

THE RHETORIC OF SHAKESPEAREAN APPROPRIATION: CONTEMPORARY  
WOMEN WRITERS RESPOND TO *KING LEAR* AND *THE TEMPEST*

by

ERIN MELINDA DENISE PRESLEY

(Under the Direction of Christy Desmet)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the rhetorical relationship between Shakespeare as an appropriator and Shakespeare as a source for contemporary women novelists. Influenced by early modern pedagogy and its emphasis on imitation, Shakespeare's relation to his sources reflects the primary sense of "invention": to find or discover. Shakespeare's use of source materials complicates both the notion that early modern drama had no sense of textual audience and the Romantic notion of originality. Focusing on the models of Shakespeare's mode of appropriation offered by *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, this dissertation understands appropriation as a give-and-take process that emphasizes negotiation over theft. Edgar's "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (*King Lear* 5.3.299) and Caliban's "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (*The Tempest* 1.2.366-7) shape the ways in which Jane Smiley, Marina Warner, Gloria Naylor, and Iris Murdoch respectively

engage with the source plays in their novels. Informed by the complicated ideas about language present in these lines and the novelistic discourse theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and Kenneth Burke, the dissertation offers an alternative definition of literary appropriation, viewing the act as collaborative rather than as textual theft, by putting the source plays into conversation with their contemporary counterparts.

Index words: Shakespeare, appropriation, revision, King Lear, The Tempest, Smiley, Warner, Naylor, Murdoch, pedagogy, Bakhtin, Burke

THE RHETORIC OF SHAKESPEAREAN APPROPRIATION: CONTEMPORARY  
WOMEN WRITERS RESPOND TO *KING LEAR* AND *THE TEMPEST*

by

ERIN MELINDA DENISE PRESLEY

B.A., East Tennessee State University, 2002

M.A., East Tennessee State University, 2004

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The  
University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2010

© 2010

Erin Melinda Denise Presley

All Rights Reserved

THE RHETORIC OF SHAKESPEAREAN APPROPRIATION: CONTEMPORARY  
WOMEN WRITERS RESPOND TO *KING LEAR* AND *THE TEMPEST*

by

ERIN MELINDA DENISE PRESLEY

B.A., East Tennessee State University, 2002

M.A., East Tennessee State University, 2004

Major Professor: Christy Desmet

Committee: Michelle Ballif  
Sujata Iyengar  
Frances Teague

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
July 2010

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to my director Christy Desmet. She encouraged my study of appropriation through a directed reading and patiently waited and commented on my dissertation drafts. I appreciate the excellent advice and support she has given me over the past several years. I must also thank my committee members, Michelle Ballif and Sujata Iyengar, for their ongoing support of my work. Special thanks to Fran Teague for encouraging me to tackle Iris Murdoch and her subsequent support of that decision.

On a personal note, I thank my parents for encouraging my pursuit of the Ph.D. over the past six years. They taught me to love reading, and I will be forever in their debt. I also thank my husband, David Powell, for reading drafts at the eleventh hour and for making me laugh when I was discouraged.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1     'Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say': Silencing, Scene, and Gendered Behavior in Jane Smiley's <i>A Thousand Acres</i> .....	30
2     'Decipher its noises for us': Understanding Sycorax's Island in Marina Warner's <i>Indigo</i> .....	76
3     'The only voice is your own': Polyphony, Place, and Pedagogy in Gloria Naylor's Signification of Shakespeare.....	103
4     'Noise has always been my friend': Echoes of <i>The Tempest</i> in Iris Murdoch's <i>The Sea, the Sea</i> .....	135
CONCLUSION.....	172
WORKS CITED.....	185
NOTES.....	199

## Introduction

### Shakespeare's Sense of Originality

This dissertation examines the rhetorical relationship between Shakespeare as an appropriator and Shakespeare as a source for contemporary women novelists. Influenced by early modern pedagogy and its emphasis on imitation, Shakespeare's relation to his sources reflects the primary sense of "invention": to find or discover (OED). Shakespeare's use of source materials complicates both the notion that early modern drama had no sense of textual audience and the Romantic notion of originality. Focusing on the models of Shakespeare's mode of appropriation offered by *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, this dissertation understands appropriation as a give-and-take process that eludes the poles of idolatry and blasphemy. Edgar's "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (5.3.299) and Caliban's "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.366-7) represent two possible responses to negotiation between artistic subjects. Informed by these complicated ideas about the power of language, the dissertation offers an alternative definition of literary appropriation, viewing the act as collaborative rather than as textual theft.



Negotiating between slavish subjection to a prior text and stealing a story, Shakespeare's narrative method informs the way in which contemporary women novelists engage with the bard's corpus. My reading of this connection relies on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Kenneth Burke, specifically Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* and Burke's *A Grammar of Motives*. For Bakhtin, the novel offers the greatest opportunity for heteroglossia, more so than any other literary form. While my reading uses Bakhtin's theory, I do complicate his notion that the novel parodies earlier forms such as drama by exploring the ways in which Jane Smiley and Iris Murdoch "stage" their novels in much the same way as Shakespeare stages his plays. In terms of appropriation, Shakespeare works closely with the sources of *Lear* and picks and chooses details from a variety of sources in *The Tempest*, informing contemporary borrowings. While Smiley revises *King Lear*, Marina Warner, Gloria Naylor, and Murdoch seem especially attracted to *The Tempest*. Smiley consistently follows the plot of Shakespeare's *Lear*, while Warner, Murdoch, and Naylor take only certain elements from *The Tempest*. All of the works considered in this dissertation emphasize the importance of place, and my reading of the scene's significance relies on Burke's dramatic pentad. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke tries to transcend viewing one component of the pentad, scene, in purely materialistic terms, because then, "the

circumference of scene is so narrowed as to involve the reduction of action to motion" (131). In order to account for scene's full import, Burke systematically interrogates the ways in which great thinkers have used scene in their respective works. For the purposes of this dissertation, scene includes the geographical setting as well as the political, cultural, and physical conditions that exist in that identifiable space. Thus, this particular configuration of texts (i.e., Shakespeare's sources, Shakespeare's plays, and corresponding novelistic adaptations) allows us to examine closely and directly the relationship between Shakespeare as appropriator and appropriated.

In *A Thousand Acres*, the focus of my first chapter, "'Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say': Silencing, Scene, and Gendered Behavior in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*," Smiley interrogates the familial structure of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and of contemporary American society as well as the bard's literary authority. This novel reflects Bakhtin's idea that "retelling a text in one's own words is to a certain extent a double-voiced narration of another's words, for indeed 'one's own words' must not completely dilute the quality that makes another's words unique" (341). By appropriating the plot and refashioning the story into a feminist and environmentalist narrative, Smiley not only questions Shakespeare's stature

through the symbolic act of writing the novel but also emphasizes the effects of scene on the novel's main character, Ginny Cook, as she struggles to find her own voice. Audiences are outraged at the behavior of Goneril and Regan, just as the farming community in Iowa is appalled at what they perceive to be the callous actions of Ginny and Rose. As both families are patriarchal and deeply connected to the land, Smiley's novel shows the resemblance between the family structure in early-modern England and in modern American society; however, her feminist revision ultimately allows Ginny to construct her own identity outside of the constraints of the male-dominated family, enabling her to establish a life of her own without patriarchal expectations or boundaries. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin posits that "by manipulating the effects of the context, it is very easy to emphasize the brute materiality of another's words, and to stimulate dialogic reactions associated with such 'brute materiality'" (340). Smiley takes advantage of this polemical device, which Bakhtin associates with speech acts in her novel by creating sympathy for the eldest daughters and vilifying the father and community through her revisioning of *Lear*.

In this re-visioning, public silencing proves to be one of Smiley's most persuasive techniques for creating sympathy in the novel for the eldest daughter as she deviates from popular

perceptions of *King Lear's* Goneril. Ginny rarely asserts her opinion throughout much of the novel, and the reader can sense that her desire to keep the peace within her family, no matter how superficial, has been her main objective for most of her life. Similar to her longing for familial harmony on the farm, Ginny avoids conflict with her husband early in the novel, producing a sterile relationship in which Ginny praises her husband Ty as being "well spoken and easy to get along with" instead of extolling their passionate love for one another (ATA 12). Indeed, Ginny strives to be a dutiful daughter and wife as "a good appearance [is] the source and the sign of all other good things" in the isolated farming community (ATA 215).

The rhetorical choices Smiley makes in relation to her characters vis à vis the linguistic power that Goneril, Regan, and Edmund wield in *King Lear* warrants careful consideration along with Smiley's commentary on the creation of *A Thousand Acres* in "Shakespeare in Iceland" (1999) and "Taking It All Back" (2003). By viewing these elements through the novelistic discourse theories of Burke and Bakhtin, I argue that Smiley's appropriation privileges the potentially disruptive "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" over the prescribed silencing endorsed by the patriarchy, reflecting the power of language in Shakespeare's *King Lear* as well as the literary reckoning Smiley seeks in engaging with the bard (5.3.299).

In *Indigo, or Mapping the Waters*, Marina Warner also privileges the story of Shakespeare's women through a heteroglot discourse. Shakespearean names correspond to the characters of *The Tempest* as her appropriation fills in many of the play's gaps. Warner contextualizes the Other from Shakespeare's play in her novel by presenting two stories: the seventeenth-century experiences of Sycorax and Ariel before, during, and immediately following the colonization of the island; and, the twentieth-century coming-of-age of Miranda. Warner also engages with the troubled history of British colonialism, but she relies on *The Tempest* as her main point of reference in her attempt to depict the experience of double colonization, the fate of the women on the island. Caroline Cakebread notes this "dilemma" as "these female characters are already circumscribed by the patriarchal hierarchies extant upon the island long before the arrival" of the colonizers (227). Being thus circumscribed, Sycorax, Ariel, and Miranda try to reconcile the stereotypes ascribed to them by men with their respective realities throughout the novel. In the twentieth century, Miranda feels an overpowering need "to fill the silence that she feared in others, to ward off the invisibility that she feared in herself" (*Indigo* 235). With a mixed racial background, Miranda appears "exotic to [men] - being a bit of a 'musty'" (241). Miranda goes on to qualify her "mustiness" by claiming it "isn't anything to deny here in

Paris," implying the significance of scene. In essence, this comment reveals the stigma of difference in the homogeneous British empire, while also intimating the potential for heteroglossia; in other words, being "musty" in London signifies marginalization, while the same label in Paris carries an air of desirability. This association with foreign-ness, of being "musty" and living in Paris, marks Miranda an Other and influences her ability to reclaim her roots on *Enfant-Béate*.

As Miranda attempts to negotiate the present world in which she lives, she can not escape her family's well-documented history or the diffused myth of Sycorax's power. In this novel, the focus of my second chapter, "'Decipher its noises for us': Understanding Sycorax's Island in Marina Warner's *Indigo*," the spirit of Sycorax infuses the present-day story of the Everard family just as Sycorax herself dominates the narrative of the past.

The spirit of Sycorax also suffuses the novels of Gloria Naylor as several strong women characters voice her polyphonous project. Naylor engages directly and indirectly with the bard in her work, but denies "consciously" appropriating his plays. She misquotes Shakespeare in *Mama Day*, invoking his style but avoiding his words, and cites him as a stereotypical symbol of cultural elitism in *Linden Hills* and *The Women of Brewster Place*. She simultaneously reifies and rejects Shakespearean

stereotypes, suggesting the need to question both the value and the harm of assigning Shakespeare such a powerful position in the culture. Naylor shows that even the most disadvantaged members of contemporary American society know who Shakespeare is and have some idea of what he represents. In this vein, Naylor employs Shakespeare as a representative of the ivory tower in order to make her case for the lack of equality in the disconnected African-American communities of her fiction.

While Naylor directly cites Shakespeare and his plays in her novels, she denies appropriating his plots in her work, specifically in *Mama Day*. The implications of this denial appear to invoke Jean Marsden's conception of appropriation as co-opting or theft. Naylor's engagement with *The Tempest* in *Mama Day*, however, suggests another option; instead of viewing appropriation as theft, *Mama Day* offers seeing the interplay of one work with another as an opportunity for polyphony. Naylor begins the novel with the back story of Willow Springs, *Mama Day*'s primary setting. The narrator of this section tells the reader that "the only voice is your own," suggesting the importance of voice and the need for that voice to be heard.

Naylor's mode of appropriation can best be compared to riffing or sampling from Shakespeare in the musical sense of those terms, an issue I will attend to in the third chapter, "'The only voice is your own': Polyphony, Place, and Pedagogy in

Gloria Naylor's Signification of Shakespeare." She samples from the Shakespearean corpus in her work, taking what she needs and adding her unique stamp to make it her own. In this sense, her mode of appropriation reflects musical forms that demand improvisation, such as jazz or the blues, and it also replicates Shakespeare's engagement with localized aspects of travel narratives in creating *The Tempest*.

Perhaps the most complex engagement with *The Tempest* occurs in Iris Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea*, the focus of the fourth chapter: 'Noise has always been my friend': Echoes of *The Tempest* in Iris Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea*. Murdoch presents a self-fashioned Prospero with Charles Arrowby, the novel's star narrator. Throughout the novel, Charles calls attention to the genre of his story as well as the account's accuracy. Inherent in Charles's concerns about his "novelistic memoir" is his struggle to let go of the Prospero-like power he holds, or believes he holds, over a motley crew of old acquaintances, a childhood sweetheart, and most importantly, his cousin, James (236). Key in forcing Charles to explore the nature of these relationships is the setting of the novel, which in many ways, mirrors the role of the scene in *The Tempest*. It is at the sea where Charles must come to terms with his obsessions, particularly his troubled relationship with his cousin, James.



## Originality in Early Modern England

Before considering these novels, we should consider Shakespeare's sense of originality and its relationship to early modern education and classical rhetoric by exploring Shakespeare's "imitations" in the context of his milieu and his epoch. Influenced by classical rhetoric, *imitatio* was a common characteristic of theatrical works during the early modern period. In his 1935 study on literary imitations in early modern England, Harold O. White establishes a corollary between classical methods and Renaissance practice. He claims that imitation equaled originality for the ancient Greeks and Romans, which in turn, influenced early modern thought (8). White confidently explains that "all sought originality just as the classical critics declared that it should be sought: through individual adaptation, reinterpretation, and if possible, improvement of the best which each writer could find in the literature of his own and earlier days" (119 emphasis mine).

Complicating White's seemingly straightforward account of Renaissance writing is David Quint's *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature* (1983). Quint views Renaissance imitation as a "conflict between tradition and modernity" (Preface x). By focusing on the use of *topoi* as the common denominator in Greek and Roman imitation, Quint shows how this practice influenced Renaissance borrowings. According to Quint,

Italian humanism shapes the way in which early modern writers perceive and qualify their classical borrowings. Originality appears historically relative as "it [originality] comes into play when no single work of art or set of works is considered absolutely original, when, to the contrary, all works are considered counterfeit - man-made and a part of history," revealing the unstable relationship between the concept and the practice (5).

This conflation of imitation and originality grew out of the Renaissance grammar school curriculum. Drawing on the five canons of classical rhetoric, early modern educators emphasized invention, memorization, and delivery in the classroom (Riggs). While not trying to prove that Shakespeare attended the King Edward VI School in Stratford, I do argue that the influence of the school practices shaped his work. Studies such as Geoffrey Bullough's massive *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* and Kenneth Muir's *Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* focus on Shakespeare's use of sources - both classical and contemporary, spanning a variety of genres. Shakespeare's revisions of these sources reflect the primary sense of "invention": to find or discover (OED). In this section, I explore the implications of viewing Shakespeare's invention as appropriation and the tension between orality and literacy as the bard's work bridges the gap between the two.

In an attempt to define originality in Renaissance literature, Quint focuses on continental imitations but devotes the epilogue to Milton's *Paradise Lost*.<sup>1</sup> In this analysis, Quint argues that originality is problematic, potentially Satanic. Even though Milton's Satan "is condemned to imitation, and his attempt to be original only produces counterfeit replicas of the divine order he wishes to usurp," *Paradise Lost* becomes the standard account of the fall (212). Despite Milton's Puritanism, Quint argues convincingly, his epic poem proves to be a "desacralization of tradition" as it works "to affirm both [Milton's] unique authority and his authorial uniqueness" (213-14). Quint concludes, counter to White, that "it was in literature that Renaissance thought first achieved an autonomous, secular identity" (219). Ultimately, Quint finds that "originality had become the source of authority" in the Renaissance (220).

Even though Quint contradicts White's interpretation of imitation during the period and gestures towards the influence of religion, he too neglects key issues in understanding the appropriation of classical techniques and the question of originality during the Renaissance. Both Quint and White discount the influence of Medieval rhetoric on Renaissance practices. In *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, Thomas Conley explores the uneasy marriage of rhetoric and religion during the

medieval period. Of particular significance is Augustine's use of Cicero and the subsequent proliferation of church-affiliated schools. Conley highlights Augustine's feigned rejection of rhetorical practices as "pagan" in relation to his continued use of it throughout his life. Augustine found that rhetoric "was not only useful but sometimes necessary for assuring cohesion within Christian society" (75). Using language as a means to control the masses, as it were, was not the only practical application of rhetoric medieval religious thinkers borrowed from the Ciceronian corpus; they also employed rhetoric in establishing their schools. Patricia Bizzell explains that "education was not limited to clerics and to children of nobility, for men of the new middle classes aspired to the learned professions" (441-42). In addition to describing the diverse student body at these new schools, she also discusses their "accreditation." Bizzell points out that "the Church undertook to regulate *licentia docendi*, and those schools gaining Church approval could license their graduates to teach anywhere in Christendom," revealing the economic value of church accreditation (442).

Medieval pragmatism continues to play a role in education throughout the period. In *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*, Erasmus echoes Quintilian insofar as his pedagogy takes a practical approach. Erasmus goes as far as censuring Socrates

for the "useless pursuit of philosophy" (Bizzell 623). For Erasmus, "the duty of the true philosopher is at some point to abandon the crabbed precepts of philosophy and accommodate himself to the interests and opinions of the majority, to serve the times" (623). While Erasmus cautions against the dangers of rhetoric, he establishes when and how it should be taught. He advocates appropriating several elements of the lawyer's oratory for the preacher, specifically *stasis*. Claiming that "even though *status* are employed principally in court cases, everyone who is speaking to the people for the purpose of persuading, exhorting, or consoling still sets himself some precise goal which he wishes to accomplish" (640). By suggesting the use of *stasis*, Erasmus advocates classical imitation in religious pursuits and in education.

Peter Ramus, an offspring of the Reformation, follows Erasmus in terms of emphasizing practical concerns in his pedagogy, but deviates from Erasmus and most other thinkers in every other aspect of his work.<sup>2</sup> Conley credits Ramus with stripping rhetoric down to style and delivery, while elevating dialectic to a Platonic height (133). Despite Ramus's negative impact on rhetoric, he belongs to an influential group of thinkers who published in the vernacular. Following the lead of other continental writers such as Castiglione and De Scudéry, Ramus preferred publishing in French. Bizzell explains that

Ramus "downplayed the importance of education in the classical languages and elevated the vernacular, publishing many of his own works in French" (675). Conley suggests a rise in nationalism also explains this emergence of texts published in the vernacular instead of Latin.

In *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (2005), David Riggs discusses the use of the vernacular as fostering a hegemonic national and religious identity in the early modern classroom. Riggs argues that "[Henry VIII] and Elizabeth viewed the instruction of children in English as a way of fashioning obedient subjects" (27). Riggs's analysis echoes T.W. Baldwin's earlier work in which Baldwin claims "the texts for petty school, being mostly religious and being in English, were aimed at uniformity in religion rather than uniformity in petty school" (20). Focusing on the role of religion, Baldwin posits that "the aims of petty school were wholly and consciously religious and moral" (20). Both Baldwin and Riggs identify Alexander Nowell's *The ABC with the Catechism* as well as the Bible as standard texts in the grammar schools. Riggs describes a typical day at the King's School where Marlowe studied:

Classes at the King's School ran from six or seven in the morning until seven in the evening, six days a week, with Sundays and holidays devoted to religious instruction. (39)

Imitation, "rote memorization and oral recitation" were important exercises in this grueling schedule. Commenting on an Erasmusian exercise that would have been common in such a curriculum, Peter Mack finds that "the exercise is a rather formalistic rhetorical amplification of a received commonplace, but like other grammar school exercises it opens up a space for linguistic play which might encourage innovations of expression and thought," echoing White's argument about originality in *Plagiarism and Imitation During the English Renaissance* (9).

Given the overtly religious emphasis of the curriculum, Riggs finds that "under Elizabeth I, external conformity became the master principle of church discipline" (42-3). In addition to considering the coercive tactics of schooling, Riggs also examines class stratification during the period.<sup>3</sup> He highlights "the elitist disdain for the poetic imagination" while pointing out the hypocrisy of such discrimination given "the fact that poets were the only ones who fulfilled the humanist ideal" (58-9). Using Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* as evidence, Riggs claims that "Sidney wrote his *Apology* to persuade English gentlemen that poetry was too important to be left to the lowlife types who were writing it" (59).<sup>4</sup> While Riggs's focus is on Marlowe, his overview of the education system and public opinion concerning poets provides insight into Shakespeare's experience as well. He convincingly argues that Marlowe's education

allowed the poet and playwright to advance socially.<sup>5</sup> Stephen Greenblatt views rhetoric as a key component in upward mobility during the period. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), he contends that "rhetoric offered men the power to shape their worlds, calculate the probabilities, and master the contingent, and it implied that human character itself could be similarly fashioned, with an eye to audience and effect" (162). Advancing this idea, Greenblatt claims that "rhetoric served to theatricalize culture, or rather it was the instrument of a society which was already deeply theatrical" (162). Considering Shakespeare's milieu, the role of theatrics in the culture reflects the medium in which he made his living.

While considering imitation during the Renaissance as a concept and in practice proves useful in understanding originality, the context, the theatre, is also important. According to Russ McDonald, theater is essentially collaborative in nature: scribes may have introduced errors, actors may have added or changed lines in the course of a performance, the prompter may have cut lines to speed up the performance, etc., etc.; the possibilities are plentiful. While alterations to the plays probably occurred during performance, even more changes may have been introduced as a result of the printing process. Pages were not printed in chronological order and the printers had to guess as to how much text would fill a page (McDonald).



Due to the "chaos that must have reigned in the London print shops," McDonald surmises that "we should be surprised only that the texts we have do not contain more obvious mistakes than they do" (201). About half of Shakespeare's plays were published during his lifetime, but he was not involved in the process because the plays he penned for the stage - not the page - did not belong to him. Without copyright laws, Shakespeare gave up his rights to the work once he delivered it to the theatrical company and collected payment. It was not in the company's best interest to publish a profitable play that might merit a revival so most of Shakespeare's plays in print during his lifetime were the product of piracy. Even the "legitimate" printings of Shakespeare's plays, notably the posthumous First Folio edition, prove problematic as no manuscripts survived; instead, printers relied heavily on the scribal transcripts and occasionally on the pirated quartos (McDonald).

In addition to unstable texts, the concept of authorship was in transition due in large part to the shift from orality to literacy in Renaissance England (Ong *Orality and Literacy*). The idea of the individual genius was not yet in place. For example, the playwright's name did not always appear on the title page advertising the play; Shakespeare's name, for instance, did not appear on the title page of *Titus Andronicus*. Many playwrights also collaborated on plays or sold their works

anonymously to avoid persecution. Ben Jonson commissioned and supervised the printings of his works, but he was the exception to the rule as publishing a play in print was not a priority for the majority of early modern playwrights, including Shakespeare. Indeed, "to a Renaissance playwright, 'publication' meant presentation of the work to the public on a stage" (McDonald 196).

While McDonald's study provides a useful overview of the printing process during the period, Patrick Cheney's *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* and Lucas Erne's *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* both shed more light on the idea of originality during the period. Cheney focuses his study on Shakespeare as an author, while Erne disagrees with the widely-accepted belief that plays were not printed for reading during the Renaissance. He argues that Shakespeare wrote self-consciously and was concerned about his literary reputation. Thomas Greene also suggests the importance of print in *The Vulnerable Text*. Commenting on an extended quote by Erasmus, Greene argues that "only in a passage such as this can one fully gauge how much power Erasmus and his world attributed to the written and printed word" (8). Putting these works into conversation helps characterize the complicated nature of Shakespeare's mode of appropriation.

### **Sources for *King Lear* and *The Tempest***

Given the proliferation of imitation and collaboration during the early modern period, Shakespeare's use of sources was not unique, yet his appropriations receive the most critical attention. Studies such as Geoffrey Bullough's massive *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* and Kenneth Muir's *Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* focus on Shakespeare's use of sources – both classical and contemporary, spanning a variety of genres. Stephen Lynch differentiates between the borrowings of Shakespeare and those of his contemporaries by arguing that "Shakespeare seems consistently to write both with and against his sources, seizing upon and developing suggestions already present in his sources, while complicating his plays with developments that counter and refute his source texts" (3). Positing that Shakespeare's use of source materials is revisionary, Lynch distinguishes the bard's appropriations from other early modern dramatists, setting the stage for Shakespeare as the great appropriator.<sup>6</sup>

Surveying Shakespeare's use of sources in *King Lear* and *The Tempest* offers insight into the scope of his appropriations, specifically the different ways in which he engages with source materials in creating these two plays. In his composition of *King Lear*, Shakespeare drew on a variety of sources. Muir follows Bullough's focus on *The True Chronicle Historie of King*

*Leir and His Three Daughters* as the primary source for the plot of Shakespeare's tragedy. The anonymous *Leir* begins with the king abdicating his throne because of his deep sorrow over the death of his beloved wife. While the two eldest daughters are wicked in this telling, the queen is not vilified as in Shakespeare's version. In the anonymous work, Leir remembers his wife fondly, whereas the only mention of the queen in Shakespeare's play implicates her as sexually inconstant.<sup>7</sup> In fact, *The True Chronicle Historie* reads more like a fairytale with its happy ending in which the father is reunited with his good daughter and regains his power. According to Alan Young, folktales also influenced Shakespeare's play, specifically Cordelia's response to the love test. Young cites popular tales known as "Cap o' Rushes" in which the father misinterprets the good daughter's response to his test. The daughter replies that she loves her father as meat loves salt, typically resulting in disownment. It is only when the father eats meat without seasoning that he appreciates the "love-like-salt" response and can be reunited with the good daughter (Young). Lear ultimately realizes that Cordelia genuinely loves him, but her death denies him a reunion.

Deviating from the happy endings of the anonymous play and fairytales, Shakespeare's *Lear* also departs from historical accounts of the king and his daughters. Bullough and Muir both

point to Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* as likely sources for *King Lear*. The most striking alteration to these histories is the respective fates of Lear and Cordelia. In none of the probable sources of *King Lear* - fictional or historical - does Cordelia die before her father. Shakespeare, however, explodes the pattern of the fictional sources while simultaneously rewriting the histories by having Cordelia die before Lear.

Without clearly stated intentions, Shakespeare's decision to deviate from all of his source materials allows for a variety of readings. Focusing on the bard's engagement with *The True Chronicle Historie*, Stephen Lynch argues that "Shakespeare writes an anti-*Leir*" (39). Lynch rejects readings of *Lear* as anti-Christian, contending that "the powerful sense of negation in *King Lear* seems directed not at some generalized Christianity, but rather at the distinctly reformational and Calvinistic tendencies of the primary source text" (35).

While Lynch advances a religious reading of the play, Kathleen McLuskie focuses on the patriarchal underpinnings of both *Lear* and Shakespeare. In her criticism of *King Lear*, McLuskie discusses the expectations of the folktale, which *The True Chronicle Historie* satisfies, in relation to *King Lear*'s failure to achieve those requirements:

The folk-tale of the love test provides an underlying pattern in which harmony is broken by the honest daughter and restored by her display of forgiveness. The organization of the Shakespearean text intensifies and then denies those expectations so as once more to insist on the connection between evil women and a chaotic world. (52)

Broadening her argument to criticize the Shakespearean canon in general, McLuskie goes on to suggest that "feminist criticism must [...] assert the power of resistance, subverting rather than co-opting the domination of the patriarchal Bard" (57). While McLuskie identifies Shakespeare as patriarchal, she overlooks the ill effects the male characters suffer in this society and focuses solely on the misogyny present in the play. Even though Shakespeare appears to simply add misogyny to the source for the Lear story, he does not simply indict the female characters in the play. Rather, Other desire as represented by rhetorical manipulation, reproduction, and power implicates both male and female characters of threatening the stability of the patriarchal system<sup>8</sup>.

In a similar vein, *The Tempest* also invokes concerns about Other desire and power relations. In *The Tempest*, Prospero appears as "the ideal father in Shakespeare" (Singh 51). Prospero has raised Miranda as a single parent and appears

concerned with his only child's welfare. He also appears to express affection for his daughter and respect for his presumably deceased wife. When Miranda poses the question, "Sir, are not you my father?" (1.2.55), Prospero replies, "Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and / She said thou wast my daughter" (1.2.56-7). Unlike Lear, Prospero compliments his former mate as virtuous, but "in a context implying [...] women as a class are not, and that were it not for her word, Miranda's legitimacy would be in doubt" (Orgel 50). Prospero also openly admits his love for his daughter as he considers Miranda "a cherubin" in his moments of despair (1.2.152).

