Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and Capitalism

In this forceful study, Helen C. Scott situates *The Tempest* within Marxist analyses of the ‘primitive accumulation’ of capital, which she suggests help explain the play’s continued and particular resonance. The ‘storm’ of the title refers both to Shakespeare’s *Tempest* hurtling through time and to Walter Benjamin’s concept of history as a succession of violent catastrophes. Scott begins with an account of the global processes of dispossession—of the peasantry and indigenous populations—accompanying the emergence of capitalism, which generated new class relationships, new understandings of human subjectivity, and new forms of oppression around race, gender, and disability. Developing a detailed reading of the play at its moment of production in the business of theatre in 1611, Scott then moves gracefully through the global reception history, showing how its central thematic concerns and figurative patterns bespeak the upheavals and dispossessions of successive stages of capitalist development. Paying particular attention to moments of social crisis, and unearthing a radical political tradition, Scott follows the play from its hostile takeover in the Restoration, through its revival by the Romantics, and consolidation and contestation in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, transatlantic modernism generated an acutely dystopic *Tempest*; then during the global transformations of the 1960s, postcolonial writers permanently associated it with decolonization. At century’s end, the play became a vehicle for exploring intersectional oppression, and the remarkable ‘Sycorax school’ featured iconoclastic readings by writers such as Abena Busia, May Joseph, and Sylvia Wynter. Turning to both popular culture and high-profile stage productions in the twenty-first century, Scott explores the ramifications and figurative potential of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* for global social and ecological crises today. Sensitive to the play’s original concerns and informed by recent scholarship on performance and reception history as well as disability studies, Scott’s moving analysis impels readers toward a fresh understanding of sea-change and metamorphosis as potent symbols for the literal and figurative tempests of capitalism’s old age now threatening ‘the great globe itself.’

Originally from Britain, Helen C. Scott received the BA from the University of Essex and the PhD from Brown University before joining the faculty at
the University of Vermont, where her primary area of teaching is global Anglophone literature.

Her research contributes to the materialist presence within postcolonial studies, developing historically informed readings of literary works; her particular areas of specialization are the contemporary transnational novel, Caribbean literature, global appropriations of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, and the life and works of Rosa Luxemburg. This work has been published in journals such as *Callaloo*, *Journal of Haitian Studies*, *New Formations*, *New Politics*, *Postcolonial Text*, *Socialist Studies*, and *Works and Days*, and in several edited collections. She is author of *Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence* (Ashgate, 2006); editor of *The Essential Rosa Luxemburg* (Haymarket Books, 2008); and co-editor, with Paul Le Blanc, of an anthology of Luxemburg’s writings, *Socialism or Barbarism* (Pluto Press, 2010).
Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and Capitalism
The Storm of History

Helen C. Scott
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Meaning by Tempests

Over a period of more than a decade at the start of the twenty-first century, I taught Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and its reception history as a case study in ‘Critical Approaches to Literature,’ a gateway course for English majors at the University of Vermont. Each time I taught the course most students typically came in with the assumptions, which continue to be common sense in a broader culture prone to bardolatry, that Shakespeare is the nonpareil of high art and that his plays transcend time and place and are universally accessible and meaningful. This account was, needless to say, in tension with their personal experience: most students also reported at least some encounters, often in school, where they were unable to understand or derive any value from reading one of the plays, including *The Tempest*, or were bored and/or befuddled by a performance. This contradiction between reputation and reality was exposed early on, and the notion of universality took many blows along the way. It was a revelation to most students that Shakespeare’s *Tempest* has not always been revered, staged, or canonized even in England, that in the United States as recently as 1960 it was possible to say that it was ‘seldom performed,’ and while it can be found today in the languages and curricula of countries across the globe, this is a recent phenomenon, and even now it is absent in as many.

It was hard to digest this checkered record because *The Tempest* seemed ubiquitous. Selecting only works based on the original play, I could introduce the major genres and regions of Anglophone literature. Most semesters I was able to take classes to a live performance of *The Tempest* within traveling distance of the university campus in Burlington, Vermont. I routinely asked students to look out for any mention of the play in their daily lives, and without fail over a semester they collectively produced something in the range of forty to fifty references and allusions, gleaned from literature, television shows, film, music, theater, and the news media, invariably including several that were new to me.
In the process of paying attention to when and how the play was evoked in the surrounding culture and in the canon of English literature, certain patterns emerged. Romantic poets seemed most interested in Prospero’s ‘Our revels now are ended’ speech; modernists shared a fascination with Ariel’s ‘Full Fathom Five’ song and Ferdinand’s lines about his supposedly dead father; postcolonial authors were drawn to Caliban’s lines, particularly his ‘This island’s mine’ and ‘You taught me language’ speeches. More recently Sycorax was gaining increasing attention. In contemporary popular culture, similar allusions would be repeated both within and across forms and genres in clusters, for example in television shows: episodes of Grey’s Anatomy and Heroes titled ‘Brave New World’; a clip of Forbidden Planet appearing in the background of a scene in Fringe; and references to Prospero, Sycorax, and Caliban in Lost. Often, the same quotations or allusions would appear in very different contexts at the same time or within a few years of each other: a collection of poetry and an environmental article both titled ‘Sea Change’; a left-wing comedy routine and right-wing blogger respectively celebrating and denouncing a Caliban reimagined as anti-capitalist protestor; economic journalists and a death metal band quoting Ariel’s lines (paraphrasing Ferdinand) from the second scene: “Hell is empty, And all the devils are here” (I.ii.214–5).3

