the present by creating an adaptation with character name changes, specific relocation to the U.S./Mexico border, and the incorporation of story details that do not correspond exactly to *La vida es sueño*. Hutcheon’s theories of adaptation and parody show how Solis interprets and creates identity through a process that re-interprets, re-creates, and re-connects two seemingly disparate cultures to explore present-day Mexican American identity. Solis does look back to the past, but only so far as to echo or resonate a sense of the past for the purpose of connecting with the present. Carlson’s theory of haunting reveals how characters in Solis’ play echo similar qualities with characters in *La vida es sueño* and embody archetypes that connect with Calderón’s. Using Oboler’s research on ethnic labeling, and various writing on border theory, I also argued that Solis’ unique style of code-switching and references to contemporary issues of border crossing highlights the development of present-day Mexican American identity in the United States and its connection with Golden Age culture. For many Latina/os, the border between Mexico and the United States serves as a literal and symbolic representation of the struggle for power, justice, and a means of understanding Latina/o cultural identity today. The literal and metaphorical border crossing found in *Dreamlandia* provides a transformational site for Solis to construct and negotiate multiple layers of Latina/o identity. Solis’s border *Latinidad* guides readers and audiences to consider how an adaptation of the Spanish Golden Age reflects current issues of Latina/o identity today.

On their own, the *Latinidades* constructed by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis speak to a specific past, present, and future, but all three *Latinidades* also connect with each other. Why did these three playwrights specifically chose the same play to adapt, and what was
going on in the world to spark their interest? Is there something about *La vida es sueño* that caused three Latino playwrights to take on the work of adapting it, each one within the span of a decade? Why now? Why these men? Why this play? Solis told me that his decision to adapt Calderón had more to do with the fact that the Dallas Theatre Center wanted to produce an English translation of *La vida es sueño*, and that *Dreamlandia* developed after Solis had agreed with director Richard Hamburger to write an original work based on Calderón’s classic play. In reality, the reason why *La vida es sueño* is so often translated and adapted has more to do with the fact that it is one of two Spanish Golden Age plays that are held up as the representative texts for a body of work that remains undervalued worldwide. Few theatre artists and non-*comedia* scholars know of any other Spanish Golden Age plays except for Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* and Lope de Vega’s *Fuenteovejuna*.

The reason why Cruz, Rivera, and Solis chose to adapt *La vida es sueño* all within ten years of each other is because there is a need to adapt the *comedia*. This stems from an even larger and profound need to educate people about the history, traditions, and vast amounts of dramatic literature written during the Spanish Golden Age. There is a need for universities to expand their curriculum to include a variety of plays by Spanish Golden Age dramatists. Many students have no idea that women were allowed on stage, or that some of the best plays were written by women. Even at the graduate level, there are students that think the Spanish Golden Age playwrights were less prolific that those from England. Although Lope de Vega claimed to have written thousands of plays, there are indeed hundreds that have survived today. Unfortunately, many of Lope’s plays, as well as those by countless other Golden Age dramatists, have never been translated into
English. Finally, there is a need to encourage young actors to audition with monologues from these plays, to workshop and stage readings of these plays, and inspire audiences with creative productions of those plays. Although some may view this as too essentialist, as if there is a genetic imperative to adapt Spanish Golden Age theatre, future studies of the historical, social, and political reasons why certain cultural trends emerge may consider how, after a period in which Latino playwrights are immersed in staging their own U.S. history and personal experiences of migration, they were established enough to win commissions to translate or adapt the classics.