Although Prospero thinks of Miranda as angelic, she does "disobey" his authority. After seeing Ferdinand, Miranda immediately falls in love with the prince; he "is the third man that e'er [she] saw, the first / That e'er [she] sighed for" (1.2.449-50). Prospero envisions his daughter marrying Ferdinand; however, he initially feigns disapproval for the union. Prospero forbids Miranda from associating with Ferdinand, leading her to believe he objects to her feelings for the prince. In an aside, Prospero reveals "this swift business / I must uneasy make, lest too light winning / Make the prize light" (1.2.454-6). This statement reveals that Prospero delays the union between his daughter and Ferdinand to protect his daughter's virtue, but it also suggests Miranda's value as her

father's commodity. Sarup Singh explains that during the Renaissance, "loss of virginity was viewed by society as a total disaster" (53). Throughout the play, Prospero's "primary concern as a father is to maintain Miranda's virginity intact at all costs" (Sachdew 214). Prospero's mission proves successful as he ultimately "gives" an unblemished Miranda to Ferdinand in marriage.

Typically, post-colonial concerns receive more critical attention than the father/daughter dynamic. The sources of *The Tempest* are more difficult to identify than those of *King Lear*, but both Bullough and Muir emphasize the role of travel narratives in the creation of *The Tempest*, legitimizing a focus on colonialism.<sup>9</sup> The experience of Sir Thomas Gates in 1609 led to the publication of multiple pamphlets on colonization in the New World, including official publications and private accounts such as Silvester Jourdain's "A Discovery of the Bermudas" (Bullough). Continental sources, specifically Montaigne's essay "On Cannibals" also highlight concerns about colonization. Shakespeare plays fast and loose with these sources in *The Tempest*, borrowing localized details from these earlier non-dramatic works and providing his own plot structure, qualities that characterize appropriations of his play.

While Caliban's story is often privileged over Miranda's or Sycorax's, *The Tempest* is one of the Shakespearean works most



often appropriated by women novelists along with *King Lear* (Sanders). Beyond presenting the father/daughter relationship, the tragic *King Lear* has little in common with Shakespeare's late romance, *The Tempest*. Bullough and Muir generally agree on the sources for *King Lear*, but offer less consensus on the inspiration for *The Tempest*. This difference between the two plays can be seen in the novels they respectively inspired. Jane Smiley consistently follows the plot of *King Lear* in *A Thousand Acres*, while Marina Warner, Gloria Naylor, and Iris Murdoch experiment with the storyline presented in *The Tempest* in their novels.

### **Argument**

Based on Shakespeare's appropriations for *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, I argue that Shakespeare's use of sources - specifically in these two plays - serves as a prototype for the ways in which feminist appropriators approach his corpus by trying to negotiate between one's role as an artist and contemporary concerns. This mode of appropriation reflects the ways in which contemporary women novelists revise Shakespeare's revisions. Jane Smiley, Marina Warner, Gloria Naylor, and Iris Murdoch all practice "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entertaining an old text from a new critical direction" in their respective works (Rich 167). At the heart

of these revisions – both Shakespearean and contemporary – is the power of language. Two lines from Shakespeare's corpus permeate the novels: Edgar's "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (5.3.299) haunts Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, while echoes of Caliban's "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.366-7) can be heard throughout Warner's *Indigo*, Naylor's novels, and Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea*.

After analyzing the novels, I will consider the pedagogical value of teaching appropriations alongside Shakespeare's plays in the conclusion, "A Confrontation with the Canon: Teaching Shakespearean Appropriations." Using works of appropriation asks students to take an extra step, to look "at" the pieces instead of "through" them (Lanham).<sup>10</sup> "Works of appropriation" is a broad term, but rightly so as it does not limit itself to one genre or one medium and includes both so-called high and low art.<sup>11</sup> Works of appropriation do not deny issues of race and gender the way that Kathleen Welch suggests traditional printed texts do; instead appropriative works "vividly race and gender our world," inviting students to interrogate Shakespeare's plays (194).<sup>12</sup>

Exposing students to these works introduces them to non-canonical writers and artists whom they may otherwise overlook in Shakespeare's shadow. While these borrowings question

gender, race, and other social issues, they still cite Shakespeare, an icon of the Western literary canon. One may ask, "Why read Shakespeare at all? Why not focus solely on the works of appropriation?" An understanding of Shakespeare's plays is essential for an appreciation of the borrowings.

According to T.S. Eliot:

Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career. (1094)

While citing a proponent of New Criticism - who uses sexist language, no less - may seem misplaced in an argument for works that interrogate historical and social issues, his statement speaks to the way works of appropriation engage with Shakespeare. These works strive to debunk the Shakespearian myth by questioning this "consciousness of the past," and if students understand this "consciousness," they too can question

not only Shakespeare's works, like *King Lear* and *The Tempest*,  
but the works of appropriation as well.

## Chapter One

'Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say': Silencing, Scene, and Gendered Behavior in Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*

Commenting on her novel *A Thousand Acres* (1991), Jane Smiley asserts that "every writer of English has a relationship to [Shakespeare], both direct and indirect. English cannot be written without Shakespeare, or, for that matter read without Shakespeare" ("Shakespeare in Iceland" 165). Smiley describes *A Thousand Acres* as a "wrestling match" with Shakespeare ("Shakespeare in Iceland" 173) in which her environmentalist and feminist sensibilities relocate *King Lear* to an American family farm in the 1970's, substantiating Harold Bloom's assertion that "no strong writer since Shakespeare can avoid his influence" (*Anxiety of Influence* preface xviii-xix). While Smiley's revision may initially appear to simply add the element of sexual abuse to *King Lear's* plot, *A Thousand Acres* highlights how strikingly similar the family dynamics are between a late twentieth-century narrative and Shakespeare's early modern play by revealing the contemporary relevance of Edgar's closing remarks: "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (Shakespeare 5.3.323).

In *King Lear*, Edgar's closing lines express the necessity to ignore the status quo in hopes of making sense of the senseless, and Smiley evokes this idea in *A Thousand Acres*. With "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" echoing throughout the novel, the rhetorical choices Smiley makes in creating her characters reveal how omnipresent the author is in creating the novel and reflect the linguistic power Goneril, Regan, and Edmund wield in *King Lear*.<sup>13</sup> These characterizations warrant careful consideration in conjunction with Smiley's reflections on the process of writing *A Thousand Acres* in her essays "Shakespeare in Iceland" (1999) and "Taking It All Back" (2003). Smiley's reflections suggest the malleability of appropriation in terms of rewriting a play as a novel and undermine Bakhtin's claim that "the novel gets on poorly with other genres" (5).<sup>14</sup> Her initial response to *King Lear*, which she discusses at length in "Shakespeare in Iceland," supports Jean Marsden's definition of appropriation. In this essay, Smiley relates her experiences with Shakespeare as a student and as an adult. She explains how she came to write *A Thousand Acres* after finding fault with traditional readings of *Lear*. Smiley characterizes her experience of rewriting *Lear* as a "wrestling match" and makes her desire to control the play clear by describing her intent to "cut [Shakespeare] down to size" and her hope that "the minds of adolescent girls [will] encounter A

*Thousand Acres*" before they read *King Lear* (173). Such a description appears to support Marsden's argument for the contentious nature of appropriation, in which she claims that:

Associated with abduction, adoption and theft, appropriation's central tenet is the desire for possession. It comprehends both the commandeering of the desired object and the process of making this object one's own, controlling it by possessing it. Appropriation is neither dispassionate nor disinterested; it has connotations of usurpation, of seizure for one's own uses. (1)

While Smiley's account of her relationship with Shakespeare uses charged terms and hints at violence (re: "wrestling" and cutting down to size) in "Shakespeare in Iceland," her description relies on her trying to relate to Shakespeare. She notes that she "felt very strongly [their] differences as a modern woman and a Renaissance man," but her whole experience of rewriting the play appears to depend upon her ability (or inability) to have a conversation (of sorts) with Shakespeare (172). Smiley's engagement with *Lear* never appears "dispassionate nor disinterested," but her relationship to Shakespeare's play ultimately reflects her desire to communicate with Shakespeare more than her desire to possess the play, suggesting that appropriation is an evolving act that requires negotiation.

Smiley is finally able to relate to Shakespeare in "Taking It All Back," an essay in which she reconsiders her earlier reaction to *Lear*. She admits to no longer reading "*Lear* as a brief for the patriarchy, with the author identifying with *Lear* himself, and allowing him all sorts of leeway as a father in comparison with the daughters" (390). Smiley explains that she

now felt that perhaps, in looking at his father's troubles and his responsibilities as a son, Shakespeare was identifying with the daughters and doing what we often do when we are required to ameliorate pain that can't be ameliorated - that is, to propose a solution that isn't humanly possible.

("Taking It All Back" 390)

After coming to this conclusion, Smiley supports Marsden's claim that appropriative works do seek ownership by disowning her novel and giving it to her readers. These very personal essays—"Shakespeare in Iceland" and "Taking It All Back" in which Smiley "speaks what [she] feels"—present dialogism, as described by Bakhtin. Smiley's desire to negotiate with her literary forebear and to engage with her readers suggests the collaborative potential of appropriation.

Effectively parsing the rich connections between *A Thousand Acres* and *King Lear* requires a theoretical framework that supports such a dialogue. Viewed through the lens of the



novelistic discourse theory of Mikhail Bakhtin and the dramatic pentad discussed by Kenneth Burke, Smiley's afterlife for *King Lear* presents the potentially disruptive "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" of Shakespeare's text in light of the prescribed silencing endorsed by both the patriarchy of the play and the patriarchy of the novel.<sup>15</sup> Such a reading simultaneously relies on the complexities of language Bakhtin presents in *The Dialogic Imagination* and on the pattern of drama Burke defines through the pentad in *A Grammar of Motives*. *A Thousand Acres* also reflects the "double nature" of adaptations; the novel retells the Lear story but does so on its terms. Linda Hutcheon argues that an adaptation's "proximity or fidelity to the adapted text should [not] be the criterion of judgment or the focus of analysis," but Smiley's novel appears "haunted at all times by [*Lear*]" (6). By putting her novel into conversation with the play, Smiley inextricably links the literary reckoning she seeks in her symbiotic engagement with the bard in *A Thousand Acres* to the power of language and place present in Shakespeare's tragedy (5.3.323).

Given Smiley's own admission of Shakespeare's influence on her novel, much of the criticism of *A Thousand Acres* focuses on its connection to *King Lear*.<sup>16</sup> While several scholars such as Barbara Mathieson and David Brauner consider the eco-critical implications of corporate farming, most of the critical

attention centers on the power dynamics within the family, viewing these relationships through a feminist lens.<sup>17</sup> The broadest study of Smiley's novel and a piece that this chapter is much indebted to is Julie Sanders's *Novel Shakespeares*. In her chapter on the connections between the novel and *Lear*, Sanders argues that Smiley shows "a preference for a controlled vision, a story told from a point of view and by a narrator" (191).<sup>18</sup> In terms of controlling the form, Sanders notes that Smiley follows the play's structure, most noticeably in setting the pivotal storm scene in the middle. Sanders also gestures towards the importance of Edgar's closing lines in her conclusion, an idea that informs my reading of *A Thousand Acres*.

### **Responding to Shakespeare**

This agrarian afterlife of Shakespeare's *King Lear* depends upon Smiley's "visceral response" to earlier writers and their work. She emphasizes the relationship between the author and the reader in the writing process as she hopes "to enter into a relationship with a reader during which both contemplate a subject and some characters together" ("Shakespeare in Iceland" 160). In discussing her own experience as a writer, she finds that "this sense of the reader's presence sometimes gets lost when the writer's mind is taken over by the characters in the

act of composing, but every novelist understands that writing is essentially a social exchange" (160). I contend that Smiley, too, enters into such a "social exchange" with Shakespeare in her novel. Her engagement with Shakespeare and the success of her novel support Linda Hutcheon's claim that "recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (4). Smiley's work clearly employs repetition in relation to *Lear*, but "repetition without replication" as her nuanced revision challenges the authority of the play (7). *A Thousand Acres* "is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work" (Hutcheon 176). Indeed, *A Thousand Acres* encourages readers to revisit Shakespeare's play, to reconsider their reactions to *Lear* after encountering the novel. In this sense, Smiley's work reflects the essential meaning of invention—to find or to discover—that shaped early modern thought<sup>19</sup>.

Smiley also recognizes the unique nature of her "visceral" explanation of her motives in "Shakespeare in Iceland" by acknowledging that "the typical structure of scholarly and critical discourse is based on the presumption that the author's experience of the process and the text must be divined from often fragmentary evidence" (176). According to Roland Barthes, "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that

text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (1469). While a writer composes for an absent audience, Smiley directly addresses her readership by willingly giving her work to them and inviting critical inquiry.<sup>20</sup> In "Taking It All Back," Smiley tells her readers that *A Thousand Acres* "is more your book now than mine," reflecting Chaucer's renouncing of his works (392). She presents these connections - to her literary precursors and to her readers - as intimate, flying in the face of the stoic mode of scholarship. Ultimately, through her personal engagement, she enacts Edgar's closing lines "speak what we feel, not what we ought to say," effectively challenging the ways in which scholars write about literature and openly acknowledging her anxiety of a variety of influences<sup>21</sup> in the storytelling tradition.

Smiley confronts such anxiety head-on in *A Thousand Acres* by interrogating the familial structure of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and of contemporary American society as well as the bard's literary authority. Her novel reflects Mikhail Bakhtin's idea that "retelling a text in one's own words is to a certain extent a double-voiced narration of another's words, for indeed 'one's own words' must not completely dilute the quality that makes another's words unique" (341). By appropriating the plot and refashioning the story into a feminist and environmentalist narrative, Smiley not only questions Shakespeare's stature

through the symbolic act of writing the novel but also emphasizes the effects of scene on the novel's main character, Ginny Cook, as she struggles to find her own voice. Scene stands out in Burke's pentad as one of the most influential elements. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke argues that "there is implicit in the quality of a scene the quality of the action that is to take place within it" (6-7). In this regard, the scene—the physical setting and its background—shapes the other four components of the pentad: the act, agent, agency, and purpose. The scene determines that audiences are outraged at the behavior of Goneril and Regan, just as the farming community in Iowa is appalled at what they perceive to be the callous actions of Ginny and Rose. As both families are patriarchal and deeply connected to the land, Smiley's novel shows the resemblance between the family structure in early-modern England and in modern American society; however, her feminist revision ultimately allows Ginny to construct her own identity outside of the constraints of the male-dominated family, enabling her to establish a life of her own without patriarchal expectations or boundaries. In Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, he posits that "by manipulating the effects of the context, it is very easy to emphasize the brute materiality of another's words, and to stimulate dialogic reactions associated with such 'brute materiality'" (340). Smiley takes advantage of this polemical

device, which Bakhtin associates with speech acts, in her novel by creating sympathy for the eldest daughters and vilifying the father and community through her revisioning of *Lear*.

In setting up the Burkean scene for Ginny, Smiley takes Shakespeare's plot and shifts the setting from a pre-Christian kingdom in England to a contemporary family farm in Iowa. In her attempt to update the story, she takes advantage of artistic license—much in the same vein as Shakespeare did with his sources—and complicates the role of the Fool and Kent; otherwise, she includes the main characters from the Lear and Gloucester families and consistently follows Shakespeare's plot. Her feminist agenda colors the reader's reaction as she adds her own touches to the story. Smiley's Lear is Larry Cook, the most respected man in Zebulon County. Larry's farm is the largest in the community, but his realm has definite boundaries as Smiley confines his "kingdom" to one thousand acres in much the same way that Shakespeare limits Lear's world with a map (1.1). Even though Larry is a formidable figure in the community, he is not the focus of the novel; instead, Smiley establishes the Goneril character, Ginny, as the protagonist by using the narrative form. In *King Lear*, Lear is "more sinned against than sinning," but in *A Thousand Acres*, this claim belongs to Ginny (Shakespeare 3.2.59). The most important addition is Smiley's invention of an element absent from Shakespeare's play: sexual

abuse. In the novel, Larry is a hostile tyrant in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease who had molested his two oldest daughters, Ginny and Rose, when they were teenagers. The two sisters shield the Cordelia character, Caroline, from the abuse. As victims of molestation, Ginny and Rose appear justified in their pursuit of retribution against their abuser and his "darker purpose" (Shakespeare 1.1.35). The editors of the Arden *Lear* point out that "darker" means "more secret" and also suggest that it "hints at something more wicked than the overt purpose of the formal court meeting" at the beginning of the play (160). In their reading, the "purpose" is arranging Cordelia's marriage, but critics such as Coppélia Kahn read this line as a reference to abuse ("The Absent Mother in *King Lear*"). Even though this element is absent from Shakespeare's play, the sexual abuse factor proves to be powerfully persuasive in asking readers to reevaluate Lear's "darker purpose" for his daughters as well as recognizing the "brute materiality" of the land transfer (Bakhtin 340).

Smiley's retelling challenges traditional readings of Shakespeare's *King Lear* that privilege the plight of the play's namesake at the hands of his eldest, usurping daughters. After failing her father's love test to see which daughter will earn the largest portion of the kingdom in Shakespeare's play, Cordelia correctly predicts the "plighted cunning" that her

sisters will commit against their father (1.1.282). After Cordelia's banishment, Goneril notes "what poor judgment" Lear is showing by disowning his favorite child (1.1.293). The family dynamics in the Lear family are difficult to parse as the play begins *in media res*, but it is clear that this is not a stable family unit. With the Lear mother absent, the daughters constitute the only female presence in the play. This presence proves liminal since the male characters either deify or demonize female identities, denying any sense of a feminine community for the Lear sisters and reducing women to commodities. Just as the sisters Lear appear to have few options in the world of the play, Gloucester's illegitimate son Edmund rejects his prescribed lot as a bastard by plotting against his father and brother and ultimately joining forces with Goneril and Regan. By forming an allegiance between Lear's eldest sisters and Gloucester's illegitimate son, *King Lear* indicts not only the desires of Goneril and Regan but also the actions of Edmund that pose an equal threat to the status quo.

Smiley also establishes a disruptive link between these characters by reimagining Edmund, but she cultivates more context for these vexed relationships through her narrative than Shakespeare's play provides. Her decision to use narrative plays an important role in this presentation, supporting Bakhtin's claim that "[the author] is to be found at the center



of organization where all levels intersect" (49). In "Shakespeare in Iceland," Smiley states her preference for narrative over drama by explaining that "narrative gives more direct access to the inner life, allows the writer to reveal the disjuncture between what is felt and what appears, and to suggest emotions so powerful that their complete expression must fail, resulting in silence" (162). She goes on to argue that "drama privileges action over point of view [...] Narrative always calls into question the validity of appearance, always proposes a difference between the public perception of events and their actual meaning" ("Shakespeare in Iceland" 172). Smiley presents a story that questions appearances and preconceived notions about a woman's role in the family by employing Ginny as the storyteller and emphasizing her relationship to the farm and community, creating a confessional atmosphere with the reader as Ginny's sympathetic confidante.

### **Shakespeare's Adaptation of *King Lear***

By allowing Ginny to present her revision of the play, Smiley calls attention to the absence of the Lear mother and Shakespeare's own appropriation(s). In *A Thousand Acres*, the mother is deceased, but through Ginny's narrative, she has a strong presence in the novel. Ginny laments not getting to know her mother better; she died when Ginny was only fourteen-years

old. In remembering taking care of her dying mother, Ginny thinks, "If there is anything more difficult or more real than the death of one's mother, I don't know what it is" (56). Ginny also remembers being raped by her father after thinking of her mother (245-47).<sup>22</sup> By establishing the importance of the mother, Smiley questions Shakespeare's omission of the Lear matriarch and the implication of "a world created by fathers alone" (Adelman 104).

The bard's alterations to one of the primary source materials, the anonymous *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and His Three Daughters*, suggests that his telling is misogynistic and supports Smiley's initial reaction to Shakespeare's treatment of Goneril and Regan. *Leir* begins with Leir abdicating the throne because of his deep sorrow over the death of his beloved wife. Leir explains his plans to divide the kingdom as a direct result of losing his "too late deceas'd and dearest queen" (1.1.2). While the two eldest daughters are wicked, the mother/wife is not vilified as in Shakespeare's *Lear*. Indeed, Leir claims that his daughters "receiv'd / A perfect pattern of a virtuous life" from their mother, the queen (1.1.11-12). In the anonymous work, Leir sings the praises of his "one loving wife," whereas the only mention of the wife in Shakespeare's version questions her sexual fidelity (5.4.147). Coppélia Kahn points out that in response to Regan's salutation

in Shakespeare's play, Lear remarks, "If thou shouldst not be glad / I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, / Sepulchring an adultress" (2.2.319-21).<sup>23</sup> Supporting Kahn's reading, Meredith Skura claims that Shakespeare minimizes the role of the daughters compared to the prominent parts they play in *Leir*. While Leir's eldest daughters also seek to displace their father, the play indicts them as ungrateful children, not evil women. While talking to a disguised Cordella, Leir cries out that "no men's children are unkind but mine!" (5.4.201). In the end, Leir finds that one of his children is indeed kind. *The True Chronicle History* reads like fairytale with its happy ending in which Leir is reunited with good Cordella and regains his power.

With its fairytale ending, *Leir* also proves allegorical to some critics. According to Skura, *Leir* exists "in a moral universe where motives are clear and unambiguous" (124). Skura discusses how different the situation is in Shakespeare's telling. Stephen Lynch also notes the obvious suffering and subsequent salvation in the source play, arguing that "Shakespeare's tragedy focuses more deeply upon spiritual suffering and salvation" (168). The consensus among critics considering *Leir* as the main source for *Lear* is that Shakespeare's treatment of the material does not prove

allegorical but is much more sophisticated than the anonymous play.

In her criticism of *King Lear*, Kathleen McLuskie discusses the expectations of the folktale, which *The True Chronicle History* satisfies, in relation to *King Lear's* failure to achieve those requirements:

The folk-tale of the love test provides an underlying pattern in which harmony is broken by the honest daughter and restored by her display of forgiveness.

The organization of the Shakespearean text intensifies and then denies those expectations so as once more to insist on the connection between evil women and a chaotic world. (52)

Broadening her argument to criticize the Shakespearean canon in general, McLuskie goes on to suggest that "feminist criticism must [...] assert the power of resistance, subverting rather than co-opting the domination of the patriarchal Bard" (57).

While McLuskie correctly identifies Shakespeare as patriarchal, she overlooks the ill effects the male characters suffer in this society and focuses solely on the misogyny present in the play. Even though it may initially appear that Shakespeare's treatment of one of his sources for the Lear story is purely misogynistic, he does not simply indict the female characters in the play; rather, he complicates the notion of femininity by attributing

feminine characteristics to some of the play's men and censuring ungrateful children. Smiley utilizes this idea in her novel by exploring elements that prove threatening to the stability of the patriarchal system.<sup>24</sup>

### **Gendered Behavior in *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres***

The stability of the patriarchy proves to be the primary zone of dialogical contact between *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*. One element that becomes gendered and complicated in relation to patriarchal power in both works is feeding, or as Kahn characterizes it "oral rage." Kahn finds that *King Lear* "is full of oral rage: it abounds with fantasies of biting and devouring, and more specifically, fantasies of parents eating children and children eating parents" (41). Lear establishes his fantasy to be cared for by his daughters early in the play. After disowning Cordelia, Lear tells Kent that he had hoped "to set [his] rest/On her kind nursery" (1.1.123-4). From this point on, Lear views his daughters as attempting to feed upon him, referring to Goneril and Regan as "those pelican daughters" (3.4.74).

Smiley picks up on the image of the pelican in her novel—supporting Bakhtin's claim that "one's own language" contains "survivals of the past" (66)—but uses the bird's near extinction as a way to indict the insatiable appetites of the patriarchal

powers-that-be in Zebulon County. Early in the novel, Ginny describes an impromptu walk along the river on a warm spring day:

And there was a flock of pelicans, maybe twenty-five birds, cloud white against the shine of the water. Ninety years ago, when my great-grandparents settled in Zebulon County and the whole county was wet, marshy, glistening like this, hundreds of thousands of pelicans nested in the cattails, but I hadn't seen even one since the early sixties. I watched them. The view along the Scenic, I though, taught me a lesson about what is below the level of the visible.

(9)

Instead of representing savagery, the pelicans are a hopeful sign in Ginny's eyes. Unfortunately, much of Ginny's life is spent at the visible level, keeping up appearances and avoiding confrontations. A convenient way for Ginny to avoid examining her obscured reality is feeding her family. She feeds Rose and her family when Rose is undergoing cancer treatment, and she feeds her father several days a week. Ginny appears to find comfort in this domestic activity, but this source of comfort becomes a form "oral rage" in the novel. After Jess begins an affair with Rose, Ginny uses food as a weapon by making and giving poisoned sausage to Rose.<sup>25</sup>

While feeding is important *Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, the most threatening and feminized element is the expression of emotion in both the play and the novel, proving to be the richest site of dialogism between the two works. Even though Lear is technically the absolute ruler of his family, he appears insecure in both his political and familial roles as he struggles with his feminine side. This struggle may have been quite common during the early modern period with its sense of biology based on Galen's theory, which "located masculinity not in the possession of distinctive sexual organs but in behavior" (Smith 106). According to Bruce Smith, "the unstable nature of a man's physical person [...] meant that even the most manly of men was susceptible to becoming a woman" (106). For the early moderns, the humors determined one's behavior. Michael Schoenfeldt suggests that controlling the humors is the central tenet of Galenic physiology. According to Schoenfeldt, "the early modern fetish of control does not demand the unequivocal banishment of emotion," but he admits that "in the early modern regime, it is unfettered emotion that is most to be feared" (18, 17). In a similar vein, Gail Kern Paster states that "besides being open and fungible in its internal workings, the humoral body was also porous and thus able to be influenced by the immediate environment" (9). Due to this perceived lack of biological difference and the danger of uncontrolled and easily

influenced humors, Lear worries about his supposedly unmanly visceral response to his daughters' cruelty: crying. After cursing Goneril, Lear exclaims that:

I am ashamed

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,

That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,

Should make thee worth them.

(1.4.288-91)

His shame in crying quickly manifests itself into a violent image as he warns his "old fond eyes" that if they "beweep this cause again [he'll] pluck [them] out" (1.4.294-95). Lear associates his emotional response with a wandering womb after suffering the insult of having his servant, a disguised Kent, put in the stocks at the behest of Regan and Cornwall:

O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!

*Histerica passio* down, thou climbing sorrow;

Thy element's below. (2.2.247-48)

Smith points out that "the precise terms in which Lear expresses his passion are gendered" in this scene (1). Kahn also sees Lear's word choices in this scene as significant, arguing that he "can no longer deny or rationalize; he can only feel—feel a tumult of wounded pride, shame, anger, and loss, which he expresses in a striking image" (33). She goes on to explain that "by calling his sorrow hysterical, Lear decisively



characterizes it as feminine" (33). Kahn offers some useful background information on hysteria, a disease that was long thought to be "caused by a wandering womb" (33). Kahn also points out that during the early modern period, "hysteria was also called, appropriately, 'the mother,'" an idea that plays a prominent role in explaining Lear's outburst (34).

Lear continues to associate any and all negative emotional responses with women, suggesting that their presence adversely affects his agency. After pleading unsuccessfully with Regan and Goneril about his accommodations, Lear further expresses his fear of crying as he addresses the heavens:

Touch me with noble anger,  
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,  
Stain my man's cheeks. (2.2.465-67)

Lear clearly associates tears with the feminine and fights the urge to cry by trying to express the revenge he will have on the lot of them; however, he is unsuccessful in articulating "such revenges" as he "[has] full cause of weeping" (2.2.468, 473).

While enduring the storm on the heath, we find that Lear is unable to keep his word<sup>26</sup>, to deny Goneril and Regan the pleasure he perceives they would take in knowing they reduced him to tears, since he later notes that "[he] will weep no more" (3.4.17). Janet Adelman views the storm itself as a feminine force. She argues convincingly that "in the storm made of his

own irrepressible femaleness, the storm that is the maternal signature, all boundaries dissolve, and Lear is once more inside what is inside him" (114). Once out of the domesticated world of castles and on the heath, Lear beseeches the gods during the climatic storm scene, but it is Nature—the same feminized Nature that Edmund worships—who is in control here.

Even after being rescued by Cordelia's forces, Lear worries that the gentleman's promise for prompt medical care "would make a man a man of salt / To use his eyes for garden water-pots" (4.6.191-92). Also striking in a related scene is the depiction of Cordelia's tears and their potentially recuperative powers. Cordelia says,

All blest secrets,  
All you unpublished virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears. (4.4.15-17)

Cordelia also characterizes her tears as "important" in advancing her father's case (4.4.26). Later, when Cordelia is reunited with Lear, she weeps openly. While Cordelia's crying appears to sooth and restore Lear, he condemns his own tears. Ultimately, Lear appears incapable of controlling his humors throughout the play, which undermines his masculine authority, or his agency as Burke would have it.

