"The Direful Spectacle of the Wrack": Teaching against Colonialism through Shipwrecks and Shakespeare

Sara A. Rich
Rhode Island School of Design

Abstract: It has become increasingly apparent that anti-colonial and anti-racist pedagogies are necessary in higher education classrooms, and honors education as an experimental zone is an ideal place to test ideas that can be taken into the wider university community. Honors professors epitomize the teacher-scholar model, and this paper presents a six-year trajectory of anti-colonial pedagogy coupled with original interdisciplinary research in the social sciences, arts, and humanities. Bringing canonical Shakespeare into conversation with historical shipwrecks and their aftermath, students learn how *The Tempest* was written at a pivotal point in history, coincidentally situated in the same year as the earliest "golden spike" marking the start of the Anthropocene Epoch. This remarkable overlap of archaeological and literary chronologies suggests a clear starting point for introducing students to the entanglements of exploration, empire, slavery, genocide, misogyny, and environmental degradation that have marked the last five centuries. By reading Shakespeare's original text alongside Aimé Césaire's and Marina Warner's twentieth-century adaptations, students build knowledge on the origins and legacies of colonial and postcolonial thought and learn to situate the artistic efforts that exemplify each into the controversies surrounding ecological and social justice movements today. The paper concludes with a selection of students' own voices and creative projects to illustrate their approaches to redressing some of their own concerns surrounding neocolonial legacies.

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New beginnings, for better or worse, often seem to start with shipwreck. The wreck of the *Santa María* on the shores of Ayiti in 1492. The wreck of the *Sea Venture* on the Bermudan coast in 1609. And the wreck of the unnamed ship carrying Alonso, King of Naples, off the coast of a mysterious island in 1610. William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was written at a pivotal point, coincidentally situated in the same year believed to be the start of the Anthropocene Epoch.

After evaluating the physical evidence, earth scientists Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin identified the year of 1610 as the earliest possible date for the beginning of a new geological era, the Anthropocene Epoch, or Age of Man (Lewis and Maslin, 2015, 2018). According to Lewis and Maslin, this epoch is marked in Earth's rocks by a global dip in atmospheric carbon dioxide, whose cause was large-scale reforestation across the Americas following the arrival of European colonizers. These colonizers carried infectious diseases that killed millions of Indigenous people and were themselves often the perpetrators of mass murders that devastated the population of the western hemisphere. With innumerable farms left untilled and fires left unbuilt, the trees regrew and collectively inhaled more and more of the atmosphere's carbon dioxide stores, leaving a permanent geochemical marker in Earth's crust, a ghostly artifact made not by people but the absence thereof. This is the reason literary theorist and Shakespeare scholar Steve Mentz (2015a) calls "The Age of Man" the "Age of Death."

Indeed, the Anthropocene has many markers, from plastics pervasion to nuclear radiation, but portended by the beached *Santa María* and euphemized in the term "Columbian Exchange," the Anthropocene is emblemized by shipwreck; Mentz (2015b) keenly terms this time the Naufragocene Age, or Age of Wreckage. The suffix "cene" here comes from the Greek *kainos* for "recent" (meaning, recent era), which homonymously resonates with "scene," a fortuitous binding of the world with the stage. That Shakespeare's final play, written at this era's start, begins with a shipwreck is deeply significant as it gestures maniacally to all the real carracks and caravels washed onto the strange shores of strangers' lands, bringing death with their landfalls (Fig. 1).

This auspicious overlapping point of historical, archaeological, and literary chronologies is enormously generative to explore, especially because so much is at stake (Mentz, 2019). In our role as researchers, there is—and should be—an increased sense of urgency to use our creative minds to find solutions for the myriad "wicked problems" we face in this new epoch and to cease the replication of past wrongs (Roberts, 2000). But as teachers, we also

Fig. 1. Italian engraving dated to the 1490s, depicting two carracks in a stormy sea, with one bearing a personified Death next to a broken mainmast. In retrospect, the image seems a suitable allegory for the events leading up to the 1610 beginning of the Anthropocene, with their impetus in the 1492 wreck of the Santa María. From *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 24, pt. 3. No. 2409.014. Courtesy of the Warburg Institute, Photographic Collection.

have a responsibility to the younger generations, not just to do everything in our power to make the Anthropocene as short-lived as possible (Haraway, 2016, p. 100), but to empower our students with the necessary knowledge to make sense of what is happening in the present, its origins in the past, and its consequences in the future. With the understanding that the past is never past and that the ecological is the social, those consequences span a wide spectrum of the lived experience. It is crucial that students know that, even when life seems out of control, they are not powerless drifters washing away in the direction of this week's raging superstorm; they have choices, from participating in democratic processes and taking advantage of rights to protest or boycott to leading new movements for justice and economic degrowth.

This process of student empowerment can start with shipwreck, and it can start with Shakespeare. The year 1610 offers a way to introduce multidisciplinary honors students, who may not otherwise have read Shakespeare, to the entanglements of exploration, empire, slavery, genocide, misogyny, and environmental degradation whose effects on us earthlings have

only compounded in the centuries since *The Tempest* was first written and performed.

In my case, my students are all enrolled in our university's honors program. They tend to be highly motivated and ambitious, but they are also often very career-focused, which can come at the expense of the desire to learn things seemingly unrelated to their major. Regardless of a student's professional orientations, I have rarely found an individual whose interest is not sparked by at least one of the themes listed above. Indeed, many students have been deeply moved by the ways these topics have manifested themselves in their own lives. As overwhelming as such matters as slavery, genocide, and violence against women can be to discuss in the classroom, starting a course with *The Tempest* and the colonial anxieties represented therein and then moving into a selection of its postcolonial adaptations can retain the benefits of reading Shakespeare as part of "the canon" while also developing in students a complex understanding of how the effects of colonialism have marked the centuries since—or, more precisely, how those effects have marked Earth and its earthlings irreversibly.

Reading Shakespeare's original (Shakespeare, 1998, 1999) alongside Aimé Césaire's (1969, 1992) and Marina Warner's (1992) adaptations in a mid-level, honors-only course helps students build knowledge on the origins and legacies of colonial and postcolonial thought, as well as learn to situate the literary efforts that exemplify each into the controversies surrounding ecological and social justice movements today. By examining each of these three works in turn, this essay will show how they can be woven together to achieve learning outcomes in a sophomore-level honors course on colonialism. The concluding section will reflect on some successes and limitations of this pedagogical approach and its situation within honors and interdisciplinary education. This paper aims to fully integrate original humanities scholarship with honors pedagogy. As a result, it indirectly argues for and attempts to exemplify how the teacher-scholar model employed by honors faculty can effectively dissolve distinctions between the two spheres of research and instruction.