The dimensions and patterns within Latinidad that I have delineated in the works by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis confirm the view that identity is something we perform just as much as it is who we are. Rivera-Servera suggests that cultural interconnectedness arises from on-the-ground exchanges among Latina/os in the United States (26). This dissertation serves as my contribution to a conversation on Latinidad, and although I am not Latino, the ideas expressed here may be taken up by Latina/os, or perhaps even non-Latino scholars of Latinidad, to further challenge and explore the cultural interconnectedness that Rivera-Servera describes. A sense of connection between people can develop within a homogenous cultural group, but Rivera-Servera refers to interconnectedness where individuals from different cultural backgrounds share a similar cultural experience. This interconnectedness may develop due to two or more different cultural groups living in the same neighborhood, or as a result of a conscious choice to cultivate new relationships, despite where someone might live. Regardless, the nature of the exchange between cultures will determine the strength of the interconnected bond.
Just as the work by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis has helped to strengthen the bond between Latinidad and the cultural heritage from Spain, so has my research helped to strengthen that bond. At the same time, I do not view my contribution to contemporary Latina/o and Spanish Golden Age scholarship as being limited by the fact that I am not a Latino. As a native Texas, born and raised in San Antonio, I not only acknowledge the influence of Mexican and Mexican-American culture in my life, but have cultivated relationships with Latina/os in South Texas that have helped to shape my identity. My choice to study Latina/o culture, embrace values from my local Latina/o community, and develop relationships with Latina/os, entitles me to intervene in this conversation on Latinidad. Non-Latinos, such as me, may take up further challenge and exploration, given that they are open to cultural exchange, appreciative of Latina/o culture, willing to build relationships with Latina/os, and commit to work that uplifts, empowers, and benefits various Latina/o communities. As I revise and expand this dissertation into a book, I plan to continue exploring Latina/o culture by investigating issues related with the broader conversation on Latinidad. In particular, I’d like to build upon research by Caminero-Santangelo, applying the concept of multiple Latinidades within selected regional contexts. Caminero-Santanelo argues that “Latino” be understood as a pan-ethnic category, and goes on to suggest: “as a single ‘people’ Latinos cannot be said to exist; but Latino identity might well be found in the multiple alliances, along sometimes quite different pan-ethnic and transnational lines, that we make with each other” (217-18). My goal is to show that Spanish heritage is only one factor influencing Latina/o identity, and encourage viewing Latina/o identity from a pan-ethnic perspective that considers more specific local and regional influences, such as those in major cities with
significant Latina/o populations, along the border between the United States and Mexico, and inside Cuba, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

As I move forward and revise my dissertation for publication, I plan to expand my study to include other adaptations, such as Maria Irene Fornes’s *Life is a Dream* (1981), an adaptation of Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* (1636), Octavio Solis’s *Man of the Flesh* (1990), an adaptation of Tirso de Molina’s *El burlador de sevilla* (1630), and Caridad Svich’s *The Labyrinth of Desire* (2006), an adaptation of Lope de Vega’s *La prueba de los ingenios* (1612-3), which was produced by The Ohio State University’s Department of Theatre in 2008. Fornes’s adaptation might be compared with Cruz’s adaptation, both because Cruz studied with Fornes, which raises speculation about the extent that Cruz may have been influenced by Fornes, and because like Cruz, Fornes’s writing offers a perspective on social and personal issues related to the Cuban American experience.

Solis’s first adaptation of the Spanish Golden Age was *Man of the Flesh*, written ten years before *Dreamlandia*. Although *Man of the Flesh* does not help contribute to Solis’s border *Latinidad*, there are elements within the text that suggest how Solis is influenced by his Mexican ethnicity. In particular, Solis takes the story of Don Juan de Tenorio and sets it within the context of a carnival celebrating the Mexican holiday of the Day of the Dead. This adaptation provides additional support to the idea that the construction of *Latinidad* relies on heritage and cultural tradition. Finally, Svich’s *The Labyrinth of Desire* presents an adaptation set in a world of mirrors and transformation. Many Spanish Golden Age plays focus on the actual use of mirrors as objects of deception, as well as themes concerning how the actions and behavior of characters on stage are actually a reflection of society. Svich’s adaptation reveals that the construction of
Latinidad is itself a process of reflection and mimetic replication of ideas, images, and themes from a variety of sources.