While humors do not determine one's biological identity in *A Thousand Acres*, gendered behavior does shape the ways in which

men and women communicate in the novel. Reflecting on her increasingly complicated perceptions of the men in her life, Ginny realizes "that they had suffered [...], but there seemed to be a dumb, unknowing quality to the way the men had suffered, as if, like animals, it was not possible for them to gain perspective on their suffering" (121). As Ginny continues to analyze the men in her life, she finds,

They had us, Rose and me, in their suffering, but they didn't seem to have what we had with each other, a kind of ongoing narrative and commentary about what was happening that grew out of our conversations, our rolled eyes, our sighs and jokes and irritated remarks. [...] The men, and Pete in particular, always seemed a little surprised, and therefore a little more hurt and a little more damaged by things that happened. (122)

Even for the men, silencing proves powerful as they exercise a masculine reserve in the face of adversity. When these characters employ disruptive speech, they appear irrational or crazy. In describing the rages of Pete, the Cornwall character, Ginny views his anger as "quiet, but corrosive, later erupting at odd times toward Ty or Rose, even at [her] or his daughters, wildly, viciously eloquent, insults and threats, mounting crazily until you couldn't believe your ears" (33). Larry also

appears irrational when he expresses his feelings on the night of the storm; Rose later comments, "He is crazy. He's bananas" (202). In fact, Ty's reserve appears to be his greatest attribute as silence and being able to "disagree without fighting" characterize his marriage to Ginny (112). Even in the end when Ginny asks for one thousand dollars and leaves the farm, Ty's only reaction is to yell "I gave my life to this place!" (357).

Indeed, all of the characters of *A Thousand Acres* continually fail to express their true feelings—or as Edgar would have it, "speak what [they] feel, not what [they] ought to say"—through most of the novel. This reticence is due in part to gender expectations, but it is also the result of many of the characters striving to be dutiful children. Upon hearing Larry's plan to divide the farm, Ginny has reservations:

In spite of that inner clang, I tried to sound agreeable. 'It's a good idea.' (19)

Rose supports Ginny's reply, while Caroline expresses doubt, saying "I don't know" (19). Echoing Lear's disownment of Cordelia, Larry closes the door in Caroline's face, effectively banishing her from his kingdom. Ginny recognizes that her younger sister "had simply spoken as a woman rather than as a daughter. That was something. [Ginny] realize[s] in a flash, that Rose and [she] were pretty careful never to do" (21).

Throughout most of the novel, Ginny's identity depends upon her role as her father's daughter. She sees her father as "the living source of it all, of us all" (189). When Ginny tries to express herself to her father, she finds Larry defensive. He says,

I never talked to my father like this. It wasn't up to me to judge him, or criticize his ways. (189)

Larry's sense of duty appears rooted in his own experience as a disciplined child, and he demands the same unequivocal obedience from his daughters.

While Lear consistently levies attacks on his eldest daughters that are gender specific, he also expands his criticism to ungrateful children. In the beginning, he exclaims,

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child! (1.4.280-81)

After censuring Goneril's reprimand in decidedly gendered terms, Lear leaves his eldest daughter and seeks out the care of Regan. He entreats his second-born daughter:

Thou better know'st  
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,  
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude.  
(2.2.267-69)

In both instances, Lear calls into question the duty and gratitude of his children. As Lear sees it, his eldest children entered into an agreement with him. In an exchange with Regan, the terms of this agreement become clear:

Lear: I gave you all.

Regan: And in good time you gave it.

Lear: Made you my guardians, my depositaries,

But kept a reservation to be followed

With such a number. (2.2.415-19)

In this section, Lear reminds Regan that he divided the kingdom between his two eldest children with the understanding that they would care for him and his train. While Goneril and Regan renege on this agreement by denying their father accommodations for his followers, the play makes clear that Lear and his train are not the most agreeable guests. Goneril makes her dissatisfaction with her father clear when she exclaims,

By day and night he wrongs me;

He flashes into one gross crime or other,

That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it. (1.3.4-6)

She explains some of these "gross" crimes, how "his knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids [them]/On every trifle" (1.3.7-8). While this short scene, situated in the kingdom, sets the stage

for Goneril and Regan's disobedience, it also establishes Lear's volatile temperament.

### **The Importance of Scene in the Play and the Novel**

In crafting the characters and their agency, Smiley emphasizes the role of the scene<sup>27</sup>. In his discussion of the scene-agent ratio, Kenneth Burke finds synecdoche at work "between person and place," suggesting the importance of the setting (7). The scene is especially significant as "it indicates the scope of the analysis - how broad or how limited it will be" (Foss 338). In Smiley's novel, most of the story takes place on the farm as the two eldest daughters struggle with their aging father in this confined space. The role of the scene looms large from the onset as the title proclaims "A Thousand Acres." Reflecting on her old way of thinking, Ginny remembers that "no globe or map fully convinced [her] that Zebulon County was not the center of the universe" (3). But just as a map demarcates Lear's empire, the extent of Larry Cook's kingdom also has limitations. Cook's farm may be the largest in Zebulon County, but Smiley situates it within clear geographical boundaries by explicitly citing the acreage and describing the rural county of which it is an important part.

The sense of confinement that this limited scene creates shapes Ginny's sense of identity and her agency. She rarely

asserts her opinion throughout much of the novel, and the reader can sense that her desire to keep the peace within her family, no matter how superficial, has been her main objective for most of her life. Similar to her longing for familial harmony on the farm, Ginny avoids conflict with her husband early in the novel, producing a sterile relationship in which Ginny praises her husband Ty as being "well spoken and easy to get along with" instead of extolling their passionate love for one another (12). Life on the farm not only affects Ginny's relationship with her family and her husband but also her ability to form friendships outside of "a thousand acres." Besides her sister Rose and briefly, Jess, the Edmund character, Ginny does not have any confidants outside of the farm.

Perhaps friendship outside of the confines of the farm is unrealistic as public expectations in the small community contribute to Ginny's silencing. Indeed, public silencing proves to be one of Smiley's most persuasive techniques for creating sympathy in the novel for the eldest daughter as she deviates from popular perceptions of *King Lear's* Goneril. David Brauner describes "the world of *A Thousand Acres* [as] one of secrecy" (656). Throughout the novel, Ginny consistently remains silent as the men encourage the status quo. Brauner accurately surmises the role of silence by paralleling the role of speech in *King Lear* with its place in the novel: "just as



Cordelia, in the opening scene of *Lear*, is damned if she speaks, and damned if she does not, so in *A Thousand Acres* the price of speech is at times as high as that of silence" (657). Caught in the middle of this lose-lose situation is Ginny. After arguing with her father in the local diner, Ginny realizes, "when my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished" (190). Mary Carden posits that "if [Ginny] is to maintain her place on the fatherland [...] she must accept as natural [a] boundary of speakable and unspeakable, must act as a participant in her own silencing" (187). Public opinion dictates much of Ginny's "silencing." For example, while objecting to her father's demand that she wait for him in the car on a smoldering summer day, Ginny notices the chiropractor's receptionist, a reputed town gossip, watching the dispute. The presence of an observer compels Ginny to "get back in the car" as she "hate[s] to think about how people feel about [her family]" (187). Whether under the watchful gaze of an acquaintance or the sway of Larry's presence, Ginny strives to be a dutiful daughter as "a good appearance [is] the source and the sign of all other good things" in the farming community (215). Under this pressure to keep up appearances for the sake of the scene, Ginny feels like "a horse haltered in a tight stall throwing its head and beating its feet against the floor, but the beams and the bars and the halter rope hold firm, and the horse wears itself out, and

accepts the restraint that moments before had been an unendurable goad" (214). Not only does the setting isolate Ginny from the outside world, but it also dictates her behavior and defines her identity throughout much of the novel.

While Goneril and Regan are not confined to a family farm like Ginny and Rose, they do occupy a clearly defined space: their father's kingdom. The landscape looms large as we first see Lear in his castle with a map of his kingdom in hand. The demarcating lines of the map represent Lear's control over the land, but Lear breaks these boundaries when he divides his kingdom and gives it to his daughters. When the scene shifts to Goneril's castle and later to Regan's home, the former power of the map is lost as Lear's eldest daughters control the scene. Unlike Cordelia, who rejects Lear's test for securing "a third more opulent" portion of his realm and leaves for France, Goneril and Regan never leave the kingdom during the course of the play (1.1.86). The eldest sisters have ostensibly married according to their father's will and left Lear's castle for the home of their respective husbands—in the same kingdom. Cordelia's experience is quite different; she marries without her father's blessing and leaves Lear's kingdom for her husband's foreign land. Goneril and Regan's sense of geographical confinement inextricably ties the eldest sisters to the kingdom in a way that Cordelia avoids by leaving for France.

Their lack of mobility, their sense of place, may encourage them to speak what they "ought to say" since they have no experience outside of this world that caters to the will of the patriarchy.

### **Rhetorical Performances**

The rhetorical performances that take place in both the play and the novel reveal striking similarities between *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, suggesting that Burke's dramatic pentad applies equally well to a play and a novel. While I treat *Lear* as a text and do not consider its long and interesting stage history, I acknowledge the value of performance studies and am informed by that field in this section. W.B. Worthen points out the differences between literary and performance studies in his essay "Drama, Performativity, and Performance." In this essay, Worthen notes that "literary scholars have only recently recognized the performative aspects of rituals and ceremonies" (1095). In the discussion that follows, Worthen rejects the stereotype that theatrical speech represents "hollow utterances" while "nontheatrical speech [proves] authentic and nonrepetitive" (1096). Citing Judith Butler's work, Worthen further posits that performances are only successful when they seamlessly conceal their conventions. It is in this sense that Goneril, Regan, and their contemporary counterparts (Ginny and Rose)

operate. What I hope to parse in my reading is their reasoning for performing.

Smiley continually casts Ginny's aversion of confrontations in the same mold as Goneril and Regan's performance for their father in the opening scene of *Lear*. Initially, Goneril and Regan appear to be Lear's dutiful daughters as they participate in their father's love test to determine which portion of the kingdom they will receive. Catherine Cox argues that the eldest daughters participate in the "public performance [...] that Lear, perhaps without even quite realizing it himself, demands" while Cordelia refuses to play her father's game (149). During this test, the scene determines the agency and the subsequent actions of Goneril and Regan. It is clear that Lear intends to divide the kingdom from the beginning as he enters the scene with map in hand and explicitly states that "we have divided / In three our kingdom" (1.1.36-7). Both Goneril and Regan recognize the rhetorical expectation here: to please their father with epideictic speech at his retirement party just as Ginny and Rose know better than to question Larry's announcement to divide the farm at the church picnic. Shakespeare's eldest daughters recognize the currency of speech in their father's world in this scene, while Cordelia refuses to qualify her love with language or to acknowledge that "nothing will come of nothing" from Lear (1.1.90). Indeed, one of Lear's parting

shots to his youngest daughter expresses his need for praise as he sullenly exclaims:

Better thou  
Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me  
better. (1.1.235-6)

This division of the kingdom is meant to show Lear's power, but Cordelia undermines his authority by refusing to participate in the ceremony. Goneril and Regan may not deliver sincere speeches, but they appreciate the function of praising their father in this situation and excel at this performance, securing their share - and Cordelia's - of the kingdom through their use of rhetoric.

Smiley chooses to alter the use of language in her revision. Ginny does not have a command of language in the way Goneril does, but her actions reflect her desire to please, to be "a good girl," while Caroline openly objects to her father's decision, "[speaking] as a woman rather than a daughter" (*A Thousand Acres* 99, 21). Caroline's choice strikes Ginny as "something [...] that Rose and [she] were pretty careful never to do" (21). In her acquiescence to the incorporation plan, Ginny appears concerned with her father as she realizes that "[his] pride, always touchy, had been injured to the quick" by Caroline's vocalized doubts (21).

In *King Lear*, Cordelia also wounds her father's pride. The initial conflict with Goneril over the unruly entourage may initially appear as the first scene of Lear's emasculation, but Cordelia commits the first instance of insubordination. In addition to denying her father's demand for a public affirmation of love, Cordelia also denies her father's role in the betrothal ceremony, an act that affects the subsequent actions of Goneril and Regan (Chamberlain). In Stephanie Chamberlain's discussion of the difficulties associated with female inheritance during the Renaissance, she uses *King Lear* as an example of the potential problems. Unlike traditional readings of the play that implicate the "pleated cunning" of Goneril and Regan in accepting their father's realm while exonerating Cordelia for refusing to participate in the love test, Chamberlain "implicates her in her siblings' actions" due to her marriage to France, a potential enemy to England (171). Chamberlain concludes that "only with the death of the last surviving female heir to Lear's estate that order is finally restored" as Edgar appears to assume control (187). Since both Goneril and Regan are married - presumably without incident - before the play begins, it is safe to presume Lear played an active role in the selection of Goneril's and Regan's husbands, choices that supposedly support the sanctity of the kingdom. Lawrence Stone describes marriage as "the only career opening for women" in the

early modern period, albeit a "career" where "the husband and wife became one person in law - and that person was the husband" (136). By Stone's account, women were essentially property in early modern England. David Cressy, however, offers a more nuanced description of early modern marriage that speaks to the Lear dynamics. Cressy explains that "a husband was expected to govern his wife and household, and the wife was supposed to command those beneath her through a mediated extension of patriarchal power" (287). In this paradigm, the wife has some power, but it is, of course, mitigated by patriarchal authority. While Goneril and Regan challenge the constraints of patriarchy throughout the play, early in the action, they appear to accept their lot in life and meet Lear's expectations. It is Cordelia who most overtly challenges the legitimacy of her father's authority, especially with her marriage to France and her return to England as the commander of the French forces.<sup>28</sup>

Caroline may not invade the farm with foreign forces, but she does start a battle, shifting the scene from the family farm to the county courtroom as she seeks to regain her father's land. When Larry initially proposes his plan to hand the operation of the farm over to his daughters and their husbands, Caroline expresses concern, a response Ginny characterizes as "a perfectly reasonable doubt, perhaps even doubt a lawyer must express" (21). Throughout Ginny's account, it becomes clear

that Caroline has led a very different life from that of her sisters. Ginny describes how "[she and Rose] were [Caroline's] allies" by negotiating Larry's strict rules so their little sister could "have a normal high school life, with dates and dances and activities after school," suggesting that Ginny and Rose were denied these adolescent pleasures (67). According to Ginny, Caroline "made good grades, conceived large ambitions, and went off as we [she and Rose] had planned, no farmwife, or even a farmer, but something brighter and sharper and more promising" (67-68). As Larry's dementia worsens, Caroline sues Ginny, Rose and Ty for mismanagement of the farm in an effort to win back her father's land. The judge rules in favor of Ginny, Rose, and Ty, but Ginny finds cold comfort in the win. Ginny realizes that Caroline's decision to carry the issue into a courtroom "had marvelously divided [them] from each other and from [their] old lives. There could be no reconciliation now" (353). Even though Ginny and Rose "win" the farm, they must face more adversity in the aftermath of the lawsuit.

In a similar vein, Goneril and Regan successfully secure the entire kingdom between the two of them through their public performance, but they fail to fully embrace the contingencies inherent in their new world. In setting the stage for his discussion of the ongoing shift from orality to literacy during the early modern period, Marshall McLuhan describes *King Lear* as



"a kind of elaborate case history of people translating themselves out of a world of roles into the new world of jobs" (14). He specifically identifies Kent, Edgar, and Cordelia as being "feudal in their total loyalty which they consider merely natural to their *roles*" and Lear and Edmund as making the transition to "an exclusive sense of the world" of the individual (14).<sup>29</sup> Goneril and Regan, however, fall somewhere in between as they struggle with maintaining their sisterly bond and attaining their individualist desires. In the play, the contact between Cordelia and her older sisters ends after the first scene, but the relationship between Goneril and Regan becomes more and more important as the plot thickens. After Lear's actions become increasingly intolerable for Goneril and Regan, the sisters begin denying their father's demands. After one member of Lear's entourage assaults Goneril's servant, she proclaims:

By day and night he wrongs me. Every hour  
 He flashes into one gross crime or other  
 That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it. (1.3.4-6)

After this decisive declaration, both Goneril and Regan work together, asserting their new-found power. They stand united in the face of their father's wrath, holding hands in solidarity against his protestations about maintaining his train (2.2).

Ginny and Rose also seek to strike a balance between their loyalty to one another and their own desires. Ginny admits early on in her story that "no day of [her] remembered life was without Rose" (8). Rose appears much more assertive than Ginny, "exhibit[ing] a sustained resolve in the face of even [Larry's] opposition that was like a natural force" (8). It is Rose who reminds Ginny of their father's sexual abuse of them. After Ginny allows the repressed memories of abuse to resurface, her bond to Rose seems even stronger as the two women stand united in their treatment of their father. This united front continues until Rose becomes romantically involved with Jess. Once Ginny becomes aware of the relationship, she feels, "Rose had been too much for me, had done me in" (329). Mirroring the eldest Lear daughters' consensus on the treatment of their father coupled with an emerging sense of self, Ginny and Rose also experience a growing awareness of conflicting desires, fragmenting their once strong sisterly devotion with increasing hostility.<sup>30</sup>

Most prominent among the conflicting desires between Goneril and Regan is Edmund, Gloucester's bastard son and a skillful rhetorician.<sup>31</sup> In his discussion of Richard Lanham's definitions of *homo seriosus* and *homo rhetoricus*, Stanley Fish posits that "what serious man fears - the invasion of the fortress of essence by the contingent, the protean, and the unpredictable - is what rhetorical man celebrates and

incarnates" (1616). The definition of rhetorical man applies nicely to Edmund as he exhibits a chameleon-like quality throughout the play. Edmund plays the dutiful child in the beginning - much like Goneril and Regan - as he defers to Gloucester's salacious telling of the "good sport at his making" (1.1.22), but it becomes clear that Edmund, like his partners in crime, is not content with his lot in the patriarchal world. He defiantly rejects the socially-held assumption that he is Edgar's inferior by virtue of his birth through his powerful soliloquy in which he reveals his plan to usurp his "legitimate" brother's place in the family:

Thou, nature, art my goddess. To thy law  
My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom and permit  
The curiosity of nations to deprive me  
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
Lag of a brother? (1.2.1-6)

Not only does Edmund question the custom of this particular form of patriarchy in which the eldest son inherits the entirety of the father's estate, but he also takes issue with the label "bastard" that has been imposed upon him and vexes the meaning:

Why 'bastard'? Wherefore 'base',  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true

As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
 With 'base,' with 'baseness, bastardy - base, base.'  
 (1.2.6-10)

In addition to rejecting the associations of illegitimacy with physical and mental deformities, Edmund also echoes Gloucester's opening lines by asserting that adulterous affairs are more vigorous than sexual relations between a married couple:

Who in the lusty stealth of nature take  
 More composition and fierce quality  
 Than doth within a dull, stale, tired bed  
 Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops  
 Got 'tween a sleep and wake? (1.2.11-15)

Edmund clearly suggests that the offspring of an illicit coupling is superior to the fools produced legitimately.

Anthony Gilbert concurs, arguing that Edmund uses language to establish his "natural equality, even superiority in comparison with orthodox society, and its prejudiced language" (par. 3). After establishing his superiority to Edgar, Edmund reveals his plan to frame his brother and become Gloucester's heir. This plan proves successful through Edmund's ability to quickly adapt to the unpredictable, which relies entirely on his command of language and his power to seduce all of the other characters (and perhaps the audience) with his rhetorical self-fashioning.<sup>32</sup>

Initially, Smiley's Edmund does not appear as powerful in the novel as in the play, but Jess Clark is able to adapt to a variety of situations and initiates the strain in the sisterly bond. He also speaks openly about his personal experiences, including substance abuse and intimate relationships, which influences the shift in Ginny's way of thinking. Smiley plays with tropes reflecting popular American culture in her revision of Edmund. Not a bastard in the traditional sense of an illegitimate birth, Jess earns this status as a draft dodger - fleeing to Canada to avoid being sent to fight in the Vietnam War and becoming an active anti-war protestor. Between his leaving Zebulon County and his prodigal return, he has tried his hand at organic farming, a practice that stands in sharp contrast to the methods practiced by his father and Larry. His time away and his varied experiences lead Ginny to believe Jess is worldly, "that there were things he knew that [she] had been waiting all [her] life to learn" (73).<sup>33</sup>

### **Smiley's Revision**

After having an affair with Jess, Ginny feels liberated and becomes "more decisive and [makes] rules," allaying her sense of hopelessness, of feeling like a fettered farm animal (154). As Ginny's character begins to change in spite of the scene, both Ginny's husband and her father view her newfound assertiveness

negatively. Ginny's marriage continues to deteriorate up until the night of the storm. Like Albany in *King Lear*, Ty is the patriarch's favored son-in-law as he is agreeable and avoids confrontations with Larry. The final blow to Ginny's marriage occurs when Ty does not stand up for her during Larry's verbal abuse during the storm. Ty's silence after Larry curses Ginny as a "dried-up whore bitch" confirms his loyalty to the patriarchal scene, and his failure to defend her unofficially ends their relationship (181). Like Lear, Larry Cook conveys his disgust and fear of the feminine by attacking the ability to procreate.<sup>34</sup> In *King Lear*, Goneril does not have any children; in Smiley's version, Ginny has had numerous miscarriages due to fertilizer drainage from Larry's farm that has contaminated the drinking water. Ginny later deduces that her inability to have children, her mother's cancer, and her sister's terminal breast cancer were also products of the patriarch's poisoned water supply. In Larry's world, both the bodies of women and of land are at his disposal. James Schiff discusses Larry's dominion over female bodies:

Like the female body, the land has existed as something for men to control, possess, violate, and exploit. Larry Cook's nighttime excursions into his daughters' beds parallel the gradual taking and accumulation of his neighbors' land [...] He views his

daughters, like the land, as his. Mother Earth or daughters Ginny and Rose, all are feminine bodies for him to assert his will over and to bury his seed within. (379)

As Larry's possessions, Ginny and Rose are victims of both the patriarch's literal rape of their bodies and of his rape of the land.

The farming community not only condones the rape of the land with pesticides and fertilizers, but they also choose to ignore the molestation of Ginny and Rose that takes place on Larry's thousand acres. After receiving her father's curse and recognizing where her husband's loyalties lie, Ginny learns that she was molested as a child. Rose reminds her of the abuse, of "how [Larry] came into [their] rooms" late at night after the death of their mother (203). Brauner posits that "if patriarchy in this novel is predicated on secrecy, Smiley proposes a feminocentric alternative, based on the telling and sharing of stories," which endorses "speaking what we feel" (665). Ginny attempts to cope with these revelations through her confessional storytelling, but coming to terms with these repressed memories is made more difficult by the isolation she endures on the farm as well as the accusations she must face in the community. As Ginny tries to make sense of the emerging memories of the abuse, the community considers her and Rose land-hungry, "a pair of

bitches" in light of the plan to divide Larry's farm (*A Thousand Acres* 218).

Ginny realizes that the discourse of the farm, her family, and the community all deny her meaningful agency in her present surroundings and that she must leave her comfort zone in order to find her own voice. In his discussion of speech acts, Bakhtin asserts that "one's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse," which leads to heteroglossia ("Discourse in the Novel" 348). Ginny's predicament reflects the Bakhtinian assertion that "the importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous" (348). While Lear experiences an epiphany and recognizes his error in casting out Cordelia at the end of Shakespeare's telling, in Smiley's account, Ginny is the one who undergoes a life-altering change in her realization that she must liberate herself from the farm and the authority it represents.

Ginny's principle act in the novel occurs when she leaves the farm for an apartment and waitressing job in Minnesota: the same type of life Rose imagined their mother might have led. As the novel ends, Rose dies from the ravages of cancer attributed



to the contaminated drinking water. Her death leaves her two children in a situation similar to the one she and Ginny experienced. Rose's daughters are now motherless, but the farm is left to Ginny and Caroline because Rose does not "want it to come to [her girls]. [She] wants all of [the suffering] to stop with [her] generation" (Smiley 353). After Rose's passing, her daughters live with their aunt Ginny as she prepares to take night classes at a local community college. Smiley's ending is bleak in terms of the destruction of the natural world as the farm is sold to a corporate land developer; but unlike Shakespeare's version, it is not tragic for all of the female characters thanks to the shift in scene and the rejection of "the word of the fathers" (Bakhtin 342). Smiley's novelization of *Lear* allows this outcome to take place. According to Bakhtin, novelizations "become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the 'novelistic' layers of literary language" (7). In addition to *A Thousand Acres'* flexible and layered nature, Bakhtin goes on to argue that "the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality" (7). After the sale of the farm, Ginny's "still-evolving" reality becomes clear as she remains in the city to raise her nieces with the hope that their sense of

identity and voice may be shaped by a more supportive scene than the stifling space of "a thousand acres."

Ultimately, this ending parallels Smiley's desire for her readers to reconsider traditional readings of Shakespeare's works by listening to the speech - both masculine and feminine - that voices the imagined worlds of not only the contemporary page but of the early-modern stage as well. By voicing what the farming community considers unspeakable, Smiley's novel opens a space for heteroglossia by allowing Ginny and Smiley to ultimately "speak what [she] feel[s]," a space that only exists on the fringes in Shakespeare's play.<sup>35</sup> And while Smiley's disowning of the novel reinscribes the language of economics that Marsden uses to define appropriation, Smiley's engagement with Shakespeare defies the negative connotations associated with "theft" and "abduction." Smiley's struggle to come to terms with *King Lear* by rewriting the play as a novel and her careful consideration of that decision in personal essays suggests that Smiley's appropriation is collaborative. Through the conversation she ultimately has with Shakespeare in *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley ultimately exhibits the power of speaking what she feels.

## Chapter Two

'Decipher its noises for us': Understanding Sycorax's Island in  
Marina Warner's *Indigo*

Marina Warner's *Indigo, or Mapping the Waters* explores the effects of colonialism on the islanders of Liamuiga (later called *Enfant-Béate*) and the Everard family through a complex retelling of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* that spans over three hundred years. Much like the novels of Gloria Naylor, in which past and present blend and meld, *Indigo* also suggests that time is not linear in its development. The subtitle, *or Mapping the Waters*, positions a sense of place at the crux of Warner's novel. Moving back and forth between the twentieth century and the dawn of the seventeenth century, the novel also shifts between London and the Caribbean. The scene, in the Burkean sense, influences the actions of the characters as they struggle to be heard in their respective settings. Language also affects the ways in which these characters come to terms with their personal histories. Ultimately, the novel seeks to displace the hopelessness of Caliban's decree—"You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.364-65)—by giving a voice to the people silenced by colonialism.

### Engaging with *The Tempest*

In the massive body of criticism devoted to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Prospero and Caliban receive much more attention than the female characters presented in the play. Rewritings, such as Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea*, appear to be informed by a focus on Prospero as the artist, as reflected by essays such as Robert Egan's "'This rough magic': Perspectives of Art and Morality in *The Tempest*." Later criticism reveals the shift from reading the morality of Prospero's "white" magic to interrogating the implications of colonialism in the "brave new world" (5.1.182). For example, Alden and Virginia Vaughan's *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*, clearly focuses on the construction of Caliban as "a freckled whelp, hag-born" by the colonizers (1.2.283). Similarly, Paul Brown's seminal essay, "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism" and Stephen Greenblatt's much-cited *Learning to Curse* both focus on the relationship between colonizer and colonized.

As most critics considering Warner's novel contend, *Indigo* privileges the stories of Shakespeare's Miranda, Ariel, and the absent Sycorax over the plight of Caliban. In her article, Caroline Cakebread discusses the double colonization that native women experience, being doubly Othered by their biological sex

and race. Cakebread claims that "Warner moves beyond the vocabulary of master and slave implicit in [George] Lamming's work and takes up the curse of silence that characterizes the female experience of colonization" (225). Giving a voice to these silenced women by creating a space for Bakhtinian heteroglossia is closely linked to the scene(s) and the major source text in *Indigo*. Oscillating between two islands connected by colonialism, the bulk of the novel takes place in England and Liamuiga. Warner's project also unites these two disparate places by invoking Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Kate Chedgzoy notes that most postcolonial responses to *The Tempest* "focus on Caliban as a figure of resistance. Where they notice Miranda's existence at all, they usually take her to be complicit in Prospero's oppressive project..." (96). While Warner does not deny "the brutalization of Caliban," as discussed by Chantal Zabus, she does present a gynocentric focus in her rewriting of Shakespeare's late romance (140). Many critics find Warner's approach to revision exciting. According to Angeles de la Concha, "Warner does not just shift perspectives bringing about a subsequent reversal of the hierarchic categories at the basis of the play, she has chosen to deconstruct" (84). On one level, Warner's motivation to "deconstruct" *The Tempest* is personal.

Much in the same vein as Jane Smiley's personal essays concerning her gynocentric rewriting of *King Lear* (i.e., "Shakespeare in Iceland" and "Taking It All Back"), Marina Warner also discusses her reasons for reimagining *The Tempest*. In "Between the Colonist and the Creole: Family Bonds, Family Boundaries," Warner discusses her family's involvement in English colonialism, specifically in the Caribbean, and her Creole background. Warner explains that "the French include whites in the term Creole, and so do the Spanish, but to English ears, 'Creole' sounds foreign, French, or worse, native, but native of another place besides England" (199). In this regard, she fashions the contemporary Everard family after her own experience of being considered exotic. Warner, however, does not claim the right to self-identify as Creole, because she feels that "the relations of the former plantocracy to the islands which they colonised and inhabited for nearly three hundred years make it fallacious, even opportunistic, for a descendant now to grasp the label and wear it with new pride" (199). Warner's decision to resist using "the label" is best described by Chedgzoy, who argues convincingly that "*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" (124). In crafting these voices, Warner completed much research on her

family's colonial role and used that information in crafting the Everard family. One particularly interesting choice that Warner makes concerns an island youth who helped to shape her grandfather's brilliant career in cricket. Based on Warner's research, she finds that her grandfather's first memories of playing cricket involve a young islander "who rejoiced in the name of Killebree" (200).<sup>36</sup> Warner explains that "the image of Killebree [...] stuck in my mind and helped inspire the reckoning I attempted in *Indigo*" (200). One literal way in which Warner seeks to credit Killebree is by giving this family name to one of her novel's most important characters, Serafine.