SHAKESPEARE'S DEFINITE TEMPEST

Although the canon has long been criticized as outdated at best and exclusionary at worst, the societal benefits to having cultural experiences that are shared across the generations and between a nation's classes, ethnicities, genders, and religions are clear. One of the great powers of art is bringing

diverse people together in conversation over a common aesthetic encounter. Shakespeare's works have endured centuries of literary criticism because of their unique insights into common experiences, such as forbidden and unrequited love, obligations to family and country, desires for greater power, and anxieties surrounding mortality. The plays' adaptability to stage and film performances in various temporal and geographical settings indicates the apparent timelessness of the stories and the relatability of the characters who people them. That does not mean, however, that Shakespeare's plays or any other canonized artwork exists in a state of perfection within a sealed vitrine, immune to the scrutiny of critical and other theories. Despite its seeming timelessness, Shakespeare's art was produced within a complex cultural moment, one with which the work itself grapples.

When Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, England was changing rapidly. Spain was at the height of its imperial power and, following Sir Francis Drake's raids on the riches of Spanish colonies in the Americas and his return in 1580 with wealth in gold and spices, England was positioning itself as a challenger. Although short-lived, the English first attempted settlement in the Americas at Roanoke in 1585. The East India Company was launched in 1600, and the Virginia Company of London founded Jamestown in 1607. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare draws from ample contemporary sources on the Native peoples of the New World, transatlantic slavery, and the oddly fortuitous potentials of shipwreck (*felix culpa*), in order to construct a world in miniature that is equal parts utopia and dystopia (Hulme, 1986, pp. 89–102; Vaughan and Vaughan, 1991; Bernhard 2011, p. 139; Glover and Smith, 2008, pp. 233–235; Doherty, 2007). When news spread in 1609 among the English that the crew and passengers of the wrecked *Sea Venture* had not only survived an Atlantic hurricane en route to the Jamestown Colony but rediscovered a bizarre and magnificent island in their wrecking, imaginations must have sparked like St. Elmo's fire across that inhabited island of Great Britain. None, it seems, more so than Shakespeare's (Vaughan, 2008; Cawley, 1926).

The opening act of *The Tempest* (1610) dramatizes that decisive historical event when a shipload of settlers is tossed violently to and fro on the sea's surface (Fig. 2). *Sea Venture* survivor William Strachey describes "a dreadful storm and hideous" that "beat all light from heaven, which like a hell of darkness turned black upon us, so much the more fuller of horror" (Strachey, 1625, p. 4). Over the dark hours of the hurricane, those onboard began to ponder their imminent demise, as prey to the depths:

Fig. 2. Scene from *The Tempest* (Act 1.1) of the shipwreck that begins the play. In the background, a figure stands on the shore, holding a staff and commanding the storm. Printed in London for Jacob Tonson, as a plate to the 1709 edition of Nicholas Rowe's *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*. S528t2 no.1, image 23195. Courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

"For indeed, death is accompanied at no time nor place with circumstances everyway so uncapable of particularities of goodness and inward comforts as at sea" (p. 5). Shakespeare channels Strachey's dread through the noble councilor Gonzalo whose grim words spoken in the sway and swell of iambic pentameter conclude the storm-tossed first scene:

> Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea
> for an acre of barren ground—long heath, brown furze,
> anything. The wills above be done, but I would fain die
> a dry death. (1.1.63-66)

Of course, like Strachey, Gonzalo lives to see another dry day. The difference, however, is that Strachey and his compatriots landed on an uninhabited island chain known variously as the Devil's Islands, the Bermudas, or, as they would soon call it after the *Sea Venture*'s admiral, Somers Isles. Gonzalo and his fellows, on the other hand, wash ashore on an island already inhabited. The deposed Duke of Milan, Prospero, and his teenaged daughter, Miranda, watch their countrymen's shipwreck from the safety of the island home where they had been exiled since Miranda was a small child. In the play's second scene, it is revealed that Prospero, who is also a powerful sorcerer, had commanded the storm through his "airy spirit," Ariel, who might be compared to an indentured Holy Ghost forced to act as the hand of God. The spirit Ariel is accompanied in his servitude by Caliban, a "savage and deformed slave."

The backstory of Prospero's slaves makes clear that the island had been inhabited even before Prospero and Miranda were exiled there, and that a series of violent conflicts had once erupted between the new arrivals and the original inhabitants—Ariel, Caliban, and the latter's deceased mother, Sycorax—with Prospero triumphing over the native people. Sycorax, whom Prospero introduces as a "foul witch" (1.2.258), has been dead for some years when the play's action begins (Warner, 2000, p. 97). According to Prospero, she herself had been exiled to the island and had enslaved Ariel; once Sycorax was conquered, Prospero freed Ariel only to confine him again to servitude alongside Sycorax's son, Caliban. Given the context of the European slave trade with Africa and the ongoing expansion into "new worlds" in the early seventeenth century—and the two centuries previous—the play's colonial setting should be self-evident (Hulme, 1986, Lamming, 1960/1992; Loomba, 2002, pp. 4–7), and students certainly read it that way. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the exiled Prospero hails from Milan, not far from Columbus's hometown of Genova. Once washed ashore, even the

nobleman Gonzalo roams through the island, dreaming of his plantation utopia, resplendent with the innocence of an imagined "state of nature" devoid of the concerns of civilization. Gonzalo's sentiments effectively echo the "noble savagery" of Michel de Montaigne in *Des cannibales* (1580), famously resurrected in Jean-Jaques Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) (Miller, 2017; Crispin, 2010, pp. 144–145).

Although Shakespeare's own views on the colonies and the treatment of enslaved and Indigenous peoples are contested, Prospero is his protagonist, and one who is often identified as the Bard's alter ego (Loomba, 2002, 161-163; Holland, 1999, pp. xxxix–xli; Hulme, 1986; Vaughan and Vaughan, 1991). The autobiographical element can be seen as a strong indicator of the playwright's empathy with the protagonist and his character arc. While Shakespeare/Prospero does grant Caliban some agency as in scene 2 of Act 2 when Caliban curses Prospero and pronounces that the island rightfully belongs to him, Caliban consistently circles back to subservience. Prospero does not deny that he stole the island but instead claims that his takeover was justified because of Caliban's libido; in turn, Caliban acquiesces. During Caliban's would-be rebellion in Act 3, the slaver-sorcerer is more amused by his efforts than threatened or moved by them, and scene 2 in both Acts 2 and 3 makes clear that Caliban cannot help but be a slave to someone; it is simply in his nature to serve others, including even the drunken buffoons Stephano and Trinculo. Indeed, before pardoning the trio of scheming rebels, Prospero grumbles a preamble to the white man's burden, calling Caliban:

> a devil, a born devil, on whose nature
> nurture can never stick: on whom my pains,
> humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost! (4.1.188-190; cf. Crispin, 2010, p. 143; Vaughan and Vaughan, 1991, p. 50)

While Caliban's name is understood to be an intentional anagram of "cannibal," "Prospero" appears to be an unintentional anagram of "oppressor," an anachronistic coincidence that belies the playwright's probable condonation of Prospero's powers and its abuses. The only moralizing about abuses of power that the play really offers are in regard to powers of an occult kind, as they blasphemously approach the purview of the divine (Holland, 1999, xxxvi–xxxvii).

