Beyond the Tempest: Twin Skin and the Ethnic Divide in Shakespeare

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The legislative decision to challenge, and ultimately foreclose on, ethnic-studies programs in Arizona high schools in 2010 was all-the-more controversial because it included The Tempest in its list of banned books. In the minds of these lawmakers, Shakespeare has no place in discussions about identity politics for Latino/as in America. We must ask, however, what value does Shakespeare hold for Latino/as? This paper draws on Gloria Anzaldúa’s call in Borderlands / La Frontera to move beyond static resistance to the dominant, white culture by standing on “both shores at once” (100), so as to engage the energies of cultural hybridity. Such a move allows us to re-imagine Shakespeare’s currency for Latino/as who must often swim within the difficult cultural divide of the borderlands. By looking beyond The Tempest and toward the future of Shakespeare studies, this paper considers the promise of employing ethnic studies to diversify a field that is in deep need of diversification.