### **The Oral Tradition and History**

*Indigo* begins in 1960s London with a story told in the oral tradition by Serafine Killebree, a native islander lovingly called "Feeny" by her employers, the Everard family. Feeny tells young Miranda Everard the story of King Midas, a story that has significance later in the novel.<sup>37</sup> Young Miranda adores Feeny and the stories the older woman tells. As a child, Miranda notes that "in her stories everything risked changing shape," indicating on one level the alterations to the fairy tales Feeny tells but, perhaps more significantly, on another level the instability of history. Miranda repeatedly associates Feeny's storytelling with her hands, observing that

Serafine's palms were mapped with darker lines, as if she had steeped them in ink to bring out the pattern; the lines crisscrossed and wandered, and Miranda would have liked to be able to puzzle out the script, for she was beginning to read. Feeny's palms were dry and hard like the paper in a storybook, and when they handled Miranda she felt safe. (22)

This rich passage says much about the novel's interconnected stories and establishes the bond between Serafine and Miranda. Serafine's "mapped" hands bring to mind the colonial expeditions, intent on claiming and mapping land, that ultimately brought Serafine so far away from her native island to England. That her hands appear "steeped in ink" suggests Serafine's connection to her homeland and the steeping of indigo associated with Sycorax in the novel's companion story. Zabus indicates the larger significance of Serafine's storytelling by positioning her as an important part of "a female continuum of orality" (146). Cakebread also notes the import of Feeny's stories; she argues that "Serafine's oral stories—told to young Miranda in the kitchen or in the nursery—become an alternative family history in *Indigo*," suggesting a means to voicing the silenced and also a possible return to the matriarchal ordering of Sycorax's world before the arrival of Miranda's ancestor (224).<sup>38</sup>



The world of Sycorax is inextricably linked to the present day in Warner's novel. Serafine's connection to the mother Sycorax is subtly suggested throughout *Indigo*. Like Sycorax, Serafine also has associations with magic: "Serafine could still conjure *Enfant-Béate* when she wanted" (66). While this use of conjuring implies Serafine's skill as a storyteller more than her magical abilities, she, too receives the label of "witch" in the novel. In a scene that suggests multiple forms of prejudice at play, the aristocratic Gillian, the young wife of Serafine's employer Anthony Everard, questions Feeny's place in her world after the birth of the new Everard heir, Xanthe:

Gillian was forever making up to Xanthe the maternal inadequacy she had discovered in herself, to her shame, from the time her baby was born, and Serafine's comfortable and assured expertise only sharpened her anxieties. Besides, she wished that the woman would call her "your Ladyship," as she should do, or "my Lady," or at least "Lady Everard," instead of that "Miss Gillian," which sounded so coarse and was anyway so incorrect, almost insulting. They really should get a proper English nanny. It was too bad of Anthony to land her with that old witch. (69)

While Gillian's use of the label "witch" does not invoke Prospero's description of Sycorax in *The Tempest* as a "damned

witch" known "for mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible," the usage does operate as a way to Other Serafine and to repudiate her knowledge by aligning it with witchcraft (1.2.263-64).<sup>39</sup>

### **Warner's Reimagining of Sycorax, Ariel, and Caliban**

Also significant in Gillian's reflections on her relationship with Serafine is the importance of language, specifically of naming in the novel. Gillian believes Serafine's way of addressing her, as "Miss Gillian," is disrespectful, primarily because it fails to comfortably distance her from her servant. Although Gillian's use of Serafine's nickname, Feeny, may be disrespectful, the rest of the Everard family, particularly Kit and Miranda, appear to use the name as a sign of sincere affection, much in the same vein as the characters in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* use pet names.

While Serafine's name offers insight into her complicated role in the Everard family, as both a member of the family and as a servant, the names of other characters in the novel signal their connections to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Even though some critics, such as Angeles de la Conches, avoid finding direct correlations between characters sharing the same name between the play and the novel, the Foucaultian idea of a name as a description is difficult to ignore.<sup>40</sup> The Shakespearean

names that populate Warner's novel immediately evoke their namesakes. Yet Warner's revision of these characters undermines the notion of reading a name as a description by providing a distinct voice for each character, a voice that does not exist in *The Tempest*. The Shakespearean names that dominate Warner's novel are feminine: Sycorax, Ariel, and Miranda. In an interesting and important alteration, Warner changes the gender of Ariel in her novel, rewriting the character from a masculine spirit to an Arawak woman.<sup>41</sup> While Prospero and Caliban—in fact, multiple versions of both—are present in *Indigo*, the female characters of *The Tempest* ultimately possess the strongest voices in Warner's novel.

In fashioning polyglossia out of the closed space of *The Tempest*, Warner fashions her Sycorax out of a few descriptions from Shakespeare's play. We know Shakespeare's Sycorax primarily through Prospero's words. Prospero introduces the absent Sycorax as "the foul witch" and proceeds to negatively portray her "unmitigable rage" (1.2.258, 1.2.276). Based on the scraps of information provided by Prospero and Caliban, it becomes clear that Sycorax lost the island to Prospero by his more powerful "art" (1.2.291). Warner addresses these fragments in her reimagining of Sycorax. Readers hear Sycorax through an omniscient third-person narrator. No longer voiceless, Warner's Sycorax ties together all of the novel's stories—spanning

centuries and scenes—notably appearing in the Everard's contemporary tale.

The novel's Sycorax, Janus-like, looks back to Shakespeare's polarizing characterization of her while simultaneously establishing a more nuanced understanding of her role and her influence on the future in *Indigo*. The island of Sycorax is "full of noises," echoing Caliban's description of his home in *The Tempest* (89). Complicating Caliban's beautiful description of his island in these terms:

The isle is full of noises.

Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments

Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,

That if I then had waked after long sleep,

Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,

The clouds, methought, would open and show riches

Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked

I cried to dream again. (3.2.135-43)

Sycorax is credited by the narrator as "the source of many" of the noises on the island of Liamuiga (89). The narrator also complicates the notion of dreaming as a comfort in the manner Caliban presents the activity in his speech through the presentation of Sycorax's troubled dreaming. What Warner essentially does in her depiction of Sycorax, a character denied

a voice in Shakespeare's play, is to present a more nuanced account of her background through the omniscient narrator. The narrator almost immediately calls into question Sycorax's powers by implying that the coming of the colonizers signals "the beginning of a new world," a shift that Sycorax does not foresee and appears incapable of stopping (93). Instead, the power Sycorax possesses in the novel appears rooted in the feminine and the domestic—in listening, mothering, and cooperating with the natural world.

In "Between the Colonist and the Creole: Family Bonds, Family Boundaries," Warner expresses her hope that her Sycorax "grows to the dimensions of a full humanity" through her deeply layered presentation of this silenced character (203). Mothering plays a powerful role in humanizing Sycorax in the novel. Sycorax has had many children of her own, but her most important familial relations involve her two adopted children: Dulé and Ariel. In a pivotal scene, Sycorax has a dream in which she hears the voices of dead slaves, thrown overboard from a passing slave ship: "Sycorax heard their voices in the dark, and all of a sudden, the new space she had entered was lit up as if by lightning, and in a flash she remembered something from the bodies she had laid out before their burial, something she had not properly understood in the strain of tending to their dismemberment and rottenness" (94). The "something" she

remembers is the swollen body of a slave woman that she helped bury earlier. Sycorax realizes that "the other men and women, all swollen in their abdomens—a counterfeit fertility; but in that young woman's case, Sycorax had not seen past her outer shape to the form inside" (95). Using an oyster-shell knife, Sycorax removes the still-living baby from the young woman's body; she names the newborn Dulé.

Instead of celebrating this miraculous survival, the villagers read Dulé's birth as a thing to be feared, a sign of "pure witchcraft. Sycorax had cast a spell and brought the dead to life" (96). Others in the village have a problem with the new child because he is an outsider, "the first African to arrive in the islands" (96). In fact, we find that Dulé will always feel "displaced" on the island (104). Sycorax is banished from her village and sent to live with her brother, who supports her decision to live "outside the nexus of the tribe" (99). In this regard, Warner rewrites Shakespeare's presentation of "This blue-eyed hag [...] brought with child" to the island (1.2.269). In her descriptions of the relationship between Sycorax and Dulé, Warner echoes Shakespeare's language, giving it to the villagers. She describes the villagers' opinion on this relationship: "Her whelp, they said, and she a monster's dam" (98). We also learn in this section the significance of Dulé's name: "Sycorax gave him the name Dulé, meaning grief,

after his birth as an orphan from the sea" (96). Dulé later receives another name from the English colonizers: Caliban, clearly aligning the adopted child of Sycorax with Shakespeare's "poisonous slave" (1.2.318).

While Warner's retelling focuses on feminine voices, Caliban (née Dulé) participates in the heterglossia made available by the novel. Discussing the changing names of the island, Julie Sanders notes that "nomenclature acts as an unreliable signifier throughout—a process which confirms Caliban's assertion about the intimate relationship between colonial and linguistic power" (133).<sup>42</sup> Unlike Shakespeare's Caliban, who appears powerless when facing Prospero's powerful art, Dulé actively fights against the English colonizers. In *The Tempest*, Caliban's intellect proves superior to that of Trinculo and Stephano, whom he entreats to free him from the "tyrant" Prospero (3.2.40). Caliban repeatedly tells them to seek out the source of Prospero's power, his books:

Having first seized his books, or with a log  
 Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,  
 Or cut his wezand with thy knife. Remember  
 First to possess his books, for without them  
 He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not  
 One spirit to command. They all do hate him  
 As rootedly as I. Burn but his book. (3.2.89-95)

He instructs Trinculo and Stephano not once, but three times to secure Prospero's books before they attack the magician. While Caliban's plan fails—primarily because of the incompetence of his accomplices—he is able to identify the source of Prospero's power. Much in the same vein, Dulé recognizes the source of Kit Everard's power in the heavy artillery he possesses and in his rhetorical skills. Dulé appreciate the currency of language and persuasive powers of the colonizers. He remarks that "their speech is valueless" in regards to the lies they tell the natives (109). Upon the colonizers's arrival on the island, Dulé beseeches Sycorax:

Curse them, Mother. Use your arts, change their condition with your skills, alter their shape, as only you know how. So that they learn to fear us and do not stay. They use our water and eat our substance, they're not welcome. (111)

Instead of heeding Dulé's timely advice, Sycorax urges her adopted son to be hopeful and "have more belief in [their] capacities" (111). Unfortunately, Dulé's fears about the English prove legitimate. After Kit Everard's company attacks Sycorax and Ariel, Dulé organizes an attack on the English. The English are "extraordinarily well-prepared for their attack," and Dulé is "brought to trial as a ringleader, to be an example to others" (201).<sup>43</sup> While Warner's Caliban mirrors Shakespeare's



insofar as both characters curse their respective lots in life, Warner's novel provides a greater understanding and sense of humanity about this character as well as a stronger of agency, despite the restrictive scene and actualization of violence.

Instrumental to preparing the English for the attack is Sycorax's other adopted child, Ariel, who becomes physically involved with Kit Everard. While Sebastian and Antonio plot Gonzalo's death in *The Tempest*, Ariel comes to Prospero's loyal councilor and sings to him, stating, "My master through his art foresees the danger / That you, his friend, are in, and send me forth" (2.1.298-99). In a similar vein, Warner's Ariel seeks out Kit, a Prospero figure in his own right, on the night of Dulé's planned attack to demand that he release her from his bonds as a prisoner when he fails to acknowledge their child, Roukoubé. This unc customary meeting—"Ariel had never summoned him before"—alerts Kit that something is wrong (182). As he reflects on this unusual encounter, Kit sees the plan "as clear as a map of a well-charted route unfolded on the captain's table, what lay in store for him and for the settlement" (185). He promptly repositions the English troops and handily defeats the uprising natives.

Before Kit's arrival and Ariel's affair with him, we learn much about Sycorax's adopted daughter. Warner rewrites Ariel as another outsider, like Dulé, but chooses to make this character

female. An Arawak, Ariel is abandoned by her biological mother to save her daughter from a life of sexual servitude as a slave. Sycorax's brother decides that his sister would be the best "foster mother" for the young girl (106). Ariel is described as "a solitary, a dreamer, she doesn't fit in" (106). Sycorax's brother assures his sister that the young girl would be "a help" to her, specifically in dyeing the indigo that has become Sycorax's trade and the reason for her blue eyes (106).<sup>44</sup> So, it comes to pass that Ariel lives with Sycorax, and the older woman grows attached to her adopted daughter. We learn that "the love for Ariel that grew in Sycorax was greater than any she had felt for the children she had borne; it was sweeter than the passion for survival that had attached her to Dulé" (114). In addition to establishing the bond between these two women, this description also anticipates the fragments of information about this relationship present in *The Tempest*.

After suffering through the brutal attack by Kit and his men, Sycorax is left badly burned, broken, and totally dependent on Ariel. Ariel knows that "even her art can't save her, not now" (159). Sycorax has taught her art to Ariel, who is able to save not only her mother but also some of Kit's wounded men through her careful application of various plant-based compotes.<sup>45</sup> Motivated by lust and Ariel's knowledge of the land, Kit holds her and her dying mother hostage. Kit hopes that

Ariel will "teach [them] the secrets of the isle—decipher its noises for [them]" (141). During her captivity, Ariel becomes sexually involved with Kit, resulting in a pregnancy. She also learns some English from her constant contact with the colonizers (163). As Ariel cooperates with Kit, Sycorax grows bitter and curses Ariel "and any offspring she might bear all the evils she could call down upon them" (170). In this regard, Warner's Ariel is also Sycorax's prisoner, mirroring Shakespeare's depiction of this relationship. Ariel also loses her voice as a result of her double imprisonment: "she choked on speech [...] Kit's language was bitter in her mouth [...] she had no more words, indeed it seemed to her she no longer owned a voice" (173). Cheryl Glenn discusses the power of silence in her study *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, in which she presents the often gendered role of silence. By viewing silence as a primarily feminine rhetorical device, Glenn discusses how it can be used to undermine political (male) authority. This presentation of silence applies nicely to the recovered experiences of Ariel and Sycorax. While they both lose their actual voices in the novel, readers hear their stories through Warner's strong narrative voice.

### **The Everard Family and Sycorax's Legacy**

Tying together all of the "colored" sections of Warner's novel is Sycorax.<sup>46</sup> While the novel claims that "Sycorax has no power," and critics, such as Julie Sanders, claim that "Warner often appears proactive in silencing—or, at least, holding in a kind of enforced silence—her reclaimed protagonist," she unites the interrelated stories by hearing them as they happen (Warner 206, Sanders 147). Sycorax's fate—as a victim of the violence inherent in colonizing—haunts the lives of the contemporary heirs to Kit Everard's colonial legacy. Miranda Everard, the daughter of the colonial Kit's namesake, struggles to find her voice in a world that views her as different, "swarthy" (232). Unlike Shakespeare's Miranda, Warner's is not the center of her father's universe, his "cherubin" (1.2.153).<sup>47</sup> The novel makes clear that the stormy relationship between Miranda's parents—Kit and Astrid—leaves little room for Miranda; her place, or lack of place, appears in scenic terms: "behind, between, to one side, never with, the early child whose existence becomes a slash parting the halves of a couple, not a hyphen that links them together" (36). Miranda survives "the tempests of her childhood," but struggles to find her place and her voice in the world (36).

One of the constant struggles Miranda faces that links her to Sycorax is silence. Sycorax notes when Ariel ceases to speak during her imprisonment—to Kit and to her. Ariel "choked on

speech, for nobody could return an answer [...] She no longer owned a voice, but only a hollow drum for a head on which others beat their summons" (173). While Ariel loses the will to speak given the conditions of the scene, Miranda desperately tries "to fill the silence that she feared in others, to ward off the invisibility she feared in herself" in the twentieth century (235). As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that much of Miranda's anxiety is rooted in her family's history. Two pivotal, interrelated events force Miranda to confront her family's legacy: her encounter with an actor and her trip to Sycorax's island.

As a young adult, Miranda makes her living as an artist—reversing Shakespeare's designation of Prospero-as-artist. On an assignment in the 1960s, Miranda encounters a politically active actor, George Felix. As she photographs the movie set, George angrily confronts her, demanding to know "who gave permission for this" (254). He indicts Miranda as "some bitch exploiting [him]" (255). Miranda tries to apologize by claiming she "didn't have a moment to ask," but George rejects her excuse by shouting, "Aha, whitey just didn't get a chance to ask. And isn't that just the case with everything you gone and done over the centuries of black oppression?" (255). Miranda accepts his anger "from her position of privilege" (257). Critics such as Cakebread and Zabuz are quick to point out George's connections

to Caliban. In this early passage, he rails against Miranda as a representative of the establishment that oppresses him much in the same vein that Shakespeare's Caliban curses.

Shortly after this important encounter, Miranda meets her "sister-aunt" Goldie (née Xanthe) for cake.<sup>48</sup> Xanthe invites Miranda to accompany her to *Enfant-Béate* for the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their ancestor Kit Everard's arrival on the island. Miranda is immediately uncomfortable about the proposition, asking Xanthe, "should we go at all?" (267). Xanthe references the importance of History "with a big *H*" and claims that "you can't make it happen or unhappen just as you please" (267). Yet Miranda is "silenced as she contemplated her thoughts," thinking of George Felix and her sister-aunt's persuasive nature (267).

As usual, Goldie gets what she wants, and Miranda and her father, Kit, accompany her to the anniversary celebration. This change in scene—from London to *Enfant-Béate*—forces Miranda's hand in confronting her family's past. As Goldie makes plans to build a hotel and casino on the island, Miranda attempts the difficult task of being a responsible artist. She encounters two native women on the island, selling bread and thinks that

She would like to find a way of making an image of  
such women [...], which would be neither exotic-erotic  
like Ingres or Matisse odalisques, nor indignant-

realist like Abolitionist propaganda, neither Noble Savage nor Heroic Victim, but would connect with their history all the same. (306)

Miranda briefly thinks of photography but realizes that "when [she] take[s] a photograph it still comes out with [her] stamp on it" (307). While simultaneously evoking the earlier scene in which Miranda takes George's photograph without permission and Prospero's manipulative art in which he controls the island and all creatures on it, this passage shows Miranda trying to negotiate between her desires as an artist and the desires of her subjects in hopes of doing her work in a morally sound fashion. It also reflects Warner's own fear—expressed in "Between the Colonist and the Creole"—in which she discusses the integrity, or lack thereof, of claiming her Creole heritage after her family's involvement in the oppression of slaves from Africa and from the islands.

This uneasiness about revisiting the site of such crimes has a profound effect on the contemporary Everard family. Miranda's father, Kit, decides to stay with his half-sister, Xanthe, and her husband, Sy, to help operate the casino and hotel. Miranda removes herself from this scene, a sort of second act of colonization in which the natives' only option is to perform menial jobs for the benefit of wealthy (white) Europeans and Americans. Much action happens on the island

after Miranda's departure and return to London. Her father occupies a space removed: "'Nigger' Everard, they used to call him behind his back at school back in Surrey half a century ago. But he was one of the bakkra to the villagers, all the same" (345). It appears that Kit, with his Creole heritage, cannot escape the loneliness of his childhood, "not quite belonging, yet with nowhere else, to go" by the end of the novel (65). Xanthe's fate is in the sea that she loved, drowning like her half-brother's mother years before her, with only Sycorax hearing her desperate cries.<sup>49</sup>

In many respects, Xanthe is Warner's rewriting of Shakespeare's Miranda. Xanthe is the product of Anthony (Ant) Everard's second marriage to a much younger woman, Gillian. Ant adores Xanthe and usually grants his daughter's every wish. During an important scene set in the 1960s, Xanthe becomes Miranda's "accomplice" in their mutual desire to stay in Paris. Miranda notes that the usually unflappable Ant, her grandfather,

Became brittle and porous when he was in contact with his daughter; Miranda could see that he reacted to Xanthe's silkiness as if she weren't a clear, sparkling water, but a fiery solvent that he, for all his well-preened feathers, could not resist. (243)

Later in life, Xanthe further exerts her authority over her father by rejecting her given name and using her nickname,



Goldie, echoing both the King Midas story Serafine tells the girls at the beginning of the novel and her charmed life. Xanthe regards her relationship with her father in hostile terms, suggesting that she has been thwarted every step of the way" by Ant, specifically in regards to romantic relationships (315). Xanthe recounts her father has interfered in all of her romantic encounters, going so far to suggest, "Poppa would have liked to marry me himself if he could [...] Under lock and key, lock and key, in the tower forever" (314).<sup>50</sup> Ant's interference in Xanthe's relationships in some way mirrors Prospero's orchestration of Miranda's engagement to Ferdinand. While he feigns disapproval of the union, Prospero ultimately controls the outcome of the betrothal. In Warner's rewriting of this scenario, Xanthe marries Sy, a man Ant strongly dislikes, without her father's blessing. Xanthe notifies her father of the marriage via telegraph from *Enfant-Béate*, the setting of her nuptials, to London, suggesting the import of scene in this situation.

While many of the novel's characters think that "everything [she] touch[es] turns to gold," Xanthe has trouble expressing her love for others in the novel (343).<sup>51</sup> It is once she realizes that she truly loves Sy—the she "become[s] vulnerable to love"—that her fairytale life begins to unravel. This realization is primarily motivated by scenic conditions: the

failed coup of island militants on *Enfant-Béate*. As Xanthe drowns in the oyster beds, the narrator indicates that Sycorax hears her cries for help (352).

As Xanthe drowns, Sycorax hears many competing stories, but two tales dominate: the drowning of Xanthe and the rise of Atala Seacole. Both events occur because of an uprising, organized by a Caliban-figure, Iqbar Malik (née Jimmy Dunn). During and after the failed coup attempt, Sycorax hears the voices of these very different women: "the resolve of Xanthe Everard was heard by the old woman, but it wasn't that cry that entered and rattled the old woman's bones... The cry that shook her into consciousness came later" (352). The voice that is able to reach Sycorax belongs to Atala, an English-educated islander who despises the exploitation of her homeland for profit. As Atala voices her concerns about the ways in which the whites have exploited the island and its people, she urges her followers that,

our children must not become a class of servants once again to the bakkra, the white bakkra [...] Like my grandmother, who went to England as a servant, following that family where her grandmother before her and others before that had all been slaves. (355)

Atala's powerful rhetoric gives Sycorax hope—that "everything that happened all those years ago will be accomplished"—and also

reminds readers of how commonplace the practice she mentions—of leaving one's home to serve—is for the islanders (356). Of particular importance, it reminds readers of Serafine's situation, in which she, too, left a daughter on the island to work for the Everard's in England. While it would be convenient and perhaps satisfying to claim that Atala is possibly Serafine's grandchild, Warner's complex treatment of colonialism's legacy in the novel resists that kind of tidy fairytale closure. Rather, I argue that Warner proliferates this scenario in order to show the scope of this practice, of losing one's family in order to survive in a postcolonial world.

### **Conclusion/Coming Full Circle**

Family is at the heart of the novel's end as loose ends come together. After Xanthe's untimely death and Atala's reordering of the island (which recovers its original name of Liamuiga), Miranda remains in London, working as an artist. She is reunited with George Felix, who has now taken the name Shaka Ifetabe, after donating one of her images to a charity that supports famine relief and health education in South Africa. The scene of their reunion takes place at a church converted into a theater space; Shaka is rehearsing when Miranda arrives. The play is Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; Shaka plays Caliban and recites the "You taught me language" speech when Miranda enters.

Miranda immediately thinks, "Oh God, how, I'd like to learn me a new language. Beyond cursing, beyond ranting" (368). As she tries to deny her feelings for Shaka, she reminds herself that "she wasn't living inside one of Shakespeare's sweet-tempered comedies, nor in one of his late plays with their magical reconciliations, their truces and appeasements and surcease of pain" (370). It becomes clear that the two share a special bond and that a romantic relationship will develop. Shaka reflects on the importance of names, telling Miranda,

What a beautiful name, and it suits you. I changed mine in the high times, when Africa and roots were the answer—finding the lost Fatherland—and George was whitey's name for us—'Happy George,' always a-laughin' and a-smilin', God's li'l chilun. So now...I've ended up with no name. I am the Unnameable, ha-ha, which is why I know how to play Caliban, of course. (373)

While Shaka claims he has no name, he does have a voice, and a strong one, in the novel. This exchange between the two ends with "they had begun play," suggesting the game of chess in Shakespeare's play but moving beyond a mere game into something deeper, an exchange that will find them "engaging with each other so raptly that for a time they would never even notice anyone else outside looking in on the work they were absorbed

in, crossing the lines, crossing the squares, far out on the board in the other's sea" (373).

The relationship between Miranda and Shaka produces a baby they name Serafine. The ending of the novel is therefore hopeful, a sort of reconciliation between Shakespeare's Miranda and Caliban, and many critics such as Zabus view this happy ending through Warner's scholarly work on fairytales. While the ending is happy, I find the fairytale reading to be reductive, since the novel does not close with Miranda and Shaka, happily ever after. Instead, the novel reflects Warner's claim that "the book is about survival through language" ("Between the Colonist and the Creole" 203). With Serafine receiving the last line of dialogue and Sycorax the last paragraph of narration, the novel emphasizes the importance of having a voice and of fostering a scene that encourages more than cursing.

### Chapter Three

'The only voice is your own': Polyphony, Place, and Pedagogy in  
Gloria Naylor's Signification of Shakespeare

In *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Linden Hills*, *Mama Day*, and *Bailey's Café*, Gloria Naylor presents Shakespeare—the myth and the work—in a myriad of ways. At once oppressive, exclusionary, and inspirational, Shakespeare's presence in Naylor's novels warrants careful consideration in terms of scene and voice. This quartet of interconnected novels simultaneously presents Shakespeare as the quintessential representative of white culture and also, as a source of inspiration for the disenfranchised. At the heart of Naylor's treatment of Shakespeare is the late romance, *The Tempest*, specifically the slave Caliban and his early declaration to Prospero,

You taught me language, and my profit on't

Is I know how to curse. (1.2.364-5)

Much like Jane Smiley, Naylor seeks to right the wrongs she finds in her reading of Shakespeare's corpus and to open a space for a historically silenced point of view. Also like Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* and Marina Warner's *Indigo*, Naylor's quartet of Shakespeare-inflected novels has political implications; for Naylor, exposing injustice for African-Americans in the

macrocosm of America and within the microcosm of communities dominates her novels. At the crux of this dilemma presented in Naylor's novels are a sense of place (and of belonging) and of having a voice.

Valerie Traub discusses the dilemma African-American women writers face as they try "to negotiate a relationship to an Anglo-European language and tradition that doubly defines them as absence and lack - as black and as women" (151). In her novels, Naylor addresses this problem as she seeks to restore a feminine order by using a "status-studded example of Anglo-European patriarchal culture," and the works of William Shakespeare serve as a prominent point of reference in her "act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entertaining an old text from a new critical direction" (Traub 152, Rich 167). In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin analyzes speech acts and asserts that "one's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse" (348). Naylor tries to supplant the cultural dominance of the white, patriarchal discourse Shakespeare represents with a black, matriarchal ordering of language through her signification of his plays with the inclusion of a variety of voices and with an emphasis on scene.

Naylor cites Shakespeare—his work and his reputation—and simultaneously denies consciously appropriating from *The Tempest* in her novel *Mama Day*.<sup>52</sup> Naylor explicitly references Shakespeare's plays and his reputation, demanding an awareness of the bard from her readership. For example, she misquotes Shakespeare in *Mama Day* and uses him as a stereotypical symbol of the cultural elite in *Linden Hills* and *The Women of Brewster Place*. Naylor does not invent a mass audience for Shakespeare; instead, she relies on the reality of such an audience, reflecting "how omnipresent and how dispersed a figure of cultural authority 'Shakespeare' has become" in popular culture (Traub 159). Peter Erickson expands on this argument in his essay, positing that Toni Morrison serves as Naylor's primary literary influence, not Shakespeare. Erickson claims that "Morrison provides an identity and a voice, which Shakespeare is powerless to do," undermining the authority of the Shakespearean focus and emphasizing the strength of an African-American literary tradition (327).<sup>53</sup> Given these circumstances, Naylor simultaneously reifies and rejects Shakespearean stereotypes, suggesting the need to question both the value and the harm of viewing Shakespeare as *the* "reservoir of cultural capital" (Bristol 51).