Ultimately, Shakespeare's tempest is a singular event, a one-off that facilitates Prospero's restoration to rightful power and his resignation

of wrongful power: namely, his magic. The tale is set on the cusp of the Enlightenment, a time that brimmed with colonial anxieties about devil-worshipping natives, the reclamation of Edenic islands, the ethics of slavery, an imaginary "state of nature," and questions of whether deterministic physical environments offered the moral ground for creating and maintaining racial hierarchies. There is something unsettling in the geographical location of the island, which wavers, or washes, between worlds Old and New. What Shakespeare pins in time, he unpins in space.

Almost immediately after the wreck (Prospero's "accident most strange, bountiful Fortune"!), Ariel briefly recalls that he was once ordered by Prospero "to fetch dew / from the still-vexed" Bermudas before relaying that the rest of the fleet had rallied following the storm's dissipation and were in the Mediterranean returning to Naples (1.2.229-235). While "magical islands do not necessarily have a fixed place on a map," the island-sized "brave new world" claimed by Prospero seems to be carried eastward on the Gulf Stream, along with the troubles and anxieties of empire, back to the continent once conquered by Rome (Holland, 1999, xxviii–xxix; Hulme, 1996; Hess, 2000, pp. 121–124; Gillies, 2000, pp. 180–182). Despite his probable identification with Prospero, perhaps Shakespeare could read the writing on the walls of early empire: that is, that the conquered are doomed to become conquerors, a scenario then being played out by the European nations liberated from ancient Roman overlords, primarily Spain, but soon his own Britain, and in the following centuries, the United States from Britain and more contentiously, Zionist Israel following Jewish liberation from Nazi Germany. The amnesia of imperial oppression is further expressed in a pithy exchange between Gonzalo, Sebastian, and Antonio, as the Councilor imagines his utopian colony, which he "would with such perfection govern" (2.1.167):

GONZALO: And were the king on't, what would I do?

SEBASTIAN: Scape being drunk for want of wine.

GONZALO: I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;

No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty.

SEBASTIAN: Yet he would be king on't.

ANTONIO: The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning. (2.1.145-158)

Although Gonzalo would not have the opportunity to witness his fantasies unfold as did so many historical settlers to the colonies, the promise of colonization reveals the desires of the colonizer to reign supreme over his domain, subjugating and sacrificing the will of others to fulfill the utopian vision held by the new emperor. The evident boomerang effect of colonialism would, some 360 years after Shakespeare, come full circle to be picked back up by postcolonial intellectuals, such as Aimé Césaire. And in so doing, the subtleties of Shakespeare that are lost on students translating an archaic English, often for the first and only time, are fully revealed as Césaire amplifies them into importance in a more modern language and more familiar cultural context.

CÉSAIRE'S INDEFINITE TEMPEST

Martinican playwright, poet, philosopher, and politician Aimé Césaire first spelled out his position on the relationship between colonization and civilization in his essay *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1962/2000). He points to the spread of Christian imperial colonies on a global scale as the beginning of the demise, not only of the civilizations of the colonized, but of European civilization itself. By way of what he calls "the boomerang effect of colonization"; the process of colonizing "dehumanizes even the most civilized man; … colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it" (Césaire, 1962/2000, p. 41). Those who treat their fellows like beasts or monsters become monsters themselves. In its monstrosity, "colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism" (Césaire, 1962/2000, p. 35, original emphasis). But the brutality and savagery unleashed onto those called brutal and savage comes back around, and according to Césaire, the boomerang effect was most apparent in Nazism.

While that beast was thought to have been slain, so long as colonization in any of its forms remains, Césaire warns, the monster will return.

Césaire's radically anti-colonial ideas found purchase in the Négritude Movement, which he co-founded, and in civil rights movements raging across the former colonies, most famously in 1960s America. In the heat of the American culture wars and global surges in postcolonial independence, Césaire adapted Shakespeare's *Tempest* into an anti-colonial rally for the stage (Crispin, 2010; Loomba, 2002, 163–168; Edward-Mangione, 2014; Fei, 2007; West, 2007; Rix, 2000; Porter, 1995; Dayan, 1992). As Philip Crispin remarks, "The play is a twentieth-century masterpiece of world theatre, a triumph that re-appropriates the poetic force of Shakespeare, kicks down blinkered insularity and demands to be seen and heard" (2010, p. 161). In *Une tempête* (1969), the playwright builds on George Lamming's (1960/1992) postcolonial analysis of *The Tempest* by subverting the power dynamics of the original and casting Caliban as protagonist. Here, Caliban is a proud cannibal as he "vomits up" Prospero and his white poison, a regurgitation which is in itself analogous to "the very process of adapting canonical texts" like Shakespeare's, which are too often harnessed into a defense of European supremacy (Rix, 2000, pp. 246–247; on cannibalism in Césaire, see also Loichot, 2013). Importantly, the *dramatis personae* explicitly identifies Caliban as a "black slave" and Ariel a "mulatto slave," while others are "as in Shakespeare." These ostensibly subtle changes (along with the addition of Eshu, "a black devil-god") effectively twist Shakespeare's tale into a Möbius strip wherein going full circle results in a strange-but-familiar inversion of plot, characters, and motives that students pick up on almost immediately.

Unsurprisingly, the play begins with shipwreck at the hands of a tempest conjured by the powerful Prospero, who forced Ariel's hand rather than do his own dirty work. In the next scene, Prospero explains to a naïve Miranda that he had been exiled from their home in Milan by the Holy Inquisition, who accused him of heresy for insisting upon the spheroid shape of the planet, and for consulting the works of Arab and Jewish scholars. In other words, Césaire's Prospero was not banished for practicing magic, but for practicing a science that just as effectively nullified the authority of the Christian god and his minions on earth. Although Césaire (1962/2000) boldly indicted Christianity in no uncertain terms for its role in colonization in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Prospero's heresy suggests that the layers of willful ignorance, hypocrisy, and cruelty evident in colonization may begin with religious dogma but culminate in any self-proclaimed supremacy or

superiority without justification. With Prospero as an arrogant scientist, Ariel is now an unwilling (and unpaid) lab assistant rather than a sorcerer's apprentice.