In addition, I will investigate adaptations of other classic plays, such as Cherrie Moraga’s Medea. This play is particularly valuable not only as a source of adapted material, but as the work by a significant Latina poet and scholar. While my dissertation contributes to the understanding of male Latinidades, to a certain extent there is an overlap with female Latinidades, along with varieties of female experiences of Latinidad that diverge in some important ways. My analysis of the Latinidades by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis relates to what has been said about Moraga, as well as to what Moraga has said about herself. Moraga calls herself a Chicana writer, rather than a Mexican-American, Hispanic, or half-breed writer: “To be a Chicana is not merely to name one’s racial/cultural identity, but also to name a politic, a politic that refuses assimilation into the U.S. mainstream. It acknowledges our mestizaje – Indian, Spanish, and africano” (215). Other influential Latinas such as María de los Angeles Torres offer an alternative perspective on assimilation. Torres suggests, “Latinos had found that while they shared some common ground with their countries of origin, there were important differences as well. Being in and out of place in both home and host country gave rise to the exploration of border identities” (377). This notion of border identities builds on Gloria Anzaldúa’s research by arguing against the conception of a single nationality in favor of recognizing the presence and synthesis of many cultures (Torres 378). In conjunction with Solis’s contribution to the study of border culture, these Latina voices help build a more complete understanding of a hybrid border Latinidad.

At the end of each chapter in my dissertation, the productions that I discussed
almost always seemed to disappoint me. With the Seton Hill University production of Cruz’s Life is a Dream, I felt that the director and designers would have benefitted from the input of a dramaturg familiar with Cruz’s body of work, as well as knowledge of Spanish Golden Age theatre. My impression of the production was that there was not an effort made to connect the Golden Age with elements of Latinidad. Whereas the production at South Coast Repertory did capitalize on the unmarked nature of Cruz’s adaptation, this production also fell short in that it did not reflect an understanding of Cruz’s previous work, and instead created a concept that was more futuristic than Latina/o. Productions of Rivera’s adaptation Sueño also failed to capture a sense of Latinidad. While there were design elements that appeared faithful to the Spanish Golden Age in Lisa Peterson’s production at the Hartford Stage, there was no indication that production choices made by Peterson were based on information found in Rivera’s text. The Carrasquillo production for the Potomac Theatre Festival went even further in abandoning any semblance of connection with either the Spanish Golden Age or Latinidad by presenting a disorganized muddle of theatrical elements. Only the productions of Solis’s play Dreamlandia managed to effectively communicate a construction of Latinidad through a variety of agents. This was likely due to the fact that Solis was an active participant in developing his play during rehearsals for director Richard Hamburger’s production at the Dallas Theatre Center, and collaborated extensively with director Cecilie Keenan’s production at Teatro Vista in Chicago.

As I broaden this study to include other dramatic works, I imagine that I might find some theatrical productions that do more justice to the vision of the translator, or that I might even undertake to stage one of these plays myself. It is one of my personal goals
to contribute to the revitalization of the Spanish Golden Age for English-speaking audiences. If I were to direct just one of these plays, I would choose Dakin Matthews’s play *The Capulets and the Montagues*, a translation of Lope de Vega’s *Castelvines y Monteses*. In the introduction to Matthews’s translation, he explains that his purpose for creating this translation was to make the play more appealing to English-speaking producers and audiences. Matthews’s translation is particularly striking because of how it sounds. Matthews states that his translation, “unlike most Golden Age translations, attempts to capture the polymetry of the original, and is thus in verse, mostly rhyming verse, with the stanzas echoing more or less the same distribution of rhymes in the translation as they do in the original” (9). The argument might also be made that Matthews translates with a more thoughtful regard to the appropriate characterization and modern notions of the Romeo and Juliet story. With this in mind, I feel that I might develop a directorial concept with two specific goals in mind: 1) communicate a familiar story to an English-speaking audience that is entertaining and stimulating, and 2) respect fully reproduce elements of the Spanish Golden Age theatre within an appropriate context and setting.

Indeed, the work of Latino playwrights such as Cruz, Rivera, and Solis serves as an example of a movement towards greater awareness of how Latina/os construct identity, negotiate issues of power, and respond to cultural assimilation. In the introduction to *Sueño*, Rivera writes, “For ultimately the story of an adaptation is the story of a relationship. It’s either a dance, a dialogue, a duet, or a duel between you the adaptor and the original creator – for Calderón and me, it’s been all of the above” (8). Just as the process of writing an adaptation involves a relationship, so too may the
adaptations written by Cruz, Rivera, and Solis help to develop a more intimate relationship between Latina/o culture and the Spanish Golden Age. In bringing to light that nature of these relationships, I too have developed a relationship, one of appreciation and respect for the work of Cruz, Rivera, and Solis.
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