### **The Importance of Scene**

As discussed elsewhere in this study, in *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke establishes an important connection between act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose in drama. In his discussion of the scene-agent ratio, Burke finds a closely connected relationship at work between agents and setting (7) and identifies the significance of the scene in shaping the development of a play's action. Burke also suggest that scene can influence the other pentadic elements such as the actor, the act, and agency. Burke's pentad applies equally well to Naylor's novels in regards to the importance of the various scenes influencing the ways the characters behave. While Warner relates the story of Sycorax to the colonization of her island by borrowing from Shakespeare's play, Naylor expands on the use of scene to challenge various binary oppositions present in *The Tempest*. For example, the relationship between George and Cocoa appears to set up a facile male/female dichotomy in relation to gender roles in the novel that is also present in many of Shakespeare's plays, including *The Tempest*. In the play, Miranda's chastity monopolizes Ferdinand's pragmatic interest, while Miranda considers Ferdinand "a thing divine," "so fair a house" and sympathizes with his plight in pursuit of her love (1.2.423, 1.2.458). From the beginning of the novel, gender stereotypes play a prominent role; Cocoa appears emotional,

whereas George seems reasonable. Naylor, however, does not simply present gender stereotypes; instead, she challenges these roles as George admits that he has "the same myths about southern women that [Cocoa] [has] about northern men" (33). In a pivotal sequence of events, Cocoa and George have a major dispute before his annual football trip in which Cocoa calls George "a pompous, snide, uptight son-of-a-bitch" (128). During his trip, George decides to propose to Cocoa; however, after his return home, he watches as she exits the apartment building of her former lover.<sup>54</sup> Instead of proposing to her, George explains "why [he doesn't] like being called the son of a bitch" (130). He tells Cocoa about his past: his mother was a prostitute and his father "was one of her customers" (131).<sup>55</sup> He surmises that he does not "have all the pieces. But there are enough of them to lead [him] to believe that [his mother] was not a bitch" (131). After George finishes his story, Cocoa asks him to marry her, reversing the tradition of the man proposing to the woman. This turn-of-events is a direct result of the scene, which supports such an act. In *The Tempest*, Miranda has been isolated on an island, seeing only her father and Caliban, whereas Cocoa has left her isolated island for the city. While Prospero gives his virgin daughter away in marriage to Ferdinand to "make [...] / The Queen of Naples" (1.2.453-4), a mature and experienced Cocoa suggests the matrimonial union with George.

In addition to challenging scenic stereotypes, Naylor also questions interpretations of Shakespeare's *King Lear* when her characters discuss the play. One of Cocoa and George's first dates centers on the dark tragedy. George views the play primarily through the role of Edmund. The story of Gloucester's illegitimate child has "a special poignancy for [George], reading about the rage of a bastard son, [his] own father having disappeared long before [he] was born" (106). Cocoa also identifies with Edmund as her father abandoned her family before her birth. Traub contends that "their mutual identification with the Shakespearean bastard dissolves their personal differences, and a unified aesthetic response literally leads to a sexual union" (158). Traub's comment appears valid as Cocoa and George consummate their relationship after a lively discussion of the play. George and Cocoa seem to "slenderly know [themselves]" during their romance, as Lear does throughout most of Shakespeare's play (1.2.288-9). Both characters, however, choose to privilege the Gloucester subplot over the undoing of Lear, rejecting traditional readings of the play but also ignoring Edmund's ultimate downfall at the close of the tragedy.

The most apparent scenic opposition in the novel occurs between the rural island Willow Springs and the urban metropolis New York City, appearing to reflect the disparity Shakespeare

creates between Caliban's island and Prospero's Milan. Cocoa grew up on a secluded southern island, while George has always called New York "home." Despite the apparent contrast between the two settings, Gary Storhoff perceptively notes that New York City is an island like Willow Springs, leading him to posit that "Manhattan is not the antithesis of Willow Springs but [rather] its complement" (38). As a native, George sees New York as:

A network of small towns, some even smaller than here in Willow Springs. It could be one apartment building, a handful of blocks, a single square mile hidden off with its own language, newspapers, and magazines - its own laws and codes of behavior, and sometimes even its own judge and juries [...] To live in New York you'd have to know about the florist on Jamaica Avenue who carried yellow roses even though they didn't move well, but it was his dead wife's favorite color [...] [Cocoa's] crowd would never know about the sweetness that bit at the back of your throat from the baklava at those dark bakeries in Astoria or from walking past a synagogue on Fort Washington Avenue and hearing a cantor sing. (61)

George displays an acute eye for detail with his thoughtful appreciation for the "small towns" and people of his city, and he proceeds to share these "secrets" with Cocoa, in a sense,

showing her how his island is a lot like hers. Shakespeare, however, presents no relatedness between the respective worlds of Prospero and Caliban in the manner that Naylor reveals in her treatment of the urban and the rural.

### **Signification/Naming in Naylor's Novels**

Unlike other borrowers such as Marina Warner, Naylor does not engage in a direct appropriation of Shakespearean characters in any of her novels. For example, in *Mama Day*, most critics identify the title character as Naylor's version of Prospero; however, Mama Day's given name is Miranda, suggesting Prospero's daughter. Establishing whether Sapphira or Ruby represents Sycorax; whether George mirrors Ferdinand or Caliban; and whether Cocoa behaves as Shakespeare's Miranda or Ophelia, her "real" name, or signifier, in the novel seems a moot point given Naylor's mode of rewriting. Ultimately, the ambiguity of Naylor's usage of Shakespearean names signals the role of signification in the book. In discussing the word "signification" in Black and Standard English, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes the two-fold importance of the identical spelling. He posits that:

The signifier "Signification" has remained identical in spelling to its white counterpart to demonstrate, first that a simultaneous, but negated, parallel

discursive universe exists within the larger white discursive universe [...]. It also seems apparent that retaining the identical signifier argues strongly that the most poignant level of black-white differences is that of meaning, of "signification" in the most literal sense. (49)

Gates's comment proves relevant in relation to Naylor's appropriation of Shakespeare's plays and other traditionally "white" elements in her novel, especially her use of names. Traub finds that in the novel "every character has many names, drawn from both Anglo- and African-American heritages; each name carries its own history, and their stories are always in the process of being told" (160). Using Shakespearean names does not necessarily denote a direct correlation between the predecessors and namesakes, but Naylor's deliberate choice of names drawn from Shakespeare's work warrants careful attention.

In *Mama Day*, two of Naylor's main characters share the same names as Shakespearean women; however, both Miranda and Ophelia prefer pet names in the novel. Almost everyone in the Willow Springs community refers to Miranda as Mama Day and to Ophelia as Cocoa. Based on the portrait Naylor paints of Mama Day, it seems clear that this character has little in common with Shakespeare's Miranda, but Mama Day is also a daughter. In flashback sequences, we find that Mama Day's father, John-Paul,

referred to his daughter as "Little Mama" and taught her much about the natural world (78-9). While we never see the types of lessons Prospero teaches Miranda, we do learn about the type of education that Mama Day receives from her father. As she searches for the medicinal bark of a choke-cherry tree in the forest, an older Mama Day stumbles through weeds and curses. In response to her cursing, "she hears her daddy's voice": "*Little Mama, these woods been here before you and me, so why should they get out of your way—learn to move around 'em*" (78). This memory reminds Mama Day that "the whole island was her playground" as a child, when she was "a spirit in the woods" (79). Mama Day's memory of her father's wisdom shows that John-Paul taught his daughter to respect and cooperate with nature, not against to work against it as Prospero does in *The Tempest*. The lovely description of Mama Day as "a spirit" also suggests a connection to Shakespeare's Ariel, further complicating any notion of Naylor's direct rewriting of Prospero.

The name of Mama Day's great niece, Cocoa (née Ophelia) also obscures the possibility of establishing a direct correlation between Naylor's characters and Shakespeare's. Early in the novel, Cocoa tells George, during a job interview that she is "used to answering to Cocoa." After George inquires about the origins of this name, Cocoa explains, "I've had it from a child—in the South it's called a pet name. My

grandmother and great-aunt gave it to me..." (29). Giving Cocoa her "pet name" takes on an additional layer of meaning when considering the fate of her mother and great aunt, both named Peace. Both of these women have drowned, calling to mind Ophelia's "muddy death" in *Hamlet* (5.1.183). While Cocoa prefers this "pet name" given to her by her grandmother and great-aunt, she also has another name that they—Abigail and Mama Day—use throughout their private discussions about her: "Baby Girl," suggesting their maternal relationship with the orphaned Cocoa.

The significance of Naylor's naming also shapes *Linden Hills*. An economically-disadvantaged young man who composes poetry in his head and is able to recite hundreds of poems in the oral tradition in *Linden Hills* does not suggest one of Shakespeare's characters but rather the bard himself. Naylor's Willie is an outsider in the privileged community of Linden Hills, allowing him greater insight into the contradictions of this world. His access to this world comes from his friend Lester, a disillusioned son of Linden Hills. As the two walk past a school one day, Lester notes the ubiquitous fences around centers for learning. He reflects on the presence of these barriers "even at the university: big, stone fences - and why? The gates are open, so it's not to keep anybody out or in. Why



fences?" he muses (45). Lester quickly answers his own question:

To get you used to the idea that what they have in there is different, special. Something to be separated from the rest of the world. They get you thinking fences, man, don't you see it? Then when they've fenced you in from six years old till you're twenty-six, they can let you out because you're ready to believe that what they've given you up here, their version of life, is special. And you fence your own self in after that, protecting it from everybody else *out there*. (45)

After this early conversation, Willie begins to note the disproportionate amount of wealth in Linden Hills in comparison to his own community, Putney Wayne. He notices that one resident of Linden Hills "[has] got more books than the library over on Wayne Avenue" (255). After working for these privileged people, Willie thinks that "of all the places in the world, this neighborhood had a chance of giving us at least one black Shakespeare," but Lester quickly reminds him that "Linden Hills ain't about that" (283). It seems that what Linden Hill is "about" is keeping up appearances, ignoring the need for a black Shakespeare or the opportunity to support Willie's talent.

Characters such as Willie and Kiswana Browne do suggest some hope in the bleak worlds they inhabit. Kiswana connects *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Linden Hills*. She is simply a point of reference in *Linden Hills*: Lester challenges his mother's claim that he will end up a "bum like his dead father" if he does not go to college by reminding his mother that Kiswana quit school before earning a degree (28). His mother counters by describing Kiswana as "mentally disturbed [...] putting holes in her nose, taking some heathen name, and going to live in the slums of Brewster Place" (28). Kiswana has a much greater presence in *The Women of Brewster Place*, receiving her own chapter in the book. She proves to be an idealistic young woman from a privileged upbringing who hopes to help her "people" (84). During a heated exchange with her mother, she explains that she rejects her given name, Melanie, and chooses to live in the slums of Brewster Place instead of comfortable Linden Hills, because she is "trying to be proud of [her] heritage and the fact that [she is] of African descent" (85). While Kiswana's intentions seem sincere, she appears to be losing the "fight to make things better" in Brewster Place (84). For example, she invites a poverty-stricken mother, Cora Lee, who is obsessed with babies, to bring her children to a community production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>56</sup> Cora Lee worries about "This stuff here - Shakespeare and all that.

It'll be too deep for them and they'll start acting up and embarrassing me in front of all those people" (119). Kiswana tries to assuage Cora Lee's fears by describing the production:

It's going to be funny and colorful and he's brought it up to date. There's music and dancing - he's going to have the actors do the Hustle around a maypole - and they slap each other five and all sorts of stuff like that. And it'll have fairies - all kids like stories with fairies and things in them; even if they don't understand every word, it'll be great for them.

(119)

Implicit in Kiswana's description is her assumption that Shakespeare has educational value. Indeed, Cora Lee later thinks that "[her children] needed things like Shakespeare and all that. They would do better in school and stop being so bad. They'd grow up to be successful like her sister and brother," suggesting that Shakespeare can get her children out of the ghetto and make them better people (121). After attending the performance, one of Cora Lee's sons poses the question, "Shakespeare's black?" Her reply is "not yet" (127). While this episode inspires hope for Cora Lee and her children, it quickly ends when the section closes, placing Cora Lee in bed with another nameless man and suggesting the cycle of unplanned pregnancies and subsequent children she can not support will

continue (127). Despite the hopelessness of this scene, Kiswana and Cora Lee are able to voice their experiences through the dedicated chapters in Naylor's novel.

While there is an audience for Shakespeare in Cora Lee's disadvantaged community, it is not clear if there is space for the bard and for the individual voice in *Bailey's Café*. Miss Maple, (née Stanley) remembers an important day in his life, the day his father presented him with an extravagant graduation gift: a handsome collection of Shakespeare's complete works. As father and son are picking up the gift, a racist, working class family, the Gatlins, attacks Stanley's father, forcing him to question the possibility of equality. The Gatlins strip father and son naked and lock them in a room. Soon, "the stench of *The Tempest* [...] [fills] that close room" after the Gatlins set the rare collection on fire (183). Stanley's father dons women's clothing that he finds in a cardboard box, breaks through the door, and confronts his attackers. Stanley listens as his father explains to the Gatlins that:

The founding fathers of this democracy passed on to you who call yourselves real Americans a monumental lie. All of us are not created equal. Some of us are more intelligent and physically fit than others. Some of us have the iron will to hold on to a dream. My

parents were such people. [...] So for better and for worse, you are not my equal. (185)

The father's characterization of democracy as merely a pipe dream has a powerful effect on his son.

Reflecting on this pivotal moment later in life, after countless interviews and rejections from positions he is more than qualified to fill, Stanley musters the courage to wear women's clothing and to become Miss Maple. The narrator of *Bailey's Café* shares much information about Miss Maple, explaining that "as soon as he opens his mouth, you can tell he's not from the rough side of town. If anything, it's a cultured voice and it's clear he's had a lot of schooling" (164). Once Miss Maple begins to tell his story, it becomes clear that he has received "a lot of schooling," a Ph.D. from Stanford, to be exact. After being released from a federal penitentiary for objecting to service in the War, Stanley actively pursues a career in marketing, traveling across the country to interview for positions. Unfortunately, Stanley encounters the same scenario at each interview, explaining,

I could feel the desperation in the way they kept reading and rereading my college transcripts, flipping through the charts—God, how they could use someone like this, needed someone like this—and then the shattered hopes when they finally looked back up at me

and a different man hadn't materialized in front of them. (197)

After repeatedly enduring this treatment because of the color of his skin, Stanley decides to shun the uncomfortable suits he had been wearing to these interviews and to start wearing women's clothing. Once Stanley makes this decision and puts it into practice, he becomes Miss Maple, choosing to do more with language than curse. Despite enduring criticism from some characters in the novel for violating a social norm, for the most part, the people of Bailey's Café accept Miss Maple on his own terms, suggesting the possibility of a voice and of a community.

In terms of community building, Naylor's first two novels present little hope for men and women of color of finding a supportive space. No safe space exists for women, or men, in *Linden Hills*. The women in the homes of *Linden Hills* appear disconnected from any homosocial relationships. One of the most isolated characters in this dark novel is Willa Prescott Needed, the great niece of Mama Day.<sup>57</sup> Married to the founder and most influential resident of the Linden Hills community, Luther Needed, Willa thinks that,

Marriage would set her free [...] Freed from those endless luncheons with other lonely women who could well afford the pewter-and-fern atmosphere that

accompanied the piano bar and stuffed sole as they talked about all the right things while the real things would have to wait until the second carafe was ordered. Because they could ill afford the reflections waiting at the bottom of their empty wineglasses, that something must be missing if they only had each other across the table week and week.

(117)

The desperation to marry that the omniscient narrator presents in this passage explains why Willa would "marry a man that she didn't love" and abandon her circle of women friends (117). This desperation also explains why Willa never questioned Luther's controlling nature—his demand that she be "all in white" for their wedding or the list of household duties—before her imprisonment in her own home. Ultimately, Luther locks Willa in their basement, "control[ing] her food and water and light" after doubting the paternity of their son (68). Luther is convinced that the child Willa has is not his biological son because of the child's lighter skin tone. During her imprisonment, the boy dies leaving Willa in a basement cell with her child's decomposing body. The narrator reveals Luther's ruthlessness as he reflects that the child's death is "regrettable. But it had been an expedient turn of events, for he hadn't really thought about what to do with it once she was

allowed to come back upstairs" (68). This passage chillingly exposes Luther's nature as he refers to his dead son as "it" and views the death as a boon. During this torture, Willa realizes as she rummages through the boxes in the basement prison her husband has forced her in that she has no friends to miss her; she thinks of "the answers she would never get to the letters that hadn't been sent, the phone calls that hadn't been made" (121). She finally understands that "all those lonely luncheon partners would never miss her now since she had been dead to them for years" (121). Another resident of Linden Hills tries desperately to avoid allowing the expectations of the community to destroy her. As she nears despair, Laurel "[thinks] about the two people who had come the closest to being called friends. The three [women] formed a strange triangle where she was in the middle between a woman who admired her and a woman she admired" (240). Unfortunately, these two women in Laurel's triangle cannot help her, as Willa is locked in the basement and Ruth is ill; Laurel commits suicide shortly after this attempt to reconnect with her female friends. Not only does *Linden Hills* present an actualization of the suggested violence of *Taming of the Shrew*, but it also echoes the destruction of the female community at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and suggests the dire consequences of losing that support system.



Luther's imprisonment of Willa in order to teach her a lesson about his power echoes Petruccio's kidnapping and holding of Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew*. Petruccio claims, "I will be master of what is mine own" when he announces his plan to hold Katherine against her will (4.1.100). This statement also reflects Luther's treatment of his Will in *Linden Hills*. The elimination of a female support system for Willa also conjures the ending of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which Helena and Hermia essentially lose their voices through marriage. Many critics have written about this community of women in Shakespeare's comedy, such as Jill Ehnenn, noting the silence from these two characters once they are bethrothed.<sup>58</sup>

Naylor's first novel, *The Women of Brewster Place*, also highlights violence against women. From Cora Lee's memories of "fractured jaws [and] bruised eyes" to the brutal gang rape of Lorraine, Naylor presents a bleak scene for the women who reside in Brewster Place (114). The title suggests a feminine commune, but the setting is far from a utopia; instead, it is a ghetto, "the bastard child" of the local government, and a place populated by those who "had no choice and would remain for the same reason" (1, 4). As the women of this community struggle with the poverty and isolation of Brewster Place, they appear powerless to change the situation in which they live. Inherent in its shaping of their sense of identity, motivation, and

attitude, the scene influences their agency. Kenneth Burke points out that this overlap naturally occurs in discussions of scene-agent and scene-agency ratios as agency "serves as an element common to both scene and agents" (9). *The Women of Brewster Place* opens with a description of the apartment complex: "Brewster Place was the bastard child of several clandestine meetings between the alderman of the sixth district and the managing director of Unico Realty Company" (1). Born out of political maneuverings, Brewster Place flourishes until the city erects a wall that cuts the complex off from the surrounding city. The community quickly begins to deteriorate after becoming "a dead-end street" (2). Naylor personifies Brewster Place as a living being through her characterization of the setting: "Brewster Place knew that unlike its other children, the few who would leave forever were to be the exception rather than the rule, since they came because they had no choice and would remain for the same reason" (4). This description in the opening chapter named "Dawn" sets the tone for the story.

The structure of *The Women of Brewster Place* gives a voice to several of the Brewster Place's "daughters" (4). Seven residents of Brewster Place are highlighted through the narrative. Love infuses many of these chapters—Miss Eva saves Mattie with her kindness, just as Mattie subsequently saves Etta

with her love in light of the abuse she has suffered at the hands of men. In the end, Mattie's love cannot save Lorraine or stop the subsequent tempest. A community of women emerges as the female characters unite to destroy the man-made wall that separates them from the rest of the world after Lorraine's rape in the closing scene, but their actions appear to be motivated by a sense of hopelessness as "Brewster Place [...] waits to die" (192).

The other novels also present the strength of a female support system in the face of adversity, highlighting Shakespeare's presentation of such a system in his comedies. Similar to the refuge Mattie finds at Miss Eva's, Eve's boarding house provides a similar safe haven for displaced women in the most improvisational of all of Naylor's novels, *Bailey's Café*. A sense of timelessness and magic accents the island that is Bailey's Café. Naylor appears to come full circle with this novel by following a structure similar to the character chapters present in *The Women of Brewster Place*, except the chapter titles here suggest improvisational music such as jazz and the blues.<sup>59</sup> This last novel in the quartet ends with the birth of a prostitute's son, George. Upon George's birth, the whole community around Bailey's Café, including the Jewish shopkeeper, African-American narrator, and the cross-dressing Miss Maple, come together to celebrate the occasion. This ending gestures

toward the creation of a supportive community for the people associated with the Café, but it quickly becomes clear that George does not have a happy future as the narrator discusses the Wallace P. Andrews shelter for homeless boys. George connects *Bailey's Café* to *Mama Day*, an earlier work in which we learn much about George and his time at the shelter. Like Shakespeare's outcast Caliban, it appears that the characters of these novels inhabit a space removed.

With references to Shakespeare tying all of the novels together, Naylor's most direct and intense engagement with him occurs in *Mama Day*. She fashions her female Prospero on an island off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina in *Mama Day*. With her "gifted hands," Mama Day (née Miranda) sacrifices having a life of her own to ensure the general well being of the community of Willow Springs by serving as a mid-wife and preparing herbal remedies for neighbors (89). While none of these situations are ideal, Naylor gives women the opportunity to unite for a common cause. A true community - where men and women of different races unite - never quite comes to fruition, however.

Building this type of community almost happens in *Mama Day*, but the matriarchal ordering of Willow Springs proves unable to accommodate the masculine. The "other place" appears surrounded with mystery, only Mama Day and Cocoa access this scene until

very near the end of the novel. The other place is actually the original family home of the Day family and appears to be the source of Mama Day's magic. When Abigail mentions "hop[ing] for a miracle," Miranda thinks, "No...then we go to the other place" (96). Cocoa recalls having "seen Mama Day do a lot of things out at the other place, and when [she] told the kids at school they called [her] a liar" (97). Mystery envelops the old family home until Cocoa falls ill, courtesy of a curse by Ruby, who is the island's practitioner of black magic. Mama Day requires George's assistance in saving Cocoa, but he must enter "a part of [Cocoa's] existence that [he is] powerless in" when Mama Day urges him to "go to the other place" (177, 289). A staunch realist, George never quite believes in Mama Day's powers, but he does go to the other place, because "there was no way [he] was going to let [Cocoa] go" (301). Propelled by his love for Cocoa, George dies after following Mama Day's orders and saves his wife's life.

### **Shakespeare and Education**

Naylor's fashioning of her fictional characters as outsiders in American society not only highlights racial and economic marginalization, but also questions Shakespeare's status in cultural institutions. According to Michael Bristol, "in the United States, more so probably than in Britain,

Shakespeare has been identified with general or universal human interests, or to put it another way, with social and cultural goodness," and Naylor exploits this reputation in her novels, a method that attracts readers and calls into question Shakespeare's cultural status (16). Naylor also employs the connection between Shakespeare and democracy, a connection that continues to hold sway in the American education system. In secondary schools, most students read one Shakespeare play per academic year as part of a prescribed curriculum, and many larger school systems offer courses devoted specifically to the study of Shakespeare's work.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps, nowhere is this democratic association more obvious than with the National Endowment for the Arts' "Shakespeare in American Communities: Shakespeare for a New Generation" initiative. An image of Shakespeare in front of the American flag dominates the opening page of the program's website, and serves as a visual signpost of the democratic value of knowing Shakespeare. The NEA's website explains the objective of this program is "to introduce a new generation of audiences to the greatest playwright in the English language. In order to understand American culture or American theater, one must first understand Shakespeare" ("Shakespeare in American Communities"). The objective is telling, as it clearly proliferates "Shakespeare's status [...] as a natural fact" and appears to further reflect Bristol's

pronouncement that "the institutional elaboration of [Shakespeare's] work is then implicitly described as a natural consequence of intrinsic qualities that exert an irresistible force on later generations" (91). According to NEA statistics, 195,997 students saw a Shakespearean performance between June 2004 and May 2005 through this program ("Shakespeare in American Communities").<sup>61</sup> This program reached a staggering number of students in less than a year with the hope of helping young people better "understand American culture," and NEA provides access to performances of Shakespeare's plays as a means to that end.

As a graduate of the American education system and an enthusiast of the "Shakespeare in the Park" festival, Naylor is herself a member of a mass audience for Shakespeare.<sup>62</sup> In a series of interviews, Naylor discusses her experiences with Shakespeare as an adolescent, growing up in New York City, and how those early experiences have shaped her appreciation for Shakespeare:

My mom took us over to see "Shakespeare in the Park" and the play was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then once in junior high school I saw *Macbeth* performed, and just something about the way in which Shakespeare used language resonated within me. [...] And now, in later years, I simply look at that career and I admire it.

I've always hoped to be prolific, I never wanted to be just a one-novel person, or even a writer or one type of work. So I admire the span of his career, the things he attempted - not always successfully - and the courage of his vision. (qtd. in Fowler 129-30)

Naylor's admiration for Shakespeare began during her youth as a student in the American public school system, and was strengthened by initiatives such as Joseph Papp's enterprise with its "ideal of a democratic, non-elitist Shakespeare" (Lanier 156).

While Naylor questions the conception of Shakespeare as the measure of good taste, she does not deny the democratic possibilities of education. She presents characters from a variety of backgrounds; a few are formally educated, but most are not. Naylor's novels seek to tell the stories of all of these characters, regardless of their backgrounds. Sharon O'Dair contends that "formal and higher education offers the vulgar voice, but principally upon the condition of assimilation into the (upper) middle class, a condition that clearly works to minimize and regulate that voice" (70). Naylor is aware of this condition, and shows the disastrous effects it can have.<sup>63</sup> She, however, resists the opportunity to deify or demonize formal education or folkways, allowing each character to tell his or her story, and in a sense, undermining Caliban's claims about



the uselessness of language. Using Shakespeare as a common thread woven through these motley accounts, Naylor also resists the opportunity to lament the existence of an Americanized "popular" Shakespeare.

Even though Naylor offers a complicated view of formal education in her works of fiction, she has an Ivy League degree and has taught at several prestigious universities in the U.S.<sup>64</sup> Her engagement with the Shakespearean corpus, complex in its intricate improvisation, belies her claims of simply being a Shakespeare "fan." The alterations Naylor makes to Shakespeare's works make it difficult to pin down a definitive label for her mode of appropriation. In "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," Bakhtin notes the roots of appropriation:

The primary instance of appropriating another's discourse and language was the use made of the authoritative and sanctified word of the Bible, the Gospel, the Apostles, the fathers and doctors of the church [...] Here a whole spectrum of possible relationships toward this word comes to light, beginning at one pole with the pious and inert quotation that is isolated and set off like an icon, and ending at the other pole with the most ambiguous, disrespectful, parodic-travestying use of a quotation.

While his discussion here focuses on the medieval appropriation of holy texts, his assertion about the potentially polemical nature of such borrowings applies to works like Naylor's that engage with the sacred Shakespearean corpus. Bakhtin goes on to consider "the transitions between various nuances on this spectrum," concluding that they "are to such an extent flexible, vacillating and ambiguous that it is often difficult to decide whether we are confronting a reverent use of a sacred word or a more familiar, even parodic playing with it" (69-70). Even though Naylor's use of Shakespeare is not "reverent," it is also not "parodic" in its engagement with his body of work.

Naylor, instead, seeks to negotiate with Shakespeare as a contemporary African-American woman, recognizing Jane Smiley's assertion that "every writer of English has a relationship to [Shakespeare], both direct and indirect. English cannot be written without Shakespeare, or, for that matter read without Shakespeare" (165). Given Shakespeare's cultural standing, certain expectations exist concerning his works. Michel Foucault suggests that "[the author's name] is more than a gesture, a finger pointed at someone; it is, to a certain extent, the equivalent of a description" (1626). This statement rings especially true when considering "Shakespeare" as many readers have certain expectations from any work associated with his name. Instead of accepting the Foucaultian idea that "literary

works are totally dominated by the sovereignty of the author," Naylor approaches Shakespeare's works and his cultural currency on her own terms in her fiction (Foucault 1629).

Naylor's interplay with Shakespeare further supports Jane Smiley's contention that "drama privileges action over point of view [...] Narrative always calls into question the validity of appearance, always proposes a difference between the public perception of events and their actual meaning" (172).

Throughout Naylor's four novels, "the importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous" (Bakhtin 348). As Naylor negotiates this struggle, she simultaneously tries to defy Bakhtin's assertion that "retelling a text in one's own words is to a certain extent a double-voiced narration of another's words, for indeed 'one's own words' must not completely dilute the quality that makes another's words unique" (341). In his discussion of *Mama Day*, James Andreas posits that Naylor "displaces the monologic voice of Prospero with multivocality and polyphony" through her diverse collection of characters (115). She also rejects the limited view of the power of language that Shakespeare presents through Caliban in *The Tempest*.