But the identities of Prospero's enslaved islanders are further complicated later in the same scene when Caliban enters at Prospero's beckon. Here, Caliban doesn't just enter with curses to greet his master; instead, he shouts the defiant greeting, "Uhuru!" the Kiswahili word for "freedom" (Crispin, 2010, pp. 146–147). That call for freedom is a forceful remonstration, and a declaration important enough to be repeated two lines later (1.2.98-100). Caliban reminds Prospero that the knowledge he has of the island was stolen from Caliban when he was a young boy, even as he was forced to learn the newcomer's language and forget his own. Through the backs and forths of slaver and enslaved, Caliban reveals that this is not his name after all but merely the name Prospero assigned to him (lines 168-181); now, he wants to be called "X" instead, a clear cue that the audience is to identify the fictional X with the real Malcolm X, who had been assassinated in 1965, four years before the play was written.

In Act 2.1, Ariel visits Caliban's cave, where they discuss their "different methods" of attaining freedom. Caliban declares "better death than humiliation and injustice" ("*Mieux vaut la mort que l'humiliation et l'injustice*") (line 61). Decrying war, Ariel espouses a nonviolent approach where he, Caliban, and Prospero would be like brothers building a new world together. The mulatto slave, with his patience and insistence that Prospero can develop a conscience, is to be identified as Martin Luther King, Jr., who had been assassinated the previous year, in 1968. These references to familiar historical figures are recognized by the most astute student readers, who point them out to classmates who have not yet made the connection.

Both Caliban and Ariel eventually gain their freedom from Prospero, at which point there can be no doubt that if Shakespeare's alter ego was Prospero, Césaire's was Caliban. When Prospero grants Ariel his freedom, Ariel does the unthinkable. Never having really fought for his liberty, always placating the colonizer, buckling under and defending his unique power, Ariel is doomed to replicate his evils. The emancipated man is jubilant, even "intoxicated" with newfound power, and almost immediately, he begins to dream of shouting orders to the "benighted field hand" to "Dig, nigger!" ("*Pioche, négre! Pioche, négre!*") (3.5.53-54). The boomerang of monstrosity comes back, not just to colonizers, but to those who just go along to get along, to those who seek compromise, or worse yet, to those who are secretly envious of the colonizer's boundless authority and seeming invincibility.

The once-conquered, newly freed desires nothing more than to conquer for himself. By contrast, Caliban declares his disinterest in peace; he only wants his land and his freedom back and will do whatever it takes to get them (3.5.94-106). This recalcitrance, Césaire says, is the only way to break the monster's tyrannical cycle and restore civilization after colonization. For many students, this set of consequences is difficult to accept, even provisionally. Most still side with Ariel's strategy of peace despite knowing the outcome; at the same time, they also tend to soften to Caliban's more controversial approach.

When Césaire's Caliban joins forces with the fools Stephano and Trinculo to revolt against Prospero, who unleashes tear gas on the insurrectionists who initially mistake the gas for a swarm of mosquitos, Caliban recognizes the stinging and biting air as just one of many gadgets in Prospero's "anti-riot arsenal" ("*arsenal anti-émeutes*") (3.4.67–68). That Caliban refers to his cave as "*le ghetto*" also places the action in a contemporary setting that is consistent with the real-world correlates of the two enslaved characters (1.2.150). But the play's position in the midst of the civil rights movement sits uneasily with the Renaissance-era chronology of Prospero's exile from Milan. What Shakespeare does with space, Césaire does with time. The anachronistic elements of the play serve, and swerve, to upend the singularity of the tempest-tossed shipwreck and to protract it; this play's storm and the wreckage left in its wake are just one instance among many: hence, *Une tempête* rather than *La tempête*. Although the play's geographical setting is definite in its Caribbean isle much like Césaire's own Martinique, its temporal setting is indefinite, a reminder that the fight against colonization is ongoing (Rix, 2000). The French *tempête* shares its etymology with *temps*, meaning both time and weather; in this way, Césaire insists that, in the context of colonization, time itself is a storm to be weathered. As long as insurgents have to remind settlers that "black lives matter," as long as Indigenous peoples have to fight to get their "land back," the boomerang of colonization threatens its monstrous return. But like Shakespeare, Césaire could see the writing on the walls, not only of empire but also of ecocide.

In *Une tempête*, racial justice battle cries are heard next to those lamenting environmental harms. In the play's final lines, Prospero has aged into irrelevance without anyone to control, but even in his fits of violence, paranoia, and madness, he notes the changing climate ("*C'est drôle, le climat a changé*…"). The insane Prospero finds it unseasonably and unreasonably cold, which may be another of Césaire's references to the colonizer as exploiter of land as much as people. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was

published in 1962 and was available in French the following year (Stoll, n.d.). The first computer model of the earth warming due to fossil fuel emissions had been produced in 1967, just two years before the play was published (Manabe and Wetherald, 1967). Prospero, whom Caliban calls "the Anti-Nature" ("*A bas la anti-Nature!*"), has ravaged the earth and now must live with the consequences because there is nowhere else to go (3.4.36). Earth is an island in space as much as Caliban's isle is salvatory land in the vastness of the sea, and Prospero's myopic vision of exploitation has, unsurprisingly, come back to haunt him.

Consequently, the island's own identity presents another point of conflict between Caliban and Prospero. Caliban sees in the island the animated spirit of his dead mother, Sycorax. He even claims that his mother is not actually dead but lives on in the land and its flora and fauna, and that she speaks to him in dreams. Although the personification of earth as woman has not always sat well with feminist scholars (e.g., Plumwood, 1993), it stands in sharp contrast to Prospero's view of the island as inert, a thing with resources to extract, a thing to dominate. As Césaire's Caliban proclaims, "Dead, you can walk on it, pollute it, you can tread upon it with the steps of a conqueror. I respect the earth, because I know that she is alive; and I know that Sycorax is alive. Sycorax. Mother. Serpent, rain, lightning. And I see thee everywhere!" ("*Morte, alors on la piétine, on la souille, on la foule d'un pied vainqueur! Moi, je la respecte, car je sais qu'elle vit, et que vit Sycorax. Sycorax, ma mère! Serpent! Pluie! Éclairs! Et je te retrouve partout …*") (1.2.126-131). Again, Caliban's beliefs blend with Césaire's; among the very few stage directions given throughout the play, Act 3.4 is set "in the wild, night is drawing to a close; the murmuring of the spirits of the tropical forest are heard" ("*Dans la nature, fin la nuit; bourdonnants, les esprits de la forêt tropicale*"). Those anonymous forest spirits almost certainly allude to if not include Sycorax, the mother, but even so, her voice is distributed, filtered, through the calls of fly, ant, vulture, crab, calao, hummingbird, and opossum that echo through the night air on the eve of insurrection.

Shakespeare's only villain with no lines, dead on the audience's arrival to the theatre, is Sycorax, who has long been seen to mirror the experience of colonized women all over the globe: demonized, silenced, killed (Busia, 1989–1990; Lara, 2007; Mahanta, 2009). Shakespeare's and Césaire's Sycorax, "as symbol of a landscape and a changing human situation, is a memory, an absence, and a silence" ("Pouchet Paquet," as quoted in Lamming, 1960/1992, p. xxii). Her present absence is an eerie reminder of those empty farms and cold hearths across the Americas, of the precipitous drop in carbon

dioxide before its dramatic fossil-fueled increase. But once again, the past is never really past. Although Sycorax's presence is far greater in *Une tempête*, her own voice is still excluded from the script, a choice that renders her silence deafening amidst the ongoing atrocities against the women Indigenous to this "brave new world, that has such people in't." Thousands of First Nations, American Indian, and Alaska Native women and girls have vanished in recent years with impunity. Disproportionately, disappearances occur in the vicinity of "man camps," temporary housing sites for construction workers on pipelines and other large-scale extraction projects (e.g., Brooks, 2023; Chase and Johnson, 2023). As students learn through select readings and current statistics on missing and murdered Indigenous women in our region, industry and its constituents enact violence against Native women and the land simultaneously, and this is no coincidence; rather, it is the result of a prevailing Western ideology that women—and Native women all the more so—are "closer to earth" or "closer to nature" and that earth, so often feminized, exists solely for the benefit of man (Loomba, 2005, pp. 128–129). In the effort to raise public awareness and pressure legislative bodies, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement uses data collected on the vanished women to render visible their absence and to sound the alarm that the violent, raping, and murdering forces of colonization continue and that they must be stopped. Calls to action echo into the vacuum left by the metaphorical Sycorax's absence; they are being heard, and answered, but too slowly and too quietly. That said, student efforts contribute meaningfully to the noise of the alarm bells.

WARNER'S MULTIVOCAL TEMPEST

One literary response to the exclusion of Sycorax in *The Tempest* and *Une tempête* is found in Marina Warner's novel, *Indigo* (1992). In contrast to Shakespeare's and Césaire's focus on their respective male protagonists, Warner centers her work on the original *Tempest*'s female characters and gives them a multi-generational dimension that fuses the colonialism of the past with that of the ongoing present (cf. Scott, 2020, pp. 157–158). For much of the novel, Sycorax takes center stage, and she lends her craft—indigo dyeing—to the book's title.

In *Indigo*, it is Sycorax's story that begins with shipwreck: she discovers a beach stacked high with the bodies of a mysterious people whose skin is darker than the islanders'. The villagers prepare the strangers' bloated and dismembered bodies for funeral ceremonies and eventual cremation.

But that night, she hears their voices calling from the shallow mass grave, echoing and mingling Ariel's famed song of Alonso's drowned bones (1.2.397-402).

At the sound of their voices breaking through the wall of death, Sycorax remembers one of the bodies and returns to the grave. She cuts an infant from the womb of his dead mother, makes him breathe for the first time, and takes him in as her own. For breaching the taboos that keep the dead apart from the living, Sycorax is banished from the village and so lives with her adopted son in the forest, where she tames wild animals, taps medicine from plants, and dyes cloth with her indigo vats. Eventually, she develops a reputation as a healer, seer, sorcerer, and witch. As much as the villagers consult her for her wisdom, they fear her for her magic. Sycorax is already an outsider, so when the colonizers arrive on the island, her fate is sealed, figuratively as well as literally in an ancient saman tree beneath whose limbs she will soon be buried.

Warner's (1992) portrayal of the fictional Caribbean island of Liamuiga, along with its colonization and neocolonization over generations, is nuanced and unflinching. It is also deeply introspective because she draws from her own family's heritage and regret as plantation owners on a similar but real Caribbean island (Chedgzoy, 1995, p. 123). In the tradition of Shakespeare and Césaire, she writes herself into the character of Miranda, here a young, modern woman who exists somewhere between the oversimplified categories of colonizer and colonized.

Because of her racialized identity as a white woman, some critics have questioned the accuracy and ethics of Warner's portrayal of Black and Indigenous women. In response to concerns of appropriation and representation, the recent Own Voices social media movement began as an effort to advocate for diversity and authenticity in the publishing industry. One of the grievances aired in this movement is that writers should not write from unfamiliar marginalized perspectives: that able-bodied people should not write from a disabled perspective, that a man should not write from a woman's point of view, and that a white person should not write for, or as, a person of color. This presents something of a quandary for writers who do not hail from a currently marginalized group. While writers are encouraged to diversify their characters and to avoid treating characters of color as backdrops or facilitators of white characters' arcs, they are also discouraged from assuming the perspective of characters who do not resemble them or match their own lived experience.

In this course with its explicit theme of colonialism, and among students learning and thinking with this material for the first time, Warner's writing of women of color is often a point of contention. Students are provided with a discussion prompt that summarizes the problem and asks them to reflect and explain their positions:

> In current times, white authors and artists often encounter a paradox. On the one hand, they are encouraged to generate diversity among characters, especially lead characters, so that racially-/sexually-/religiously-/class-/ability-diverse characters don't just serve to move the plot or act as a colorful background but are intrinsic to the story or artform itself. Yet at the same time, some movements like #OwnVoices discourage authors and artists from outside a specific identity group from writing/drawing characters that do not reflect their own identity markers. So, as you may have noticed from the book jacket, Marina Warner is a white British woman. Yet, in order to decolonize Shakespeare's classic tale (and arguably, to further the decolonization of Césaire's adaptation), she writes from the perspective of many different people, including white men and BIPOC [Black Indigenous People of Color] men and women. Do you find this problematic? Explain.

By this point in the class, students are more often than not primed with cultural sensitivity; they are aware of how movements like MMIW and Black Lives Matter are testaments to the ongoing efforts to decolonize our own society. Their responses to the prompt tend to betray extreme caution if not consternation, and perhaps unsurprisingly, white students often take a more conservative approach to the question of authenticity than do students of color, who tend to be more insistent on accuracy and intention rather than strict adherence to identity markers. Below is a representative sample of some of the more sophisticated student responses to the question.