Using Shakespeare as a means to learning and self improvement unifies the polyphony of Naylor's novels, and this

point of reference depends upon a mass audience's awareness of these stereotypes. Naylor aligns Shakespeare with the cultural dominance of white, patriarchal discourse, a discourse that privileges certain voices over others. She, however, does not merely present Shakespeare as the sole representative of Eurocentric elitism in her novels. Instead, as a representative for education, Shakespeare becomes the foundation on which Naylor builds her case for working towards equality. Her own relationship to Shakespeare - as a member of a mass audience and as an educator - supports such a reading. Naylor's early experiences, such as attending performances of Shakespeare's plays during the "Shakespeare in the Park" festival as a youth, accent her own agenda, informed by the democratic imperative of Papp's project. Naylor does not imply that simply seeing Shakespeare's plays will allow the economically disadvantaged and racially marginalized to get out of the ghetto with equality for all. She suggests, instead, that access to an education, to the arts, to Shakespeare, can provide the possibility of finding one's own voice, promoting more meaningful participation in any given community. In an interview, Naylor explains, "The only hope I have is for young people. If you can get to them, not with an ideology, but just with the idea that they need to examine assumptions, there's hope. I would try to teach my young people to question everything" (qtd. in Perry 101). In

the end, Naylor seeks to prove to her audience that "the only voice is your own" through her questioning of Shakespeare, his myth, and his plays (*Mama Day* 10).

## Chapter Four

'Noise has always been my friend': Echoes of *The Tempest* in Iris Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea*

Iris Murdoch's engagement with Shakespeare in her novel *The Sea, the Sea* differs from the ways in which Jane Smiley, Marina Warner, and Gloria Naylor respond to the bard in their respective works, specifically in her approach to appropriation. While Smiley, Warner, and Naylor foreground politically sensitive issues in their negotiations with Shakespeare's plays and implicitly imply Shakespeare's culpability in perpetuating troubling stereotypes therein, Murdoch seems to repress the vexed presentations of gender and race found in *The Tempest* as she reimagines the late romance. Her revisionary interest appears rooted in the morality of Shakespeare's great magician, Prospero, and more generally, the power of the artist to manipulate and control his or her audience. Her engagement with Shakespeare and his play seems almost reverential, echoing Bakhtin's discussion of early reworkings of sacred texts.<sup>65</sup> In the novel, Murdoch employs Charles Arrowby as the sole narrator—one speaker, one voice—reflecting Paul Brown's claims about Prospero's narrative power in *The Tempest*.<sup>66</sup> While Murdoch appears to suppress heteroglossia by allowing Charles to dominate

and curse throughout the novel, she systematically exposes the holes and gaps in his version of history through his unreliable narration, forcing readers to not only question Charles's morality but also Prospero's execution of power in *The Tempest*.

From the beginning of Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea*, Charles, narrator and self-fashioned Prospero-figure, questions notions of fame and power upon his retirement from London's theater scene. Like Marina Warner's *Indigo*, *The Sea, the Sea* almost immediately invokes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as Charles grandly claims to "abjure magic" after leaving the city for Shruff End, his newly purchased home near the remote sea-side village of Narrowdean in northern England (2). Murdoch establishes Charles's role as the storyteller of this piece from the opening page of the novel, but the form of the story is unclear to the retired director:

I spoke of a memoir. Is that what this chronicle will prove to be? Time will show. At this moment, a page old, it feels more like a diary than a memoir. Well, let it be a diary then. (1)

Throughout *The Sea, the Sea*, Charles calls attention to the genre of his story, as well as the account's accuracy, suggesting the instability of form. Inherent in Charles's concerns about his "novelistic memoir" are his command of language and his struggle to let go of the Prospero-like power

he holds, or believes he holds, over a motley crew of old acquaintances, a childhood sweetheart, and most importantly, his cousin, James (236). Key in forcing Charles to confront the nature of these vexed relationships is the setting of the novel, which in many ways, mirrors the role of the scene in *The Tempest*. As in the other novels I consider, scene, in the Burkean sense, plays an important role in *The Sea, the Sea*. It is at the sea where Charles must come to terms with his obsessions, particularly his troubled relationship with James.

### **Shakespearean Inspiration: Murdoch's Sense of Morality on the Page and the Stage**

Echoes of Shakespeare, especially of his late romance, sound loudly throughout Murdoch's novel. Indeed, much of Murdoch scholarship focuses on the connections between her work and Shakespeare. Julie Sanders argues that "in Murdoch's œuvre, Shakespeare functions as a wide-reaching metonym for the nature of drama or theatrical experience itself" (102). Charles invokes such an association early on in *The Sea, the Sea* by drawing parallels between his life and the life of Shakespeare. Charles credits the scene of his birth for the life that he leads. He explains, "I was born at Stratford-upon-Avon. Or to be exact, near it, or to be more exact, in the Forest of Arden" (27). This convoluted description of his birthplace anticipates



the skewed narrative that Charles will present throughout the novel and also reveals his desire to establish a scenic connection to Shakespeare. After establishing the place of his birth as Stratford-upon-Avon, he claims that "of course I owe my whole life to Shakespeare" (27). He qualifies this grand claim by explaining that given the limited means of his conservative family, going to the theater would not have been possible without his proximity to the "great theatre" of Stratford, further supporting the importance of the scene (27). Charles also credits Shakespeare for his career choice: "I went into the theatre of course because of Shakespeare. Those who knew me in later years as a Shakespeare director often did not realize how absolutely this god had directed me from the very first" (29). Charles's first career choice, however, was acting, not directing. He downplays his failure to succeed as an actor by emphasizing his one successful performance as Prospero.<sup>67</sup> In almost every statement Charles makes about the theater, he references the bard or one of his plays, typically *The Tempest*, and clearly relates to Prospero.

Given the importance of Shakespeare and of the theater in the novel, performance plays a prominent role in the form of the *The Sea, the Sea*. Sanders explores the potentially performative nature of Murdoch's work, claiming that:

There is also a dramatic element to the way in which Murdoch 'stages' events in her narratives, a cunning attempt to merge the possibilities of the two genres, and to manipulate and invoke the reader of her fiction in a manner akin to the metatheatrical addresses to the audience so common to early modern drama.

(102)

Sanders's comments are particularly relevant to the form of *The Sea, the Sea* with its divisions, or acts, beginning with a brief "Prehistory," holding forth with an extensive "History," and closing with a cursory "Postscript." While Bakhtin claims that the novel parodies the conventions of other genres in *The Dialogic Imagination*, he does not anticipate the manner in which Murdoch challenges form in her work by borrowing from drama. Of course, her novel is not performative in the manner that W. B. Worthen defines the term in "Drama, Performativity, and Performance," but it is clear that Murdoch is interested in breaking boundaries with her form by exploiting the power of words and invoking theatrical sensibilities in her work.<sup>68</sup> Within each of the novel's acts or sections, Charles tells the story to his audience of readers, trying to manipulate the readerly reactions to his tale, but he ultimately does not have complete control over the narrative, opening a space for other voices to be heard. Charles's address to readers could also be

viewed as metatheatrical in relation to Murdoch's critical and philosophical work in which she discusses an artist's relationship to his or her audience; in other words, Murdoch calls attention to her craft, her philosophy through Charles's discussion of performance. Charles describes the relationship between performers and theater goers as antagonistic: "Of course actors regard audiences as enemies, to be deceived, drugged, incarcerated, stupefied," calling attention to Murdoch's own philosophy (33). Murdoch herself describes drama as "an enchantment," supporting Plato's condemnation of the coercive power of poetry and Rhetoric and distancing her from her readers in a way that Jane Smiley rejects.<sup>69</sup> Murdoch also notes the difficulty of capturing a "spellbinding quality," a quality she finds in Shakespeare's work, in her own artistic attempts (Bigsby 105). Richard Todd notes Murdoch's admiration for Shakespeare's artistic form and her attempt to follow the bard's lead in creating art that "brings the analogous nature of the artifact, and our apprehension of the world about us, so close as actually to identify them with each other" (37). Murdoch identifies such works as "good" art, and for her, Shakespeare is one of the few artists who consistently created such significant work (Todd "The Shakespearian Ideal").

In her philosophical essays, Murdoch defines "good" art as impersonal and non-consolatory ("Against Dryness" and "The

Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts') and sees Shakespeare as achieving this goal in many of his works.<sup>70</sup> In "Against Dryness," Murdoch claims that "the temptation of art, a temptation to which every work of art yields except the greatest ones, is to console" (292). In this essay, Murdoch goes on to argue that Shakespeare is able to transcend the desire to console in most of his works and "manages to create at the highest level both images and people" (295).<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, Murdoch concludes that we should abandon Romantic ideals in pursuit of a richer and more meaningful understanding of morality; she thinks that literature can help in this pursuit so long as it embraces contingencies and avoids consolation. In "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts," Murdoch continues to make a case for the moral imperative of "good" art. She contends that "good art" transcends human weaknesses, revealing a greater truth while also maintaining a clear form (371). While Murdoch acknowledges that "even Shakespeare is not perfect" in this essay, she uses the bard's work (*King Lear*, in particular) as a touchstone in her philosophy concerning the relationship between morality and literature (372). It appears that she finds inspiration in Shakespeare's magic and tries to employ similar techniques in creating her own form and her own characters in *The Sea, the Sea*.

Murdoch also contemplates the morality, or goodness, of Shakespeare's plays in a series of interviews. Chief among the plays discussed by Murdoch is *The Tempest*. In an interview with John Haffenden, Murdoch admits, "I've always got *The Tempest* in my head" (qtd. in Haffenden 125). She later states, "*The Tempest* was said by some critics to be a sort of pantomime, but there is a very deep, even religious, truth in that play," a truth she seriously considers through James's journey in *The Sea, the Sea* (qtd. in Todd 174). In terms of form, Murdoch consistently claims Shakespeare as one of her literary forebears and argues that he is "a great exemplar for the novelist" (qtd. in Meyers 224). In an interview with Sheila Hale, Murdoch elaborates on the novelistic model Shakespeare offers in his work. Murdoch explains, "Shakespeare has everything a novelist needs: magic, plot, characters, construction" (qtd. in Hale 31). Such a description of drama appears to challenge Bakhtin's description of the contentious relationship between forms. While Murdoch does not deny Shakespeare's influence on her work, she does question the ability to imitate his style by stating that "somebody that great hasn't got a style you can imitate" (31). In many of these interviews, Murdoch appears self-deprecating as she qualifies Shakespeare's influence on her writing by identifying him as the greatest writer in the world.<sup>72</sup>

She views Shakespeare as "the king of this whole business,"  
going on to say,

I mean he [Shakespeare] is the king of the novel, he  
is the greatest writer that ever wrote and if one  
thinks how those plays combine an extraordinarily  
strong form with the cohabitation of these characters  
who are so independent that they were strolling around  
in real life as it were, they are strolling around in  
our minds as independent people. (qtd. in Bigsby 101)

Murdoch's bold claim here about Shakespeare's influence over the  
"humble medium," the novel, appears in opposition to Bakhtin's  
novelistic discourse theory (*The Sea, the Sea* 33).

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin argues,

The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their  
role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of  
their forms and their language; it squeezes out some  
genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar  
structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them. (5)

Here, Bakhtin suggests the evolving nature of literature in that  
earlier forms inform and enrich later ones; this idea applies to  
Murdoch's use of Shakespeare, but Murdoch's work resists the  
explicit urge to parody. Her work also exemplifies and resists  
elements of Bakhtin's comments on appropriation, specifically in  
regard to authority. Bakhtin claims that:

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. (342)

In many interviews, Murdoch generously sings Shakespeare's praises, but in her own non-creative work, she sharply critiques his plays, arguing in "Against Dryness" that "*Hamlet* looks second-rate compared with *Lear*" (295). In terms of authority, Murdoch seems to embrace this idea that Bakhtin presents as stifling and that Smiley, Marina Warner, and Gloria Naylor challenge in their novels. In one interview, Murdoch states,

A work of art has got to have a form, it has got to have notation, it has got to have something which is fixed and authoritative, it must have authority over its victim, or client or whatever you can call the person who is meeting it. This of course is a principle which is now very much disputed and even attacked but in this sense I am an authoritarian. I want the work of art to stand and have authority and be able to endure. (qtd. in Bigsby 101)

In this statement, Murdoch not only endorses authority but also suggests an uneasy relationship with her readers, a relationship that differs greatly from the ones that Smiley, Warner, and Naylor try to create through their respective works.<sup>73</sup> She clearly admires Shakespeare's authority as a moral artist and values his control over form and character, but her engagement with his œuvre establishes her own authority as an artist.

### **Authority, Truth, and the Novel**

In cultivating her authority as an artist, Murdoch channels her own philosophy through Charles as he voices key concepts from her criticism throughout the novel, particularly in terms of the power of the written word and its effect on the reader. Throughout the novel, Charles seeks to "control and manipulate history" through his account (Sanders 122). Charles asserts control over "the little book" from the beginning, establishing his role as the creator, as the one "giving life" to the story, reflecting Murdoch's own authoritarian tendencies (*The Sea, the Sea* 2). He calls attention to the truthfulness of the written word early on in the novel in terms that echo Plato's fears about writing, stating,

It has only just now occurred to me that really I could write all sorts of fantastic nonsense about my life in these memoirs and everybody would believe it!



Such is human credulity, the power of the printed word, and of any well-known 'name' or 'show business personality'. (74)

Charles goes on to discuss the human desire to believe in the truth of the written word. He argues, "Even if readers claim that they 'take it all with a grain of salt,' they do not really. They yearn to believe, and they believe, because believing is easier than disbelieving, and because anything which is written down is likely to be 'true in a way'." (74). This desire to believe, as described by Charles, mirrors Murdoch's claims about consolatory art. In "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts," Murdoch argues that the human psyche "constantly seeks consolation" and that most art satisfies this need (364). For her, this kind of art does not qualify as "good," since it simply caters to human frailty. She establishes a contrast between the consolatory and the non-consolatory, or good art, in these terms: "Good art reveals what we are usually too selfish and too timid to recognise, the minute and absolutely random detail of the world, and reveals it together with a sense of unity and form" (371). While Charles voices many of Murdoch's ideas about language and readers, he does not represent her ideal of the "good" artist. In commenting on the theater, Charles differentiates between novels and plays in terms of truth. He comments,

Emotions really exist at the bottom of the personality or at the top. In the middle they are acted. This is why all the world is a stage, and why the theatre is always popular and indeed why it exists: why it is like life, and it is like life even though it is also the most vulgar and outrageously factitious of all the arts. Even a middling novelist can tell quite a lot of truth. His humble medium is on the side of truth.

Whereas the theatre, even at its most 'realistic', is connected with the level at which, and the methods by which, we tell our everyday lies. (33)

This rich passage simultaneously reflects Murdoch's critical work on the novel (i.e., that medium's moral potential) and establishes the importance of place in the novel. It also appears to question the moral authority that Murdoch attributes to Shakespeare's plays. Instead of undermining Shakespeare's moral authority, Murdoch exposes Charles's struggle with being moral. Ultimately, this early passage separates Charles from the goodness of Shakespeare's work, aligning the retired director with consolatory art and distancing him from the truth.

### **Appropriation in Practice: *The Sea*, *the Sea* Revises *The Tempest***

Negotiating between the extremes of bardolatry and blasphemy, Murdoch uses Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as the

foundation for *The Sea, the Sea*.<sup>74</sup> Murdoch's reading of the play appears traditional insofar as she seems to privilege Prospero's plight and to gloss over issues that most appropriators of the play, such as Naylor and Warner, explore in their works such as race relations, gender politics, and post-colonial concerns. *The Sea, the Sea* appeared the same year as Edward Said's *Orientalism* and during the height of second-wave feminism, so it seems fair to assume that Murdoch, an Oxford scholar, was aware of these critical schools of thought. Instead of celebrating Prospero's "white" magic through Charles, I argue that Murdoch exploits her medium's—the novel's—potential for heteroglossia by revealing Charles as a false idol and allowing other voices to be heard through the cracks and crevices present in his narration.

Charles sees himself as a Prospero figure during his reign over the London theater scene and for most of his time at Shruff End. The scene certainly shapes the story, as suggested by Burke, since Charles continually distinguishes between his actions in the theater and at the sea. Charles describes the theater in sinister terms—as "an attack on mankind carried on by magic"—and seems to have thoroughly enjoyed "shouting back at the world" as a tyrannical director (33).<sup>75</sup> We learn that Charles had acting aspirations but found little success as an actor, except for his interpretation of Prospero: "I think I was

a good Prospero, that time when Lizzie was Ariel" (38).

Throughout the novel, Charles returns to this performance as an important milestone in his life. His portrayal of Prospero in this production of *The Tempest* marks not only his one successful turn as a stage actor but also his involvement with Lizzie Scherer, an actress who proves to be an important part of his past and present. As he reflects on his theatrical past, Charles wonders, "Have I abjured that magic, drowned my book?" clearly echoing Prospero's lines in the closing act of *The Tempest* (39).<sup>76</sup> In posing this question, Charles tries to separate his past from his present in terms of the setting, but his claim that "the past and the present are after all so close, so almost one" proves powerful throughout the novel (151). As he begins his memoir, he remarks, "I gloatingly savour now that I am absolutely out of it [the theatre] at last, now that I can sit in the sun and look at the calm quiet sea" (33-4). He consistently characterizes the theatre as "a place of obsession," "of hopes and disappointments," whereas he lauds the simplicity of Shruff End and the "cleanness" of the sea (35, 36, 440). Despite this initial contrast between the two scenes, Charles later comments that "it is oddly enough easier to write here [London], amid all this cramped chaos, than in the open spaces at Shruff End" (151). Through the extended "History" section of the novel in which Charles kidnaps his childhood

sweetheart, Mary Hartley, it becomes clear that Charles cannot distinguish between the past and the present, between the real and the unreal. It also becomes clear that the remote setting at Shruff End forces Charles's hand in confronting his self-constructed image, his admission that he has "very little sense of identity" (3).

In many ways, the setting of *The Sea, the Sea* mirrors the role of the island in *The Tempest*. In their introduction to the Arden *Tempest*, Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden Vaughan argue that "the island takes on a life of its own" in Shakespeare's play, the island being a place filled with noises and magic (16). Exiled on the island, Prospero must come to terms with his various identities—father, Duke, magician, and master to name a few. Being removed from the courtly world of Milan, Prospero finds new ways to exert his power by enslaving the island's native inhabitants: Caliban and Ariel. Throughout most of the play, Prospero uses his powerful magic—"his art"—to control Caliban and Ariel (1.2.374). Prospero's treatment of Caliban and Ariel has received much critical attention in studies such as Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield's *Political Shakespeare* and Stephen Greenblatt's *Learning to Curse*. This particular power dynamic has also inspired several post-colonial adaptations such as Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*. Prospero's role as a father receives considerably less critical attention, but

he also uses so-called "white" magic to control Miranda's future (i.e., her betrothal to Ferdinand). Throughout *The Sea, the Sea*, Charles yearns to be like Prospero, principally as a magician but also, I argue, as a good father.

Charles's vision of himself as Prospero-like continues to hold sway during most of his time at Shruff End. Upon his arrival at the sea, Charles affectionately refers to it as "[his] sportive sea" and carefully collects and arranges stones around Shruff End (6).<sup>77</sup> His description of his new home and his admission that he wanted to be a botanist as a child suggest an appreciation for the natural world (6). While Charles is careful to note the natural beauty of the sea and the coast, it is clear that he wishes to colonize and control his new surroundings, just as Prospero controls the island and its inhabitants in *The Tempest*. We find that very few of the house's possessions belong to Charles; he has simply acquired the furnishings from the previous owner. Charles remarks, "I am very conscious of the house existing quietly round about me. Parts of it I have colonised, other parts remain obstinately alien and dim" (17). Charles's descriptions of the house imbue the setting with significance, making it a character of sorts in the story. In his initial description of Shruff End, Charles states that "the house is full of little creaking straining noises," echoing Caliban's characterization of his island and

indicating a connection between the retired director and Prospero's slave (18).<sup>78</sup>

In his dealings with the locals and with his new home, however, Charles continues to exhibit qualities more reminiscent of Prospero than of Caliban. Charles quickly points out his ownership of Shruff End, stating that "this is the first land which I have ever owned" (11). Like the exiled duke, Charles quickly seeks dominion over his new surroundings.<sup>79</sup> He also reveals his disdain for the natives of Narrowdean with his backhanded compliment, stating that he is "glad to intuit that the place is not infested with 'intellectuals'" (13). Charles's disdain is not felt exclusively for the locals. He appears exasperated by the appearance of Gilbert Opian, who quickly becomes a Caliban figure in his own right, chopping wood and waiting on Charles. Just as Prospero views his treatment of Caliban as benevolent and worthy of gratitude, Charles regards Gilbert in similar terms. Upon Gilbert's arrival at Shruff End, Charles remarks, "As far as the theatre went, which in his case was most of the way, I had made Gilbert. He owed me everything," referring to their scenic connection, the theater (91). Charles's belief that Gilbert owes him a debt of gratitude shapes the way he treats the aging actor, which in some ways mirrors the way Prospero treats Caliban and Ariel. When Caliban complains about Prospero's severe treatment, the

Duke claims that he "used thee/(Filth as thou art) with humane care" (1.2.346-7). The Duke also reminds Ariel of his role in freeing the spirit from Sycorax's prison, stating "It was mine art,/When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape/The pine and let thee out" (1.2.291-3). While Prospero's ethnocentric Othering of Ariel and Caliban reflects racism, Charles's treatment of Gilbert is clearly linked to Gilbert's sexual orientation. Charles quickly identifies Gilbert as a homosexual and casually portrays Gilbert's orientation in an unflattering manner. After receiving a letter from Lizzie, an old lover, about her platonic relationship with Gilbert, Charles "becom[es] conscious of that old familiar possessive feeling" as he jealously considers Lizzie's new affair (91). Charles imagines that "Lizzie's proximity is surely enough, even now, to convert any man to heterosexuality," implying that Gilbert's orientation is a lifestyle choice (46). During their first encounter at Shruff End, Charles characterizes Gilbert as "fruity," flippantly asking his visitor if he has "given up boys" (89, 90). Charles's dismissive attitude mirrors Prospero's Othering and ultimate subjugation of Caliban. Instead of viewing Caliban as an equal, the Duke denies his humanity by claiming that the island was "not honoured with/A human shape" before he and Miranda arrived (1.2.283-4). In addition to colonizing the island as his own, Prospero also enslaves Caliban, forcing him



to "serve in offices/That profit us" (1.2.313-14). While Gilbert is not Charles's slave in the same vein, his completion of menial tasks and his constant deferral to Charles suggest a potentially abusive power dynamic similar to the relationship between Prospero and Caliban.

In addition to his treatment of the locals and of Gilbert, Charles's actions continue to call to mind Prospero's, specifically in his need to possess and control people and places through naming. Charles finds considerable importance in named estates, commenting, "I thought it was very distinguished to have a house with a name" in reference to his grandfather's home (22). As he reflects upon his childhood, Charles notes with jealousy that his cousin grew up at Ramsdens: "another distinguished place with a name" (23). In adulthood, Charles continues to be concerned with the significance of names and the power that those names can possess. He spends a fair amount of time contemplating the importance of the name of his newly purchased home, Shruff End, and continually refers to his home by its name (10-15). The names of places are clearly important to Charles, but the names of people also interest him as a sign of power, a theme present in all the novels considered here. In introducing his sometime friend Peregrine Arbelow, Charles notes that Peregrine "detests being called 'Perry'," yet Charles continually addresses Peregrine as Perry (69). Charles also

"names" his first love, Hartley. Her given name is Mary, but Charles refuses to acknowledge this fact, preferring to address her by what he considers to be "her real name" and ignoring her married name entirely (126). In a way, Charles' obsession with controlling people and places through naming reflects Prospero's possessive references to Ariel as the exiled duke continually attaches the possessive "my" when he addresses the spirit (1.2.188, 1.2.207). The role of naming in the novel also echoes Prospero's "naming" of Caliban in the play; the Duke consistently addresses Caliban in derogatory terms: "slave," "hag-seed," "thing of darkness," names that all function as a way to dehumanize Caliban (1.2.376, 1.2.367, 5.1.275).

Charles's connections to Prospero, however, prove to be flimsy constructions—nothing more than "just a pack of pretentious tricks"—as the story progresses (395). Through his narrative, Charles betrays himself with details that disassociate his so-called magic from Prospero's. Early in the story, Charles admits that "[he had] had no impulse to read ... A *good sign*. Writing seems to have replaced reading" (17). Even near the end of the novel, Charles admits, "that although my plan for my retirement had included a regime of reading I had not opened a book since I arrived at Shruff End" (461). While writing is a creative activity, Charles simply writes about himself and ignores the stories of others. In stark contrast,

Prospero proclaims that "my library / Was dukedom large enough" (1.2.109-10). Charles's early education "taught him language," and it appears that much like Caliban, "[his] profit on't/Is [he] know[s] how to curse" (Shakespeare 1.2.364-5). While Charles's total domination of the story appears to deny heteroglossia, his narration—filled with gaps and contradictions—denies the authority of his own discourse and allows other voices to be heard. As critics such as Sanders have noted, Charles ultimately proves less Prospero and more Caliban by the end of the novel. After Charles kidnaps and reluctantly returns Hartley to her home, he becomes a pariah in the eyes of many of his acquaintances.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to his connection to Caliban, Charles also shares qualities with lesser characters from *The Tempest*, specifically Ferdinand and Antonio. Charles fashions himself as the young lover, rescuing the damsel in distress in much the same vein as Ferdinand views his relationship with Miranda. Unfortunately, Charles's most likely destiny appears to be that of the "celibate uncle-priest," who seeks to usurp the power of the true ruler like Antonio in *The Tempest* (475). While Charles fancies that he is the center of everyone's universe, he fails to exert the kind of power that Prospero does in Shakespeare's play. According to Brown, Prospero successfully "interpellates the various listeners—calls to them, as it were, and invites

them to recognise themselves as subjects of his discourse, as beneficiaries of his civil largesse" (59). Brown goes on to identify the different roles that Prospero effectively plays for each character in the play:

For Miranda he is a strong father who educates and protects her; for Ariel he is a rescuer and taskmaster; for Caliban he is a coloniser whose refused offer of civilisation forces him to strict discipline; for the shipwrecked he is a surrogate providence who corrects errant aristocrats and punishes plebeian revolt. Each of these subject positions confirms Prospero as master. (59)

Despite Charles's desire to be Prospero, he ultimately does not possess the kind of power Brown attributes to Shakespeare's magician. The shipwreck that Charles creates by inviting his "friends" to Shruff End for a holiday weekend does not provide a showcase for his art; instead, it establishes his cousin, James Arrowby as the novel's true magician, a point that most critics such as Lindsey Tucker and Elizabeth Dipple support.

### **James Arrowby as Murdoch's Prospero**

Dipple notes that Charles's story "is the ostensible subject of the book," but that ultimately, James's journey is the focus of *The Sea, the Sea* (275). Until very near the end of

the novel, we only know James through Charles's highly unreliable narration. The first mention of James is in the context of Charles's recent retirement from the theater. In this early passage, Charles contemplates his spirituality, recalling "James saying something about people who end their lives in caves" (4). While initially conjuring an image of Caliban's rocky dwelling, James's association with caves most likely aligns him with Plato, a common point of reference for Murdoch in her philosophical works. Just as Plato serves as a touchstone for Murdoch, Charles's cousin becomes a constant point of reference for him throughout the rest of the novel as Charles compares his own habits and attitudes to those of James, which he typically dismisses as inferior. The reader quickly discerns that Charles's disdain for James is deeply rooted in their shared childhood. Charles attempts to downplay his cousin's influence by saying, "James has never been an important or active figure in the ordinary transactions of my life. His importance lies entirely in my mind," but his constant references to his cousin suggest otherwise (55). After reading a short letter from James, Charles characterizes him as "an elder brother, not a younger cousin" (55). Charles then recalls how he "could not help regarding Uncle Abel and Aunt Estelle [James's parents] as glamorous, almost godlike, beings in comparison with whom [his] own parents seemed insignificant and

dull" (57). It becomes clear through Charles's extended description of James's parents that he envied their lifestyle as a child, or as he explains, "I could not help bitterly coveting things which at the same time, as I looked at my father, I despised" (57).

This jealousy dominates Charles's childhood and continues to influence him through adulthood and into his retirement. Charles characterizes James's childhood as privileged—filled with ponies and trips to the continent—while his own is "dull" in comparison (57). In the course of writing his memoir, Charles claims, "part of my unease about my cousin consisted in a fear that he would succeed in life and I would fail" (61). Charles discusses the many advantages James had over him, principally a better education. Yet Charles feels that he has ultimately "won the game," because he is sure that "[James] has been disappointed by life, whereas [he has] not," leading him to believe that "[he] is the more successful one" (65, 391). As the novel progresses, we find that Charles is the one most disappointed by loneliness and incessant jealousy.

Connected to Charles's fears about losing "the game" to James is their career paths. While Charles has found success in the theater, and some celebrity, James chose a life in the military. Charles notes in his recollections about his perceived rivalry with James that his cousin chose "to become a

professional soldier," remembering that "it did not occur to any of us then that the army too is, and traditionally, a road to power and glory" (62, 63). James's work is important not only because of Charles's suspicion of the "power and glory" but also because it clearly aligns James with Prospero. We find that James has spent most of his military career in areas colonized by the British, specifically India, and that he also worked in Tibet ostensibly as an important player in covert operations. James's relationship with a native sherpa suggests Prospero's relationship with Ariel, simultaneously hierarchical and co-dependent. James explains to Charles during their last conversation that his servant had died during a blizzard in the Tibetan mountains. James claims that his "vanity" killed the sherpa, because he chose their dangerous path (444). James also reveals the sherpa's name, Milarepa, by explaining, "'Well, that wasn't his real name, I called him that after a-after a poet I rather admire. He was my servant'" (442). This rich response reveals the power dynamic between James and the sherpa; James controlled the sherpa, physically and linguistically, much in the same vein that Prospero controls Ariel's fate in *The Tempest*.