> [William] Styron, [Harriet Beecher] Stowe, and Warner failed to separate their conscious and unconscious bias, although they collectively wrote with clear intentions (whether as a means to advocate for the civil rights movement, to push for the abolition of slavery, or to decolonize colonial tropes); ultimately, when I argue that the ethics vary by situation, I am referring to "the white author's" intention and *accuracy of the narrative*. If the intention is justifiable and the accuracy of the delivery

is *meticulously examined*, the act of white appropriation can distance itself several degrees from its inherent problematic nature. (Student 1, 2022; original emphasis)

I have often heard this argument that people should not produce works that focus on a certain group that they are not a part of because they are releasing the narrative from someone that has not experienced the struggles and/or injustices. Of course, this does depend on the intention of the work. I do not believe that *Indigo* itself is problematic after reading it, because the intentions of the book were made very clear both by the author and by the text if the reader was familiar with *The Tempest*. In any (well-written) book, there will be a diversity of characters, and it is the job of the author to successfully portray those characters. It seems that the only problem is when the main character depicted is significantly different from the author. Though, if it is the vision of that author to create a successful story with a main character that differs from them, why should they not write it? Should they instead have another person write their story? Or never write it at all? (Student 2, 2022)

I think that it is very problematic to try to represent the ideas, feelings, and emotions of other cultures. I find it very frustrating that a white woman could try to assume what men and women of color could think, say, or feel. I think that Miranda's character captures the consideration of Warner's guilt, and that Xanthe is a representation of her privilege. […] Xanthe convinces Miranda that guilt is unhealthy and illogical, which I think is Warner's way of addressing what she has to be guilty about and how she has moved past it, but I find it difficult still to accept that someone who is aware of their role in this history can still try to assume the voice of someone who has an experience and historical weight that she can never fully realize. I also wonder why she would try to offer a perspective that wasn't meant to have some form of authenticity, just to add noise to an exhausted topic that she shouldn't have been a part of. (Student 3, 2020)

Firstly, I don't think that it is problematic that Warner is a white British woman. I mean, isn't this exactly the kind of person who you would want to think about complex racial issues in such a deep way? It is easy for BIPOC men and women to understand their own points of view, but it is a much harder task for a British woman to understand their

> situation. That is why it is so good when people like her try. Ultimately, what's the alternative? The only way we can make progress through this space of race and culture is for people to try and see things from someone else's perspective, which is exactly what Warner did in Indigo. […] I think that what Warner did was all that she could do, try to see the world from the perspective of the Other. (Student 4, 2020)

Because of Warner's background, some student critics, such as Student 3 above, suggest that the writing of *Indigo* was the product of the author's own sense of "white guilt" for the crimes of her ancestors and their ilk; in other words, the novel acts as a confessional for the author to expunge or absolve the sins of racism and privilege that she has inherited. This concern has even caused some students to question the final assignment to creatively amplify the voice of Sycorax.

> I am very conflicted about the different points of view she adopts in the book. While the character of Miranda is a clear stand in for herself and her own complicated identity, the presence of the other characters deviate so much from that. I do not have as much of an issue of her writing from the point of view of men as I do the point of view of her writing from the POVs of BIPOC[, e]specially when it comes down to the sensitive material of dubious sexual consent and the horrors that the native people faced. A white person cannot simply put themselves in the shoes of another person in a situation like that no matter if it was just to textualize their voices or not.
>
> However, at the same time, that is what our own assignment is. We have to put a voice to the BIPOC Sycorax, and unfortunately, these are a lot of the experiences that native people went through. Warner never claims to try to expose the true stories of natives, but rather uses those experiences to shape a larger narrative to give a character a chance to live, breathe, and speak. […] This never claims to be a realistic tale and it would really be problematic if the author had pushed aside her own biases and presented herself or Miranda as some moral high ground to the other characters in the story. But she doesn't do this, instead she curiously navigates her own life and history and self-diagnosed guilt through the surrogate Everards to find some sort of hope and atonement. […] She never wanted to give an accurate textualization of the voices of BIPOC, she wanted to be able to explore her own history and the history of colonization in the Caribbean and let the conqueror and

> the conquered mingle to allow for more open relations and common ground to allow earlier sins to be atoned for. (Student 5, 2020)

As conflicted as Student 5 is about the project, most of her insights resonate with those of Shakespeare scholar Kate Chedgzoy (1995), who explains further:

> *Indigo* does not presume to offer access to the "authentic" experience of colonised native women; rather it self-consciously represents a white author's textualisation of black women's voices. It seems important to me that white feminists should engage imaginatively with the discursive positioning—and indeed the lived experience—of the "other woman," and such a creative engagement is part of the project of Warner's text. Moreover, in tracing the histories of colonialism, the novel shows that use of genealogies anchored in physiology to establish taxonomies of racial identity is a flawed and confused project, albeit one which continues to structure social relations. (p. 124)

It should be noted that "engaging imaginatively" with the Other is not necessarily the same as developing empathy, in the sense of feeling what the Other is feeling. This would be impossible let alone inappropriate, and, according to psychologist Paul Bloom (2016), socially undesirable. Instead, we aim for reasoned compassion so that students take seriously the concerns of the metaphorical Sycorax and do what they can to amplify them and seek resolution in the form of large-scale social and ecological justice. However, Bloom (2016) agrees that fiction writing does require empathy, as the author must feel, to a certain degree, what each character is feeling, especially the protagonist. In a writing workshop leading up to the culminating project, students learn the difference between empathy and reasoned compassion before embarking on a creative writing assignment.

This assignment was piloted in the infamous spring semester of 2020. Students were asked to recall a conflict they had experienced since sheltering in place, mask mandates, and toilet paper shortages. They wrote the dialog of that conflict and then reflected on how their attitudes had changed about the characters in their story (their perspectives, motivations, etc.). Next, they were reminded that the current COVID-19 pandemic was not the first time that globalization spread viruses into populations without immunity. They used the mapping project at native-land.ca to determine which Tribes lived on the land where they presently resided, before imagining a smallpox outbreak among those Indigenous peoples at the time of first contact. They

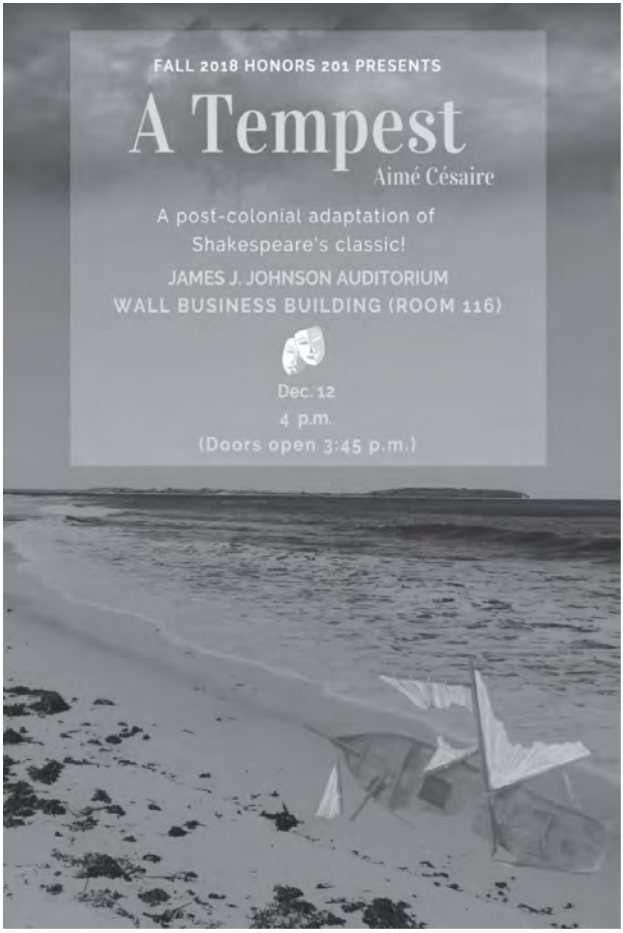
were asked to imagine the terror: no radio, no television, no internet, no epidemiology to help understand what was happening, how, or why. They had to harness all the anger, confusion, distrust, and fear that they were feeling in relation to our current pandemic, and to infuse a flash fiction or prose poem piece with these emotions, but set within the historical conditions of their location, and written with empathy for those who experienced them.

Despite some initial hesitancy, students, including even Student 5, come to agree that rather than dwell on difference, it is more important to sensitively and responsibly tell and retell the story of colonization and to correct for the omissions of women's, and especially Native women's, perspectives among the earlier tempest-tellers. After all, Césaire himself understood race as primarily performative, which he emphasized at the play's start with the figure of the Master of Ceremonies who oversees the actors walking on stage and selecting masks at random (Rix, 2000, pp. 242, 244–245; cf. Fanon, 1986). Because the actors must then retain that mask for the play's duration, he makes visibly absurd the fact that the arbitrariness of birth into skin of a certain color dictates so much of our lives. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994), who famously declared that "the subaltern cannot speak," draws a distinction between types of representation: speaking for (in the sense of *vertreten*) and signifying (as in *darstellen*), with the difference being "between a proxy and a portrait." While the former is highly dubious, the latter can also be harmful, so, following Ella Shohat (1995), representations must be configured with the charge of the ideological weight they bear. Shohat urges, "Rather than ask who can speak, then, we should ask how we can speak together, and more important, how we can move the dialog forward," resulting in a representation project that is "a collective pleasure and responsibility."

After weeks of discourse, sometimes heated, in a diverse classroom space, students are prepared for the pleasures and responsibilities of representation. With Kate Chedgzoy's (1995) encouragement to "engage imaginatively" with Others, coupled with Irene Lara's (2007) call to "(re) listen to and (re)narrate the story of Sycorax" and create "more artistic and theoretical works that focus on 'Sycorax'" as metaphor, students feel emboldened to use their creative powers to help amplify the voice of the silenced Sycorax. They understand that Sycorax effectively symbolizes the real women rendered voiceless through colonization ever since that first historical shipwreck in 1492, a wreck followed by innumerable others crashed onto New World shores amidst storms physical and metaphorical (cf. Scott, 2020, pp. 142–146).

The course has been something of a tempest of its own, having shifted tremendously over the last six years (Rich, 2021). For example, we first performed *Une tempête* for the university (Rich, 2018; Fig. 3), and later created a curriculum guide to help instructors incorporate the play into their own classes (Rich, 2019).

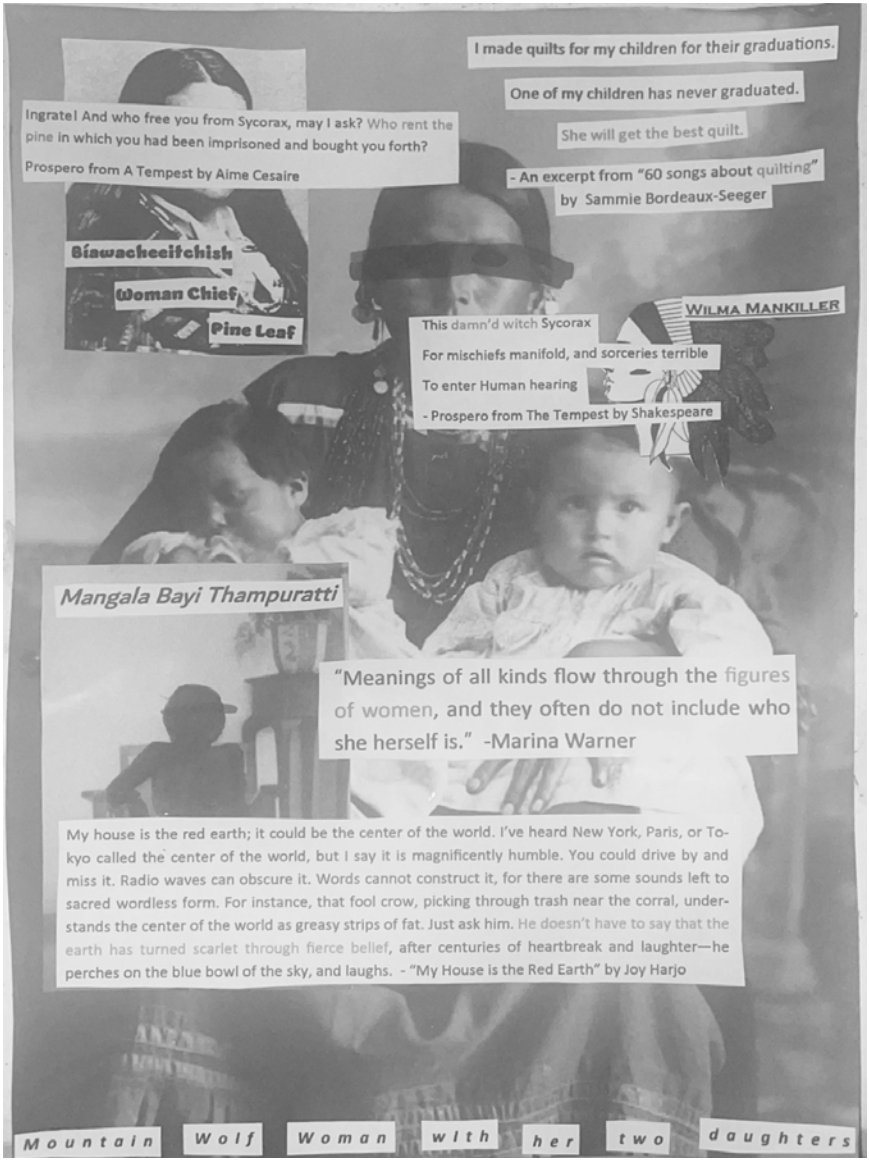
Fig. 3. Student-designed poster for the English-language production of *Une tempête* at Coastal Carolina University in 2018. The production was the culminating project of the first iteration of this course. Courtesy of the author.