In a similar vein, Charles's own relationship with James establishes the military Arrowby as the novel's Prospero. Charles repeatedly comments on the ways in which James ruins

things for him. Late in the novel, Charles claims that James "could spoil anything for [him] by touching it with his little finger" (448). Perhaps more importantly, Charles reveals, "I was never unaware that James retained the power to hurt me very much" (379). While readers recognize that Charles's feelings appear totally irrational based on the information presented about James, this characterization of James's power echoes Caliban's fears about Prospero's magic in *The Tempest*.

The jealousy and fear Charles feels towards James affect not only his relationship with his cousin but also his relationships with women such as Mary Hartley, Lizzie Scherer, Rosina Vamburgh, and Clement Makin, as well as his relationship with Hartley's adopted son, Titus Fitch. Frustrated by his inability to control his cousin, Charles tries to rule the women in his life. We find that Charles desires the kind of power that Prospero has over Miranda in relation to women, regarding them as "[his] art" (*The Tempest* 1.2.25). But unlike Prospero, who appears to care for his daughter's welfare—claiming, "I have done nothing but in care of thee"—Charles regards most women as liars and whores (*The Tempest* 1.2.16, *The Sea, the Sea* 32, 51). At one point, Charles poses the question "Why keep bitches and bark yourself?" (11); this query effectively reflects the way Charles treats women in romantic relationships. Oscillating between characterizing past lovers as whores and idolizing his



lost love, Charles compares the women in his life to Shakespeare's heroines, employing them as the benchmark and choosing to ignore the fact that "they don't exist" (52, 161). Despite the very real and tumultuous relationships Charles has had with three actresses, Lizzie Scherer, Rosina Vamburgh, and Clement Makin, he obsesses over his childhood sweetheart, Mary Hartley. Charles references Hartley early on when he claims, "I never (except for once when I was young) seriously considered marriage" (38). He soon makes another passing reference to the one who got away, commenting that "[he] wanted a wife once when [he] was young, but the girl fled" (51). It takes Charles over twenty pages more to name "the girl" and describe their idyllic romance.<sup>81</sup> In romanticizing the past, Charles describes his adolescent relationship with Hartley as "holy" and pure, making it clear that they never physically consummated their relationship, choosing to "converse as angels" (78). Charles is vague about Hartley's reasons for ending their chaste affair but makes it clear that he has never stopped loving her.

After years of lamenting ostensibly over the loss of the perfect woman, Charles sees Hartley by chance in Narrowdean. He immediately begins looking "for ways to blend the present with the far past," hell bent on resuming the relationship where they left off years before (111). Once he learns that Hartley is married, he begins thinking of ways to get what he wants, never

"doubt[ing] that her emotion was as strong as [his]" (112). What follows is Charles's stalking and eventual kidnapping of Hartley. It becomes clear through Charles's account of the situation that he is more interested in reclaiming the "unspoilt world" that he and Hartley shared in their youth than he is in sharing a future with her. Shortly after he returns Hartley, he refers to her as "a wicked enchantress" but wishes, "If only Hartley had been my sister, I could have looked after her so happily and cared for her so tenderly" (485, 457). These diametrically opposed labels—"enchantress" and "sister"—highlight the only two ways that Charles appears capable of seeing the women in his life.

Charles's inability to truly commit to Hartley as a lover should come as no surprise based on his previous romantic involvements with Lizzie, Rosina, and Clement. Charles admits, "I still have feelings of ownership about Lizzie" early in his memoir (47). Even though Charles expresses a physical interest in her, he prefers to "always picture Lizzie in breeches" and thinks of her as a "radiant teasing boyish creature" (48, 94). Charles also seems to conflate his desire to be in love with Lizzie's love for him: "I began to love Lizzie after I realized how much she loved me" (48). Their relationship is also inextricably linked to *The Tempest*; in Charles's mind, he remembers, "I began to love her during *The Tempest*," suggesting

his narcissism (48). This *Tempest* connection is also significant, because "[Prospero] was the last substantial part [Charles] ever played" (49). In this particular production, Lizzie plays Ariel and Charles begins to think of her as his son; he later expresses a similar desire during his time with Titus (49). Unlike Shakespeare's Ariel who questions Prospero's promises of freedom (1.2.247), Lizzie "want[s] [Charles] to be the lord and the king" of her life, and Charles continually exploits her love for him (187).

While Lizzie acquiesces to Charles's will throughout most of the novel without question, Rosina challenges Charles and holds him accountable for his bad behavior. Charles describes his initial attraction to the then-married Rosina by explaining that she "had the fierce charm of the rather nasty girl in the fairy-tale who fails to get the prince, but is more interesting than the girl who does, and has better lines too" (71). It is clear from the onset of Charles's description that the relationship he had with Rosina was not healthy and potentially violent; he claims that "her charm [...] made [him] want to crush her, even to *crunch* her" (71). After Rosina briefly haunts Charles at Shruff End, she threatens him, swearing that "[he] will not live happily ever after" (104). While Rosina's actions appear irrational, they become more sympathetic as we learn about Charles's treatment of her. We find that Charles

broke up Rosina's marriage to Peregrine, impregnated her, and left her for another woman (105, 313). We also learn that Rosina "got rid of the child" after Charles abandoned her (313). Despite this disturbing information, Charles continues to see Rosina as "a black witch," echoing Prospero's scathing description of Sycorax as "a foul witch" (341, 1.2.259). Charles's fear of Rosina appears rooted in her ability to discern the unsavory implications of his behavior, and even though Charles dominates the narrative, Rosina's voice can be heard through the novel's dialogue. She tells him, "You want women but you are never *interested* in the people you want, so you learn nothing" (105). Rosina's declaration seems valid as Charles appears much more interested in the chase and the conquest than the actual relationship.

While Rosina's accusation seems spot-on, Charles has had one long-term relationship with a woman, Clement Makin. Rosina describes Charles's affair with the older Clement in Oedipal terms by stating, "Your first mistress was your mother" (105). We learn bit by bit through the narrative and dialogue that Clement is Clement Makin, a great actress who has passed away. It is not until page twenty-six that Charles acknowledges, "I had intended to write about Clement," but instead, he continues writing about himself, denying Clement a voice in the novel (26). While Charles insists throughout most of the novel that

Hartley was his first and only love, he continually betrays this claim with information he reveals about the role Clement played in his life. From helping him start his career in the theatre to making sure he was financially comfortable, Clement looms large in Charles's life long after her death. Indeed, Charles admits early in the novel that Clement is the reason he moved to "this lonely coast" as she grew up in the area (32). He also credits his "darling Clement's business sense" for allowing him to have the means to purchase Shruff End (6). It is not until the end of the novel, though, that Charles fully acknowledges Clement's importance in his life:

Clement was the reality of my life, its bread and its wine. She made me, she invented me, she created me, she was my university, my partner, my teacher, my mother, later my child, my soul's mate, my absolute mistress. She, and not Hartley, was the reason why I never married. (479)

In this moment of clarity, Charles seems to see the reality of his past affairs and continues to interrogate his failed relationships with Titus and James.

Upon reflection, Charles also regrets his treatment of Titus Fitch, Hartley's adopted son, which proves to be his greatest failing.<sup>82</sup> When Titus arrives at Shruff End, Charles immediately calculates the boy's value in manipulating Hartley

and sees Titus as "the key" in wooing his lost love (248). Charles quickly begins "feeling rather possessive about Titus" and asks the youth to stay at Shruff End. Charles tells Titus, "You are searching for a father. I am searching for a son," echoing his earlier desire to see Lizzie as his child (258). In the beginning, Charles showers Titus with attention, sharing *his* sea with the youth as they swim together and get to know each other. Charles seems convinced that "[his] act, [his] will would create a new family," but his interest in Titus quickly begins to wane as he stalks and kidnaps Hartley (322). During Hartley's incarceration, Charles, blinded by his so-called power, ignores Titus. Near the end of the novel, the boy tragically drowns in the choppy sea. It is only then that Charles laments,

Why had I not seen *at once* that this, the possession of Titus, my anxious fumbling responsible fatherhood of him, was somehow the point, the pure gift, that which the gods had really sent me, along with so much irrelevant packaging? (455)

While Charles's remorse may be sincere, he still expresses the desire to possess in this passage, revealing his "tyrannical" and "jealous" nature (455).

As all of these vexed relationships come to a head in one way or another at Charles' tempestuous holiday gathering at

Shruff End, it is James who proves to have real power. Charles jealously notes that James "seemed to be a centre of magnetic attraction" to his other guests (325). James is able to manipulate and control Charles's guests—Gilbert, Lizzie, Peregrine, Rosina, and Titus—in ways that Charles is unable to do. The primary difference in Murdoch's rendering is that James uses his power for the good of the people involved, not for his own selfish gain, which is the hallmark of Charles's manipulative nature. For example, James convinces his cousin to return Hartley to her husband and her home after the untimely death of Titus. It is also upon James's death that Charles ponders, "Who is one's first love?" (471). Throughout the novel, James is present in all of Charles's thoughts and relationships. Near the end, Charles and James discuss religion. James claims that "all spirituality tends to degenerate into magic [...] White magic is black magic" (441). He goes on to tell Charles, "The last achievement is the absolute surrender of magic itself [...] Goodness is giving up power and acting upon the world negatively" (441). At this juncture in the novel, it seems that Charles may actually "abjure magic" as he realizes that his "vanity had killed Titus" (467). James dies "achieving all" through his spiritual journey, and it is only in death that Charles sees James as a "twin brother" and recognizes the relationship they might have

enjoyed (468, 469). While still at Shruff End, Charles finally sees seals, which he views as "beneficent beings" and a rare sight in that area, suggesting that he may figure out how to be good (471). He also recalls his earlier conversation with James, specifically that "white magic is black magic" (467). But Charles, unlike Prospero, does not concede that "[his] charms are all o'erthrown," nor does he ask his audience to "release [him] from [his] bands" (Epilogue 1, 9). Instead, Charles holds onto his perceived powers and leaves the sea.

## **Conclusion**

Murdoch stated in a BBC interview, "the road to goodness is a dangerous road" and one that Charles proves ill equipped to traverse (qtd. in Dipple 274). Instead of ending the novel with the potentially healing appearance of the seals, Murdoch adds a short section entitled "Postscript: Life Goes On." In this section, she follows her own philosophical advice, embracing the contingent and incomplete. In a metatheatrical move, Murdoch has Charles begin this final act by saying, "However life, unlike art, has an irritating way of bumping and limping on, undoing conversions, casting doubt on solutions, and generally illustrating the impossibility of living happily or virtuously ever after," explicitly avoiding a consolatory ending (472). In addition to rejecting consolation in this section, Murdoch also



aligns her voice with Prospero's by replicating the Epilogue of *The Tempest*. In this section, we find that Charles has left Shruff End and moved into James's London flat. This change in scene affects Charles's behavior; he appears to be back to his old tricks as he entertains thoughts of an affair with a friend's young daughter, clearly rejecting his loss of power "as an ageing powerless ex-magician for whom people were sorry", his final "role as a celibate uncle-priest" (396, 475). The good and virtuousness of James appears all but lost in this closing section, much like the loss of good at the end of *King Lear* as Charles has lost his way to goodness. Murdoch, however, reminds us in "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts" that the human psyche "constantly seeks consolation," and she hopes to overcome this weakness through her work (364). Ultimately, James learned from his mistake—it was "[his] vanity [that] had killed the sherpa"—and "died in happiness achieving all" (467, 468). Murdoch, however, resists the consolatory urge to have Charles follow James's morally sound lead. Charles does not learn from his mistakes or fully recognize his "own illusions of power" (430). Instead, he still considers noise to be his friend by the close of the novel despite the fact that his inner circle has finally figured out that Charles's noise is simply hot air.<sup>83</sup> Essentially, Murdoch practices what she preaches in

her criticism by having Charles remain in London and returning to his old lifestyle.

This complicated ending shows Murdoch embracing the contingent, resisting the consolatory, establishing her own authority as an artist, and opening a space for heteroglossia through the novel. As suggested earlier, Murdoch appears to take on the role of Prospero (i.e., Shakespeare) in the play's Epilogue at the end of her novel through the contingent Postscript by enacting her philosophical belief concerning the superior value of non-consolatory art. Many critics have argued that Shakespeare uses Prospero's Epilogue as his farewell to the stage.<sup>84</sup> Accepting this reading of the Epilogue works well in regard to Murdoch's literary relationship with Shakespeare. She appears to simultaneously reify and reject the singular voice present in her novel by invoking Shakespeare's monologic power and by giving so much power to an unreliable narrator such as Charles. Ultimately by voicing her novel's conclusion through her own philosophy, Murdoch establishes her artistic authority, while recognizing Shakespeare's role as an artist and the novel's polyphonous power.

## Conclusion

### Confronting the Canon: Teaching Appropriations

The value, or questioning the value, of education proves to be a poignant theme that unites all of the novels I consider in this study. In *A Thousand Acres*, Ginny notes the sacrifices that she and Rose made to ensure a college education for Caroline. Warner also notes the importance of access to an education through the voice of Atala Seacole in *Indigo*, who recognizes that her people must have a solid education in order to rise above the servant-class that most of the islanders belong to in postcolonial times. A concern with education unites all of Naylor's Shakespearean-inflected novels, in which she questions the value and the accessibility of a formal education for the disenfranchised in the African-American communities she creates. While presenting education through the voice of an ostensibly privileged narrator, Murdoch also suggests that access to an education is not always guaranteed in *The Sea, the Sea*, as Charles considers himself grateful for getting Shakespeare through his public school education. While Naylor and Murdoch both present characters who find the educational value of Shakespeare absolute, many students in the writing classroom may beg to differ.<sup>85</sup> I present in this conclusion an

experience I had teaching Shakespeare to First-year students and propose a solution to their resistance to the bard.

### **Inspiration for Finding a New Approach to Teaching Shakespeare**

An emphasis on literacy in the classroom presents several problems for students encountering Shakespeare's plays, but before I consider these problems, I would like to share a bit about my experience teaching Shakespeare. While this account is anecdotal, it presents some of the characteristic problems many students face when focusing on the text in isolation without consideration to textual history, performance, or later responses. Most of my students in the second section of First-year Composition at the University of Georgia had encountered Shakespeare before they entered my class in their high-school studies. I was sure that their previous experiences would free our discussions from plot summary, so we could dig beneath the surface and focus on analysis. I also planned on showing key scenes from a few film productions in conjunction with the reading, in hopes of discussing directorial decisions and theoretical implications. Perhaps my goals were determined by my own interest in early modern drama, but my initial lesson plan had to be revised as I quickly discovered that the students were not "getting" the play on the most basic level of comprehension.<sup>86</sup>

My discovery occurred on the first day of discussion. My normally eager students became reticent in light of my *Hamlet* questions; Shakespeare, it seemed, had rendered them speechless. Instead of enduring the painful silence or simply lecturing to the students, I asked them why they were not "getting it," what they did not understand. The majority of them simply said, "I don't get Shakespeare," as if the text they received is exactly as Shakespeare wrote it, but also carrying the implication that "Shakespeare" is something above and beyond their capacity for comprehension. I asked them to tell me what they knew about Shakespeare and his work. Beyond citing clichés (e.g., he is considered the greatest English writer), the students knew little about the setting or staging of the plays and nothing about the printing and publication history. What they knew, or thought they knew, about "high culture" Shakespeare intimidated them into silence.

The real culprit in their lack of comprehension, however, was the language. Many of the students believed the plays to be in Old or Middle English. They also had trouble engaging with certain constructions in the verse style. When asked about their experiences of reading Shakespeare in high school, most of the students reported simply reading the plays for homework, taking notes from the teacher's lecture in class, memorizing important speeches, and taking a test or two. This approach to teaching

supports several of Plato's fears about writing's adverse effects on the memory. Plato suggests that:

There's something odd about writing [...] which makes it exactly like painting. The offspring of painting stand there as if alive, but if you ask them a question they maintain an aloof silence. It's the same with written words: you might think they were speaking as if they had some intelligence, but if you want an explanation of any of the things they're saying and you ask them about it, they just go on and on for ever giving the same single piece of information. (70)

By requiring students to read the plays in isolation, teachers are essentially asking these students to make sense of "words, words, words" that will not speak to them (*Hamlet* 2.2.210).

Considering the plethora of footnotes that accompany most student editions of the plays, it is not surprising that many students do not enjoy the plays they read for homework. It should also come as no surprise that they do not appreciate the import of speeches they memorize. Teachers at the secondary level often have students memorize speeches from Shakespeare's plays for recitation in class. In Lentz's study he explains that "Aristotle criticizes the Sophists for employing the memory of words (verbatim repetition) without requiring the students to understand the arguments that underlie the words" (120). This

complaint is also applicable to having students reciting passages from Shakespeare that they simply do not understand.

Taking the time to talk to these students about their experiences allowed me to revise my lesson plan in a way that included comprehension while also encouraging critical analysis. As I made these revisions on the fly, I am sure that there remained innumerable glosses and gaps. This chapter, however, seeks to propose an approach to teaching Shakespeare that teases out the loose threads attached to "Shakespeare" and his plays in a feasible fashion. My proposal is for a special section of First-year Composition's second component, which focuses on literature. In this course, students would read a selection of Shakespeare's plays alongside works of appropriation, which would include but not be limited to music, films, television shows, and online sources, that praise, question, or in some way borrow from the bard.<sup>87</sup>

### **Solutions**

One simple remedy to the problem of Shakespeare's inaccessibility comes from the oral tradition: the old warhorse itself, reading the plays aloud. Scholars in both Shakespeare studies and Composition Theory sing the praises of simply getting the words off of the page by having students read in class.<sup>88</sup> By reading orally, students can hear and begin to recognize the poetry and its significance. Marshall McLuhan

discusses the relationship between print and the Renaissance theater. He finds that:

Print as a public address system that gave huge power of amplification to the individual voice, soon made itself a new form of expression, namely the Elizabethan popular drama [...] What is especially significant is the discovery of blank verse as a broadcasting megaphone and the consciousness that jiggling rhymes cannot provide the sweep and volume of public utterance that is resonating in the new age.

(197)

Without the "jiggling rhymes" that many inexperienced readers expect from poetry, a useful exercise is to have the students identify which passages are in verse and which ones are in prose. This recognition provides a smooth segue into a discussion of why some characters speak in verse (usually the nobility) and others speak in prose (usually the lower class or the "villain" characters) and invites a consideration of the implications those differences carry.

Another useful and accessible option is showing one of the many filmed versions of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>89</sup> Showing films appeals to the students' sense of what Walter Ong terms secondary orality. Ong describes secondary orality as having "striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique,



its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas" (*Orality and Literacy* 133-34). He differentiates between the two by characterizing secondary orality as "a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print" (134). As Ong finds oral society to be thoroughly communal and without a sense of individual identity, he characterizes this "new" orality as "self-conscious" and rooted in literacy. For literate students, television and film are commonplaces in their lives, so it makes sense to incorporate these media into the lesson. Tiffany Stern agrees that film adaptations can be helpful, because they "have put Shakespeare back into the world he came from—the world not of 'literature' or 'education,' but entertainment" (120). If time is of the essence, one need not show an entire film. In fact, it would be much more effective to show key scenes from different films from the respective play as Ong also argues that literate people "read" films in much the same way they read texts. For example, showing Hamlet and Gertrude's closet scene from the Laurence Olivier version in relation to Kenneth Branagh's would spark a discussion of the directorial choices, specifically in terms of sexualizing the exchange.<sup>90</sup> In addition to provoking discussion, using films allows students simultaneously to see and hear the play. Kathleen Welch suggests that "one can turn one's gaze away

from the television, but one cannot turn one's ear from it without leaving the area where the monitor leaks its aural signals into every corner" (102). While Welch's description of television programming carries sinister implications, as though one cannot escape television's influence, her idea lends itself to the potentially constructive power of film in the classroom.

### **Works of Appropriation as Revisions**

While reading aloud and watching films are extremely helpful in teaching Shakespeare, using works of appropriation ask students to do as Richard Lanham suggests in *The Electronic Word*—to look "at" the works instead of "through" them (Lanham).<sup>91</sup> "Works of appropriation" does not limit itself to one genre or one medium and includes both so-called high and low art.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, works of appropriation do not deny issues of race and gender in the manner that Welch suggests traditional printed texts do; instead appropriative works "vividly race and gender our world," inviting students to interrogate Shakespeare's plays (194).<sup>93</sup> Writing about Shakespeare in secondary schools, Susan Leach claims that students cannot experience Shakespeare "in a neutral way" because of the inherent "class connotations" attached to his myth and his work (110). By confronting issues of race and gender, appropriations that revise Shakespeare's plays acknowledge such connotations, while also acknowledging

the body. For example, Stephen Greenblatt asks, "What about the body?" in relation to *King Lear* in performance, but this question applies to all of Shakespeare's plays as boys played women's roles on the early modern stage (2311).<sup>94</sup> Most students are unaware of this fact, and while some instructors may discount this consideration as irrelevant to teaching the plays, denying that boys were playing women on the early modern stage blindly and uncritically accepts the limited and complicated roles of female characters in the plays.<sup>95</sup>

Considering the roles of boys as women on the early modern stage implicitly genders the concept of performance just as the works I consider in this dissertation explicitly explore the importance of gender in the play text. Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, with its questioning of who is "more sinned against than sinning" and ultimately answering that Ginny deserves this claim, clearly questions the gender roles presented in *King Lear* (3.2.59). In a similar vein, Warner supplants Prospero's stronghold over the scene and action with the untold story of Sycorax. She also chooses to rewrite Ariel as a woman in *Indigo* to complicate and further politicize the imprisonment at the hands of Kit Everard, one of the novel's Prospero figures.

In addition to raising awareness about the complicated case of gender in Shakespeare's plays, revisions also interrogate the presentation of race in his plays and go beyond considerations

of white actors playing the racial Other.<sup>96</sup> Aimé Césaire's post-colonial play *A Tempest* (*Une Tempête*) revisits *The Tempest* and questions Shakespeare's characterization of Caliban.<sup>97</sup> In Césaire's play, Caliban is an African slave instead of a deformed beast man and becomes the hero of the piece as he seeks to escape Prospero's tyrannical colonialism. Not only does Césaire challenge Shakespeare's characterization of Caliban as subhuman, but he also rejects the conventions of blank-verse by empowering his Caliban with strong language. Caliban's first line in Césaire's play is "Uhuru," which means freedom in Swahili (1.2.87). In addition to the meaning of the word, this line is significant because it aligns Caliban with his African roots, not with the Eurocentric world of Prospero. The role of language in Caliban's recovery of freedom is integral, as Césaire writes back to a white, patriarchal society. Laurence Porter suggests that Césaire chooses Shakespeare's play to show "that no corner of white culture should be immune to skeptical scrutiny," an idea that also applies to Gloria Naylor's treatment of Shakespeare in her novels (362).

Naylor effectively genders and races Shakespeare's plays in her quartet of novels. In *Mama Day*, she creates a matriarchal community led by the gifted titular character, Mama Day (née Miranda). While Mama Day shares a name with Prospero's daughter, she has little in common with the magician's only child. Instead

of simply rewriting Prospero as an African-American woman, Naylor reimagines what it means to have such power. Unlike Prospero, Mama Day uses her magic responsibly and organically in Naylor's novel. In this way, Naylor calls attention to the wrongs committed by Shakespeare's Prospero—his abuse of Caliban, Ariel, and the island—by revising *The Tempest*.

Even though the works I consider in the dissertation are printed novels, these works of appropriation, like borrowings from different genres and media, have the power to democratize as they question Shakespeare's stature in the canon.<sup>98</sup> Exposing students to such works introduces them to writers and artists they may otherwise not encounter with the potential of expanding or exploding the literary canon. Reading, viewing, and/or listening to works that respond to another text also expose students to a highly sophisticated mode of revision, which speaks to a common practice in the writing classroom. Still, some may question the value of reading Shakespeare at all; in fact, it may seem counterintuitive to use Shakespeare as the point of reference for a democratic classroom. But with the availability of Shakespeare's complete works online, he serves as the commonplace that guarantees access for students.

While access may be an issue with the novels, it would be less of a problem with many of the films and electronic works. As mentioned before, all of Shakespeare's plays are available

without fees through an online project maintained by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.<sup>99</sup> Many of the film appropriations are available for check-out by instructors at most university libraries, while the growing availability of e-books would allow students to read the printed works online. In order for the democratic advantages of using the works of appropriation with Shakespeare's play to be fully realized, this course would work well in a wired space such as a computer lab. Welch poses the following question to academicians: "Why do otherwise reasonable people work to deprive students of access to texts through photocopying and through the Internet?" (204). She posits that money and "allegiance to the modernist idea that knowledge is a thing out there in the world, that humans are Cartesian mind/body dualisms, and that knowledge is a commodity" are the primary reasons students are denied easy access to intellectual property (204). Using the technological resources available at most universities would give students access to the intellectual property. Further, by reading/watching/surfing works that praise, question, or in some way, use Shakespeare, students would look "at" the pieces, not "through" them (Lanham). Perhaps most importantly, instead of avoiding problematic issues, such as race, gender, and commodification, instructors could address these points head on and equip their students with the necessary skills to ponder and analyzes these

concepts on their own. Katherine Hayles posits that "rather than trying to eradicate noise, literary scholars have a vested interest in preserving it" (105). Yet many of those same scholars silence their students by denying the problems inherent in the Shakespearean corpus. By having students complete their course work in the spirit of democracy and making "noise" through their critical projects, they would reflect on their engagement with Shakespeare and the borrowings and be able to share their findings in their own voices within the classroom community.<sup>100</sup>

## Works Cited

- Adelman, Janet. *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.
- Andreas, James. "Signifyin' on *The Tempest* in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*." *Shakespeare and Appropriation*. Ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer. London: Routledge, 1999. 103-18.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: Texas UP, 2004.
- Baldwin, T.W. *William Shakespeare's Petty School*. Urbana: Illinois UP, 1943.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent Leitch. New York and London: Norton, 2001. 1466-70.
- Beauregard, David. "New Light on Shakespeare's Catholicism: Prospero's Epilogue in *The Tempest*." *Renascence* 49 (1997): 158-74.
- Bigsby, Christopher. "Interview with Iris Murdoch." *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction: Interviews with*



- Iris Murdoch*. Ed. Gillian Dooley. Columbia, SC: South Carolina UP, 2003. 97-119.
- Bizzell, Patricia. *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- - -. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead, 1998.
- Brauner, David. "'Speak Again': The Politics of Rewriting in *A Thousand Acres*." *Modern Language Review* 96 (2001): 654-66.
- Bristol, Michael. *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Brown, Paul. "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism." *Political Shakespeare*. Ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985. 48-71.
- Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. 8 vols. New York: Columbia UP, 1957-75.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: California UP, 1969.

- Cakebread, Caroline. "Sycorax Speaks: Marina Warner's *Indigo* and *The Tempest*." *Transforming Shakespeare*. Ed. Marianne Novy. New York: St. Martin's, 1999. 217-35.
- Carden, Mary. "Remembering/Engendering in the Heartland: Sexed Language, Embodied Space, and America's Foundational Fictions in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*." *Frontiers* 18 (1997): 181-202.
- Césaire, Aimé. *A Tempest*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: TCG Translations, 2002.
- Chamberlain, Stephanie. "'She is herself a dowry': *King Lear* and the Problem of Female Entitlement in Early Modern England." *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*. Ed. Kari Boyd McBride. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2002. 169-87.
- Chedgzoy, Kate. *Shakespeare's Queer Children*. Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 1995.
- Cheney, Patrick. *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Conley, Thomas. *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1990.
- Conradi, Peter. *Iris Murdoch: A Life*. New York: Norton, 2001.
- - -. *The Saint and the Artist*. London: Harper Collins, 2001.
- Cox, Catherine. "'An Excellent Thing in Woman': Virgo and Viragos in *King Lear*." *Modern Philology* 96 (1998): 143-57.

- Cressy, David. *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- De la Concha, Angeles. 'Crossing the lines, crossing the squares': Marina Warner's New Cartography of *The Tempest*." *Beyond Borders: Re-Defining Generic and Ontological Boundaries*. Ed. Ramon Plo-Alastrue and Maria Martinez-Alfaro. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 2002. 81-93.
- Desmet, Christy, and Roger Bailey. "The Shakespeare Dialogues: (Re)producing *The Tempest* in Secondary and University Education." *College Literature* 36 (2009): 121-40.
- Dipple, Elizabeth. *Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1982.
- Egan, Robert. "'This rough magic': Perspectives of Art and Morality in *The Tempest*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23 (1972): 171-82.
- Ehnenn, Jill. "'An Attractive Dramatic Exhibition?' Female Friendship, Shakespeare's Women, and Female Performativity in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain." *Women's Studies* 26 (1997): 315-41.

- Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent Leitch, et al. New York: Norton, 2001. 1092-98.
- Erickson, Peter. "Shakespeare's Naylor, Naylor's Shakespeare: Shakespearean Allusion as Appropriation in Gloria Naylor's Quartet." *Literary Influence and African-American Writers*. Ed. Tracy Mishkin. New York and London: Garland, 1996. 325-57.
- Erne, Lucas. *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Fish, Stanley. "Rhetoric." *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Ed. Patricia Bizzell, et al. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 1609-27.
- Foss, Sonja. "Pentadic Criticism." *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*. Prospect Heights: Waveland, 1989. 335-51.
- Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent Leitch, et al. New York and London: Norton, 2001.
- Fowler, Virginia. "A Conversation with Gloria Naylor." *Conversations with Gloria Naylor*. Ed. Maxine Lavon Montgomery. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 2004. 123-37.
- Gates, Henry Louis. *Signifying Monkey*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.

Gilbert, Anthony. "'Unaccommodated man' and His Discontents in  
*King Lear*: Edmund the Bastard and Interrogative Puns."

*Early Modern Literary Studies* 6 (2000): 11 paragraphs.

Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. Carbondale,  
IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Greenblatt, Stephen. Introduction to *King Lear*. *The Norton  
Shakespeare*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: Norton,  
1997.

- - -. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*.  
New York: Routledge, 1990.

- - -. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. Chicago: Chicago UP,  
1980.

Greene, Thomas. *The Vulnerable Text*. New York: Columbia UP,  
1986.

Haffenden, John. "John Haffenden Talks to Iris Murdoch."  
*From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction: Interviews  
with Iris Murdoch*. Ed. Gillian Dooley. Columbia, SC:  
South Carolina UP, 2003. 124-38.

Hale, Sheila. "Interview from 'Women Writers Now: Their  
Approach and their Apprenticeship.'" *From a Tiny Corner in  
the House of Fiction: Interviews with Iris Murdoch*. Ed.  
Gillian Dooley. Columbia, SC: South Carolina UP, 2003.  
30-32.

*Hamlet*. Dir. Laurence Olivier. 1948. DVD. Criterion, 2000.

- Hayles, Katherine. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Hobson, Harold. "Lunch with Iris Murdoch." *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction: Interviews with Iris Murdoch*. Ed. Gillian Dooley. Columbia, SC: South Carolina UP, 2003. 1-8.
- Homan, Sidney. *Shakespeare's Theater of Presence*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, 1986.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.
- Kahn, Coppélia. "The Absent Mother in *King Lear*." *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986. 33-49.
- Kewes, Paulina. *Plagiarism in Early Modern England*. New York: Palgrave, 2003.
- Kittler, Friedrich. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wurtz. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
- Lanham, Richard. *The Electronic Word*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1993.
- Lanier, Douglas. *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2002.

- Leach, Susan. *Shakespeare in the Classroom*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open UP, 1992.
- Lentz, Tony. *Orality and Literacy in Hellenic Greece*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1989.
- Lynch, Stephen. *Shakespearean Intertextuality*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998.
- Mack, Peter. *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Marsden, Jean. *The Appropriation of Shakespeare*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- Mathieson, Barbara. "The Polluted Quarry: Nature and Body in *A Thousand Acres*." *Transforming Shakespeare*. Ed. Marianne Novy. New York: St. Martin's, 1999. 127-44.
- McDonald, Russ. *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1962.
- McLuskie, Kathleen. "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and *King Lear*." *New Casebooks: King Lear*. Ed. Kiernan Ryan. New York: St. Martin's, 1992. 48-59.
- Mikalachki, Jodi. *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

- Muir, Kenneth. *Sources of Shakespeare's Plays. The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1978.
- Murdoch, Iris. "Against Dryness." *Existentialists and Mystics*. Ed. Peter Conradi. New York: Penguin, 1998. 287-95.
- - -. *The Sea, the Sea*. New York: Penguin, 2001.
- - -. "The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts." *Existentialists and Mystics*. Ed. Peter Conradi. New York: Penguin, 1998. 363-85.
- Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Naylor, Gloria. *Bailey's Café*. New York: Vintage, 1992.
- - -. *Linden Hills*. New York: Penguin, 1985.
- - -. *Mama Day*. New York: Vintage, 1988.
- - -. *The Women of Brewster Place*. New York: Penguin, 1982.
- O'Dair, Sharon. *Class, Critics, and Shakespeare*. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 2000.
- Ong, Walter. *Orality and Literacy*. London and New York: Routledge, 1982.
- - -. *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983.
- - -. "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction." *PMLA* 90 (1975): 9-21.



- Orgel, Stephen. "Prospero's Wife." *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, et al. Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 1986. 50-64.
- Paster, Gail Kern. *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993.
- Perry, Donna. "Gloria Naylor." *Conversation with Gloria Naylor*. Ed. Maxine Lavon Montgomery. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 2004. 76-104.
- Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.
- Porter, Laurence. "Aimé Césaire's Reworking of Shakespeare: Anticolonialist Discourse in *Une Tempête*." *Comparative Literature Studies* 32 (1995): 360-81.
- Quint, David. *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1983.
- Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." *Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi. New York: Norton, 1993. 166-77.
- Riggio, Milla. *Teaching Shakespeare through Performance*. New York: MLA, 1999.
- Riggs, David. *The World of Christopher Marlowe*. New York: Henry Holt, 2005.

- Ronell, Avital. *The Telephone Book*. Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1989.
- Sachdew, Rachana. "Sycorax in Algiers: Cultural Politics and Gynecology in Early Modern England." *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Dymphna Callaghan. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000. 208-25.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- Sanders, Julie. *Novel Shakespeares*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001.
- Schiff, James. "Contemporary Retellings: *A Thousand Acres* as the Latest *Lear*." *Critique* 39 (1998): 367-81.
- Schoenfeldt, Michael. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- "Shakespeare in American Communities: Shakespeare for a New Generation."  
<http://www.shakespeareinamericancommunities.org>.  
 9 May 2010.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Folger, 1992.
- - -. *King Lear*. Ed. R.A. Foakes. London: Arden, 1997.
- - -. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *The Norton Shakespeare*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: Norton, 1997. 805-63.

- - -. *The Taming of the Shrew. The Norton Shakespeare.*  
Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: Norton, 1997.  
133-201.
- - -. *The Tempest.* Ed. Virginia Vaughan and Alden Vaughan.  
London: Arden, 2000.
- Singh, Sarup. *Family Relationships in Shakespeare and the  
Restoration Comedy of Manners.* London and New Delhi:  
Oxford UP, 1983.
- Skura, Meredith. "Dragon Fathers and Unnatural Children:  
Warring Generations in *King Lear* and Its Sources."  
*Comparative Drama* 42 (2008): 121-48.
- Smiley, Jane. *A Thousand Acres.* New York: Knopf, 1991.
- - -. "Shakespeare in Iceland." *Transforming Shakespeare.*  
Ed. Marianne Novy. New York: St. Martin's, 1999.  
155-73.
- - -. "Taking It All Back." *The Writing Life.* Ed. Maria  
Arana. New York: Public Affairs, 2003. 389-92.
- Smith, Bruce. *Shakespeare and Masculinity.* Oxford and New  
York: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Spear, Hilda. *Iris Murdoch.* New York: Palgrave, 2007.
- Starks, Lisa. "The Displaced Body of Desire: Sexuality in  
Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*." *Shakespeare and Appropriation.*  
Ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer. London: Routledge,  
1999.

- Stern, Tiffany. "Teaching Shakespeare in Higher Education." *Shakespeare in Education*. Ed. Martin Blocksidge. London and New York: Continuum, 2003. 120-40.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. New York: Harper, 1979.
- Storhoff, Gary. "'The Only Voice Is Your Own': Gloria Naylor's Revision of *The Tempest*." *African American Review* 29 (1995): 35-45.
- Todd, Richard. *Iris Murdoch*. London and New York: Methuen, 1984.
- Traub, Valerie. "Rainbows of Darkness: Deconstructing Shakespeare in the Work of Gloria Naylor and Zora Neale Hurston." *Cross-Cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Revisions of Shakespeare*. Ed. Marianne Novy. Urbana: Illinois UP, 1993. 150-63.
- The True Chronicle History of King Leir and His Three Daughters, Gonoril, Ragan, and Cordella*. Ed. Tiffany Stern. New York and London: Routledge, 2003.
- Tucker, Lindsey. "Released from Bands: Iris Murdoch's Two Prosperos in *The Sea, the Sea*." *Critical Essays on Iris Murdoch*. New York: G.K. Hall, 1992. 161-75.
- Ulmer, Gregory. *Internet Invention*. New York: Longman/Pearson, 2003.

- Vaughan, Alden and Virginia Mason Vaughan. *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Warner, Marina. "Between the Colonist and the Creole: Family Bonds, Family Boundaries." *Unbecoming Daughters of the Empire*. Ed. Shirley Crew and Anna Rutherford. Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1993. 197-203.
- - -. *Indigo, or Mapping the Water*. New York: Simon & Schuster: New York, 1992.
- Welch, Kathleen. *Electric Rhetoric*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.
- White, Harold O. *Plagiarism and Imitation During the English Renaissance*. New York: Octagon Books, 1965.
- William Shakespeare's Hamlet*. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. 1996. DVD. Warner, 2007.
- Worthen, W.B. "Drama, Performativity, and Performance." *PMLA* 113 (1998): 1093-1107.
- Young, Alan. "The Written and Oral Sources of *King Lear* and the Problem of Justice in the Play." *Studies in English Literature* 15 (Spring 1975): 309-19.
- Zabus, Chantal. *Tempests after Shakespeare*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> He also treats Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, but for the purposes of this paper, his discussion of *Paradise Lost* is of more interest.

<sup>2</sup> Ramus's emphasis on practicality is the only manner in which he follows Erasmus, and the only aspect of his pedagogy I plan to highlight. For the most part, earlier thinkers were building and expanding on the works of their predecessors – Aristotle appropriated Plato; Erasmus borrowed from Quintilian, etc., etc; such is not the case with Ramus. In the beginning of *Arguments in the Rhetoric against Quintilian*, Ramus establishes that he “[has] a single argument, a single subject matter, that the arts of dialectic and rhetoric have been confused by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian” (681). While he suggests that Aristotle and Cicero get it wrong, he focuses his attack on Quintilian's work. And it is an attack. Ramus continually uses words like “stupid,” “foolish,” and “idiotic” to describe Quintilian's conception of oratory. Ramus sets forth “to teach that [Quintilian's] instructions on oratory were not correctly ordered, organized, described” and that he will use dialectic to clean up Quintilian's mess (683). There appear to be two main points of departure in Ramus' attack on Quintilian: the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic and the character of the speaker. Ramus divorces moral philosophy from the realm of rhetoric and claims it for dialectic – just as he assigns invention and arrangement as elements of dialectic since “the whole of dialectic concerns the mind and reason, whereas rhetoric and grammar concern language and speech” (684, 687). He also denies Quintilian's claim that the orator must be the good man speaking well. For Ramus, “rhetoric is not an art which explains all the virtuous qualities of character” (683). He does “admit that rhetoric is a virtue, [but] it is virtue of the mind and intelligence, as in all the true liberal arts, whose followers can still be men of the utmost moral depravity” (685). Instead of arguing for the ethos of the speaker, Ramus returns to the fears expressed by Plato in relation to the Sophists and to Plato's preference for reason. See Walter Ong's *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* for more insight into Ramus' pedagogy.

<sup>3</sup> In Conley's discussion of Henry Peacham's work, he points out that Peacham “aimed his book at an audience of young scholars who wished to obtain a rhetorical education without first troubling to learn Latin, an audience that

grew during the sixteenth century” (138). Like the Sophists and many thinkers in between, Renaissance writers were concerned with social advancement.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, Sidney’s *Apology* presents a conflicted sense of achieving originality through imitation. Peter Herman’s edition (2001) does a nice job of pointing out Sidney’s contradictions.

<sup>5</sup> Riggs argues that given the Calvinistic tone of *The ABC with the Catechism*, “Nowell’s *Catechism* supplied the text for a performance that enabled Marlowe to move ahead in the system, regardless of whether or not he believed what he was saying” (42). While Riggs’ statement here applies to Marlowe’s advancement in the education system, it also suggests social mobility.

<sup>6</sup> Paulina Kewes offers an interesting discussion of Shakespeare’s borrowings in *Plagiarism in Early Modern England*. She establishes a distinction between poetry (high art) and drama (low art), arguing that Shakespeare has not historically been accused of plagiarism because he “was usually represented as a poet rather than a dramatist, his involvement with the theatrical marketplace being quietly overlooked” (15).

<sup>7</sup> Coppélia Kahn points out that Lear specifically refers to his deceased wife once in the play, and “then in the context of adultery” as he questions Regan’s paternity (43). In questioning Regan’s allegiance to him, Lear states, “If thou shouldst not be glad / I would divorce me from thy mother’s shrine, / Sepulchring an adultress” (2.2.294-6).

<sup>8</sup> I am not suggesting that all of these acts are essentially female (with the exception of child-bearing) but rather that the way they function in the world of the play represents that which opposes Lear’s patriarchy.

<sup>9</sup> Bullough and Muir also list *commedia dell’arte* as an influence.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Lanham proposes “an oscillation between looking AT the expressive surface and THROUGH it [which] seems to [him] the most powerful aesthetic attribute of electronic texts” (43).

<sup>11</sup> Shakespearian appropriation includes works from a Pulitzer-prize winning novel (Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*) to an episode of Comedy Central’s *South Park*.

<sup>12</sup> Welch makes this claim for electric rhetoric, specifically television, but I am borrowing her idea as it applies equally well to works of appropriation, which may or may not be “electric.”

<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin argues that “the author participates in the novel (he is omnipresent in it) with *almost no direct language of his own*. The language of the novel is a *system* of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other (47).

---

<sup>14</sup> Bakhtin argues that “the novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres”); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them” (5). As pointed out by Sanders, Smiley follows the structure of the play in her novel.

<sup>15</sup> Both the world of the play and of the novel encourage consensus with the patriarch’s will.

<sup>16</sup> Several of these criticisms consider Jocelyn Moorhouse’s 1997 film adaptation of the novel, which I do not consider in this study.

<sup>17</sup> Often, the ecocritical pieces approach the novel from an ecofeminist position, particularly Mathieson’s “The Polluted Quarry: Nature and Body in *A Thousand Acres*.”

<sup>18</sup> In this sense, Smiley subscribes to the authoritarian approach that Iris Murdoch endorses in much of her philosophical work.

<sup>19</sup> I consider this idea of invention more in the first chapter, “Shakespeare’s Sense of Originality.”

<sup>20</sup> Ong discusses the invention of an audience in “The Writer’s Audience Is Always a Fiction” (1975).

<sup>21</sup> In “Shakespeare in Iceland,” Smiley focuses on her relationship as a writer to Shakespeare, but she also acknowledges being influenced, even intimated, by Virginia Woolf and Charles Dickens.

<sup>22</sup> While in her childhood home, Ginny shares that she “opened the drawers that once had held her white gloves for church, her garter belts and girdles and stockings, her full slips and half slips, her brassieres, her long nightgowns, her pink bedjacket with three silvery frog closures that she always wore if she was sick in bed and wore day after day before she died. Now they hold only old man’s short and undershirts...” (245). After finding her father’s things dominating the drawers that once held her mother’s clothes, Ginny remembers the abuse.

<sup>23</sup> Like Coppélia Kahn, Janet Adelman also notes the differences between *The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir*’s treatment of the mother and her absence from *Lear*. According to Adelman, “*Leir* starts with the fact of maternal loss; *Lear* excises this loss, giving us the uncanny sense of a world created by father alone” (104).

<sup>24</sup> I am not suggesting that all of the threatening acts are essentially female (with the exception of child-bearing) but rather that the way they function in the world of the play and the novel represents that which opposes Lear’s and Larry’s respective rule.

<sup>25</sup> For a description of Ginny’s “premeditated” attack by way of poisoned sausage, see pages 336-39.

<sup>26</sup> “You think I’ll weep. / No, I’ll not weep” (2.2.471-72).



---

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Burke discusses the importance of scene in relation to agency in *A Grammar of Motives* (1969).

<sup>28</sup> Several critics, such as Jodi Mikalachki in *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England*, argue that Shakespeare kills Cordelia off in the end so she cannot become Queen.

<sup>29</sup> I do not make an argument for Lear's sense of individuality in this chapter.

<sup>30</sup> While Goneril murders Regan, Ginny plans to poison Rose with hemlock-laced sausages, but Rose eventually dies from cancer, not from Ginny's canned meat.

<sup>31</sup> In his discussion of *King Lear* in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Bloom recognizes Edmund as "frighteningly seductive" and as one of the most important characters in the play (481).

<sup>32</sup> Here, I draw on Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, in which he discusses the effects of social constructions on identity during the early modern period. He argues that "rhetoric offered men the power to shape their worlds, calculate the probabilities, and master the contingent, and it implied that human character itself could be similarly fashioned, with an eye to audience and effect" (162). Edmund clearly tries to find mobility within the social constructions of the patriarchal world in which he lives through his use of rhetoric.

<sup>33</sup> It is only later in the novel that Ginny observes Jess as "a stranger, he looked canny, almost calculating. With no one looking at him and no occasion to exercise his charm, his face was cool, without animation or warmth" (349).

<sup>34</sup> Lear beseeches nature to "Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend / To make this creature fruitful. / Into her womb convey sterility. / Dry up in her the organs of increase, / And from her derogate body never spring / A babe to honor her" (1.4.268-73).

<sup>35</sup> The Fool is able to speak what he feels, but only because of the position he occupies.

<sup>36</sup> In the novel, Warner creates the fictional sport of "Flinders" to represent cricket, and Sir Anthony "Ant" Everard is one of that sport's greatest heroes.

<sup>37</sup> The significance of this story is at least twofold: it speaks to the relationship between Anthony Everard and his daughter, Xanthe, which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. It also establishes the importance of fairytales in the novel.

<sup>38</sup> The ordering of the island, pre-colonization, is patriarchal: we learn that Sycorax has been banished from the community by her polygamous husband for suspected witchcraft. My suggestion here is that the world that Sycorax creates on her part of the island is matriarchal; to some extent, she is the authority figure for her adopted children, Ariel and Dulé. She also treats the natural world with respect.

---

<sup>39</sup> Gillian, later in the same passage, refers to Serafine as a “savage,” claiming, “Not that I’m prejudiced. But I never know what she’s getting up to” (69). By labeling Serafine a “savage,” Gillian does, in fact, appear prejudiced.

<sup>40</sup> From Foucault’s essay “What Is an Author?”

<sup>41</sup> Many stage performances cast Ariel as female. For example, one such casting is present in Murdoch’s *The Sea, the Sea*, an important production for that novel’s narrator, Charles Arrowby.

<sup>42</sup> The island’s name changes based on the powers-that-be. Liamuiga is the original name; Kit Everard changes it to Everhope (in the early 1600s), then Saint Thomas (dictated by James I), then Enfant-Béate (under French rule), and finally back to Liamuiga by the close of the novel.

<sup>43</sup> The English are ready for the attack because Ariel inadvertently tips them off. I discuss her relationship with Kit in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>44</sup> Prospero refers to Sycorax as a “blue-eyed hag” (1.2.269).

<sup>45</sup> Ariel hits several of Kit’s men with poisoned arrows before they set Sycorax’s treehouse on fire.

<sup>46</sup> Many critics, such as Chantal Zabus note the importance of the way in which Warner names her chapters with colors.

<sup>47</sup> This kind of relationship exists between Xanthe and Ant, which I discuss later in this chapter.

<sup>48</sup> Xanthe/Goldie is technically Miranda’s aunt, but a few years younger—Miranda’s grandfather remarries after his first wife, Kit’s mother, drowns.

<sup>49</sup> We learn that Xanthe “loved the sea” (327). Her drowning death certainly brings to mind Ophelia, but it also mirrors situations in other novels considered in this dissertation such as Titus’ drowning in Murdoch’s *The Sea, the Sea* and Peace’s drowning in Naylor’s *Mama Day*.

<sup>50</sup> Many references to Xanthe’s life echo Warner’s interest in fairytales.

<sup>51</sup> Upon Xanthe’s birth, she receives a blessing and a curse. The blessing, from an aging family friend, is that she will possess “a special, vintage-label common sense” (74). The curse is from Miranda’s mother, Astrid, that “Xanthe will never find a way to enjoy what she was given” (72).

<sup>52</sup> In an interview with Donna Perry, Naylor responds to Perry’s question, “Did Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* influence *Mama Day*?” by stating, “Consciously, no, although people have commented on that” (94).

<sup>53</sup> Iris Murdoch differs greatly in this regard. In numerous interviews, she endorses literary authority, particularly Shakespeare’s.

---

<sup>54</sup> It is also important to note that George slaps Cocoa when he sees her exit the building, echoing the domestic violence present in Naylor's other novels.

<sup>55</sup> *Bailey's Café* ends with the birth of George.

<sup>56</sup> Cora Lee's section of the novel begins with a description of her obsession with baby dolls as a child. We find that Cora Lee prefers new dolls to old ones, explaining that the old ones "don't smell and feel the same as the new ones" (109). This background information proceeds up to Cora Lee's adolescence, when she is caught in a sexual situation with a boy. When her mother explains that such behavior will lead to pregnancy, Cora Lee excitedly asks, "A real baby, Mother?" (109). According to the narrator, "it was then that she [the mother] began to worry" (109). It appears that her mother's worry was warranted as the story of Cora Lee progresses. We find her living in Brewster Place with her seven children, subsisting on food stamps. It appears Cora Lee's desperate situation will not improve because of the Shakespeare performance, as she thinks "the thing that felt good in the dark would sometimes bring the new babies, and that's all she cared to know, since the shadows would often lie about their last names or their jobs or about not having wives. She had stopped listening, stopped caring to know. It was too much trouble, and it didn't matter because she had her babies" (114). Unfortunately, Cora Lee appears to quickly lose interest in "her babies" once they "grow up" (120).

<sup>57</sup> Willa connects *Linden Hills* to *Mama Day*, where there is a brief mention of her tragic death; she is Abigail's granddaughter.

<sup>58</sup> Even though the stage directions in most editions indicate that Helena and Hermia are present, neither one speaks in Act 5, Scene 1.

<sup>59</sup> We meet the narrator in a section titled, "Maestro, If You Please..." and hear from other characters in chapters such as "Eve's Song" and "Miss Maple's Blues."

<sup>60</sup> This is the case in the state of Georgia:

<http://www.glc.k12.ga.us/BuilderV03/lptools/lpshared/displayunit.asp?unitId=647>

<sup>61</sup> This program still works with schools throughout the United States, primarily with lower-income students in rural and urban areas.

<sup>62</sup> Although Naylor employs an intricate mode of appropriation, she does not self identify as a Shakespeare scholar.

<sup>63</sup> *Linden Hills* focuses on the pressure to live the American dream as experienced by members of an affluent African-American community.

---

<sup>64</sup> She earned the MA from Yale University, and has taught at many well-respected institutions such as George Washington University, Princeton, and Cornell.

<sup>65</sup> In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin discusses the appropriation of holy texts and characterizes these rewritings as either parodic or pious (69).

<sup>66</sup> In “‘This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine’: *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism,” Brown argues that “the production of narrative, in this play, is always related to questions of power” (59). Brown identifies Prospero “as master” due to his control of the narrative (59). This idea Brown presents—of the play having a voice—stands in stark contrast to Jane Smiley’s discussion of point of view in “Shakespeare in Iceland.”

<sup>67</sup> “I think I was a good Prospero [...] That was my last great part” (*The Sea, the Sea* 38).

<sup>68</sup> William B. Worthen complicates J.L. Austin’s definition of performance by considering how “literary engagements with performativity tend to focus on the performative function of language as represented in literary texts” (1093). Worthen considers Austin’s account “narrow” and seeks to understand performance by “rethinking the relations of authority that inform texts and performances” (1095).

<sup>69</sup> In much of Plato’s work, he characterizes poetry as capable of seducing and deceiving its audience. His discussion of the written words failure to dialog in *The Phaedrus* is a good example of his overall characterization of writing. In “Shakespeare in Iceland” and “Taking It All Back,” Smiley seeks to form a relationship with her readers.

<sup>70</sup> Despite Murdoch’s claim that good art is impersonal or non-consolatory, her own biography appears to inform at least a few details in the novel. Hilda Spear notes that “her [Murdoch’s] obsessive love of the sea [and] her interest in stones—to see, to feel and to collect them—creep into several of her novels” (2). John Bayley’s account of his wife’s life and the subsequent film adaptation also emphasize Murdoch’s love of the sea and of stones. Charles Arrowby has this much in common with Murdoch.

<sup>71</sup> She ranks *King Lear* above *Hamlet* in this regard in “Against Dryness.”

<sup>72</sup> In an interview with Harold Hobson, Murdoch tackles Eliot’s argument that Dante is greater than Shakespeare. Murdoch claims that “Eliot must be wrong [...] Shakespeare is greater than Dante [...] And these are the two greatest writers in the world” (3).

<sup>73</sup> This statement anticipates Charles’s relationship with his audiences in the novel.

<sup>74</sup> Julie Sanders argues that “in Shakespeare, [Murdoch] found the ultimate template for her philosophical and narrative reasonings” (129).

---

<sup>75</sup> Charles's sentiments echo Murdoch's discussion of art in a series of interviews. She describes art as "a game of tricks" (Chevalier 80).

<sup>76</sup> In the closing act, Prospero says, "this rough magic / I here abjure" (5.1.50-1).

<sup>77</sup> I later suggest this same behavior reflects Charles's desire to own and control his surroundings.

<sup>78</sup> Caliban describes his "isle" as being "full of noises" (3.2.133).

<sup>79</sup> For example, he quickly claims ownership over the sea and the house (6, 39).

<sup>80</sup> Shortly after Titus's death and Charles's return of Hartley to Ben, all of his house guests leave Shruff End.

<sup>81</sup> As discussed earlier, Charles refuses to call her by her given name, "Mary."

<sup>82</sup> The name of Hartley's son brings to mind Shakespeare's tragic Titus.

<sup>83</sup> Charles states, "Noise has always been my friend" (286).

<sup>84</sup> One example is David Beauregard's "New Light on Shakespeare's Catholicism: Prospero's Epilogue in *The Tempest*."

<sup>85</sup> As discussed in the third chapter, Naylor presents a complicated view of Shakespeare's educational value.

<sup>86</sup> The play I taught during the semester discussed here was *Hamlet*.

<sup>87</sup> This approach could also be used for a regular section of freshman composition. The instructor could simply appropriate this technique for a single Shakespeare play.

<sup>88</sup> Homan's *Shakespeare's Theater of Presence* and Riggio's anthology *Teaching Shakespeare through Performance* are two examples among many such works. The Folger Library's *Shakespeare Set Free* series also encourages activities that have students read aloud.

<sup>89</sup> There is at least one filmed version of every Shakespeare play thanks to the BBC. This approach also carries over into my discussion of appropriations.

<sup>90</sup> Olivier's version, inspired by Freudian Ernest Jones, strongly suggests that Hamlet suffers from the Oedipus complex by casting a young actress in the role of Gertrude and placing a large bed as the focal point in the "closet." The same scene in Branagh's version basically denies any sexual attraction between Hamlet and Gertrude. Lisa Starks presents an interesting look at these differences in her essay, "The Displaced Body of Desire: Sexuality in Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*" in which she argues that Branagh's film is more Oedipal in its presentation of the mother/son relationship than Olivier's.

---

<sup>91</sup> Richard Lanham proposes “an oscillation between looking AT the expressive surface and THROUGH it seems to [him] the most powerful aesthetic attribute of electronic texts” (43).

<sup>92</sup> Shakespearian appropriation runs the gamut from Smiley’s Pulitzer-prize winning novel to blogs that imitate Shakespeare’s style.

<sup>93</sup> Welch makes this claim for electric rhetoric, specifically television, but I am borrowing her idea as it applies equally well to works of appropriation, which may or may not be “electric.”

<sup>94</sup> *King Lear* has presented directors with many difficulties throughout its stage history. In 1681, Nahum Tate changed the ending in order to make the piece more palatable to the audience; this “happy” ending was performed well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Greenblatt).

<sup>95</sup> Shakespeare may have written fewer roles for women for practical reasons as those parts would have to be performed by boys. There is also an analog here between the boy actor playing a woman and the figure of the body in technology. Avital Ronell and Friedrich Kittler characterize the body of technology as penetrable, as feminine, while Greg Ulmer describes the body of technology as pleasing to the eye, but essentially gender neutral or transsexual. Ulmer’s idea speaks directly to the figure of the boy in drag, who simultaneously satisfied the audience’s gaze but remained impenetrable.

<sup>96</sup> White actors played the roles of Moors, Turks, and other races, usually in “black face” on the Renaissance stage.

<sup>97</sup> The original is in French, but references here are to the English translation.

<sup>98</sup> Based on my research, no one has made the argument that appropriations can have a democratic agenda. Here, I am informed by Naylor’s agenda in using Shakespeare in her novels and am co-opting the democratic potential of rhetoric to make this claim.

<sup>99</sup> Extra features and materials require a paid subscription.

<sup>100</sup> I am currently working on a companion website that proposes projects for this course, including a syllabus and representative assignments inspired by a course I taught at the University of Georgia, which focused on *The Tempest* and various appropriations. Also of interest in terms of giving students a community voice is the study Christy Desmet and Roger Bailey recently conducted. The two put their classes, one at the University of Georgia and the other at a Georgia high school, into conversation with each other about Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.