Later pandemic and post-pandemic iterations have shifted the class toward smaller-scale projects made publicly available and with the explicit charge of centering Sycorax (Rich, 2020). Projects taking a literary approach have ranged widely from short stories and poetry to scripts and letters; others utilized visual arts methods, such as drawing, painting, and collage. Still others blended text and image, as in the blogs, illustrated podcasts, blackout poems, and 'zines the students have produced (Figs. 4, 5).

Fig. 4. Spread from a zine, *Whispers of the Witch*, produced as the culminating project for the course. These pages demonstrate the throughline from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to Warner's *Indigo*, while painting a new and humanizing image of Sycorax as a mother driven by love but prone to anger and regret. Artwork by Noelle Briggs. Courtesy of the artist, 2020.

Fig. 5. Example of a culminating project that successfully connects the fictional character of Sycorax to the lived experiences of Indigenous American women. Artwork by Baylei Lezaun. Courtesy of the artist, 2023.



In most cases, students are highly conscientious about using symbolism that effectively builds on Warner's careful use of color to organize the distinct sections and overlapping identities within *Indigo*. Alongside hands blued from decades of indigo dying, students are often also drawn to the symbolism of the red dress, in reference to Métis artist Jaime Black's haunting installations that poignantly symbolize abducted and murdered Indigenous women. Often, student projects navigate multi-vocality, taking their cue from the perspective-shifting that Warner offers as an antidote to the singular male protagonist found in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Césaire's *Une tempête*.

At the very least, all student projects reflect a newfound capacity to connect a piece of literature written at a pivotal moment in our shared history over 400 years ago with that artwork's recent adaptations, but more so the ongoing struggles against the colonial and neocolonial devices of oppression and exploitation. From genocides past, we are bound by causal chains to the ongoing femicide and ecocide that mirror each other in the false notions of the powerlessness of woman and earth, and the false dichotomy of culture versus nature. Amplifying Sycorax's voice reveals the origins and errors of such thinking along with its consequences; in the process, students see the potential for change.

CONCLUSION

As a college student enrolled in an honors Shakespeare course, I was overwhelmed by the abundance of adaptations of his work for stage and film and in visual art. At the time, that alone seemed an enviable mark of genius because I was an art student whose Muses were ancient art and archaeology; the thought that an individual's creative endeavors could be so endlessly inspiring for generations was a seductive prospect. Now, I am well aware that my best chance for inspiring generations of adaptation, revision, and retelling are in the classroom rather than the studio. But perhaps there is something more to be said about the performative ties that bind the classroom to the stage and to the world.

The method of teaching against colonization in all its forms has the advantage of establishing a common ground among students whose political sympathies vary as widely as their majors. Teaching at Coastal Carolina University—a small state school in the American Deep South, I have found that it is not uncommon for students at the beginning of the semester to

argue far-right talking points like "slavery wasn't that bad" or "Native Americans were more primitive." Over the course of the semester, their views shift dramatically. Far-left students also soften their positions on issues of authenticity in art, made popular through social-media activism, as described above. In some respects, this experience summarizes the value of retaining some canonical works in even an anti-colonial curriculum (Chedgzoy, 1995, pp. 100–106). The canon can act as a springboard for questioning the intentions and values represented therein, the relationships between art and world, and between past and present. As Ania Loomba (2002) writes about literary texts such as Shakespeare's, "they not only reflect and shape their immediate present, but also encode ideas from the past and visualize the future" (p. 4). In the case of *The Tempest*, its increasingly decolonial twentieth-century adaptations demonstrate the unique ability of art to reflect *and* refract reality.

From my perspective as a former student and current professor of honors, teaching Shakespeare alongside Césaire and Warner helps to achieve some of the key pillars of honors education as defined by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). Namely, honors courses are meant to foster student development in "problem solving, often with creative approaches; critical reading; clear, persuasive writing; oral presentation; critical thinking; forming judgments based on evidence; artistic literacy; articulated metacognition; and spiritual growth" (NCHC, 2013, p. 1). Students begin this course by thinking critically about their own major and giving an oral presentation on the evidence for how colonialism has impacted their discipline (and vice versa), and they articulate what they learned by doing this research. They develop artistic literacy by reading and analyzing the three primary works of literature under discussion, as well as critical reading skills by scrutinizing complex academic scholarship related to the plays and novel. In addition, they develop persuasive writing skills through responding to focused prompts such as the examples above. Their final project is an exercise in problem solving using creative approaches and enhanced artistic literacy. While spiritual growth may be difficult to evaluate, certainly moving the needle on strongly held but indefensible political views could approximate that domain of development. This seems especially true in an American context where church and state remain notoriously conflated and where both are implicated in ongoing neocolonial agendas.

In addition to experiential, hands-on learning that emphasizes discovery of Self and Other, honors education also thrives on interdisciplinarity. The need for interdisciplinarity is at once a practical one—honors students

hail from every conceivable major on campus—and a pedagogical one—because integrative learning requires bridging the local and global across time, genre, and disciplines. In turn, this kind of learning fosters traits of curiosity, creativity, open-mindedness, and perspective-taking (Gombrich and Hogan, 2017). Advanced interdisciplinarity has been achievable by structuring the class, not only around Shakespeare, but also around shipwreck. At once a pivotal point in the history of literature, the study of past cultures, and earth sciences, the year 1610 is so far beyond the reach of lived memory, and yet it is around us everywhere, inescapably. As we move forward in an uncertain and unprecedented geological era, Naufragocene flotsam and jetsam lap at our heels, bobbing in and out of view in toxic, polluted waters that taint skin, feathers, and scales. We need other economies, other sciences, other arts, other priorities to make other and better futures. Otherwise, we let the monstrous boomerang of colonization dominate the last act.

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The author may be contacted at srich@risd.edu.