In the surrounding world presented to myself and my students at the University of Vermont in the first decade of the twenty-first century, The Tempest was frequently associated with social crisis and radical politics, something that was heightened around the financial crisis of 2007–08. This intriguing recognition provided a clear illustration of the way that each generation rewrites Shakespeare’s plays according to its own concerns: in the words of Terence Hawkes, ‘Shakespeare doesn’t mean; we mean by Shakespeare.’4 A more systematic scouring of the changing fortunes of the play, however, reveals that the association was not strictly a contemporary phenomenon. There is, in fact, a long-standing —though uneven and sporadic—tradition of works that both find in the play an expression of the transformative power of early modern capitalism, and use it to implicitly or explicitly offer a critique of contemporary capitalism.

The Tempest as monad

As my repertoire of examples grew, I increasingly came to conceptualize The Tempest as a crystallization of its particular historical conditions of production—both the creative revolutionary energy unleashed by the collapse of feudal certainties and the brutal dispossessions associated with the primitive accumulation of capital—that becomes a rich point of cultural reference especially during successive moments of revolutionary upheaval and capitalist crises.5 The play is then subject to political contestation, as successive generations battle over not only the play-text itself but the entire history of struggle condensed therein. In these ways, The Tempest can be seen as a monad in the distinctive dialectical sense
given by Walter Benjamin. While the more familiar definition, such as that associated with Leibniz, understands the monad as ‘a reflection of the entire universe,’ Benjamin placed the concept squarely in the history of class struggle and connected it to his understanding of the ‘constellation’ (Löwy Fire Alarm 100). In the ‘Theses on the Concept of History,’ Benjamin describes how a historical materialist encounters exceptional moments when history seems to halt:

Where thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad. The historical materialist ... takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history ... the lifework is both preserved and sublated in the work, the era in the lifework and the entire course of history in the era. The nourishing fruit of what is historically understood contains time in its interior as a precious but tasteless seed. (Benjamin ‘Theses’ 95)

Benjamin approaches Baudelaire’s Les Fleurs du mal in this way, as Michael Löwy explains:

[T]he aim is to discover in Les Fleurs du mal a monad, a crystallized ensemble of tensions that contains a historical totality. In that text, wrested from the homogeneous course of history, is preserved and gathered the whole of the poet’s work, in that work the French nineteenth century, and, in this latter, the ‘entire course of history’. Within Baudelaire’s ‘accursed’ work, time lies hidden like a precious seed. Must that seed fructify in the terrain of the current class struggle to acquire its full savour? (Fire Alarm 96)

The perplexing image of the ‘precious but tasteless seed,’ suggestive of forces that seem to offer little of substance, but nonetheless can be germinated to produce fruit of great nourishment, evokes Hegel’s illustration of the dialectic: the acorn that is simultaneously just an acorn and at the same time a potential oak tree. So too does it resonate with Langston Hughes’ poem ‘Dream Deferred,’ offering the image of unrealized aspirations as dried up or overripe fruit that may either rot or explode. This concept has resonance for The Tempest: within the play can be found the kernel of Shakespeare’s work, of the English Renaissance, and of the historical moment that saw the emergence of capitalism. It speaks to us because that system has traveled across history and now not only dominates the globe, but threatens its annihilation through ecological catastrophe. Successive responses to those dynamics, animated by moments of struggle, offer illuminating glimpses of the play’s shifting location in heterogeneous time, which, in contrast to a concept of the past as homogeneous and fixed, is understood as plural, fluid, and radically impacted by future (present) developments.
My book’s title, then, refers both to Shakespeare’s *Tempest* hurtling through time and also to Benjamin’s ‘Theses on the Concept of History.’ In this extraordinary work—initially unpublished fragments written shortly before his death—Benjamin rejects linear, homogeneous, quantitative conservative historicism, anchored in the ‘ideology of progress,’ and offers in its place a dynamic, heterogeneous, qualitative historical materialism, approaching the past as a succession of catastrophes punctuated by revolutionary struggle, and existing in dialectical tension with *Jetztzeit* (‘now time’). At the heart of this vision is class struggle: ‘the life and death struggle between oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited, dominators and dominated’ (Löwy *Fire Alarm* 38). In the sixth thesis, Benjamin offers a vision of ongoing contestation over the past. While successive ruling classes use the idea of tradition to maintain their rule, the goal of the historical materialist is not to see the past ‘*the way it really was*’ but rather to ‘*hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger*’:

*Every age must strive anew to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer; he comes as the victor over the Antichrist. The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious.* (Benjamin ‘Theses’ 42)

Often, as here, using Messianic imagery, Benjamin presents history as a battle between those using ‘tradition’ in ways that obscure, naturalize, and shore up class society, and those looking to the revolutionary struggles of the past in order to oppose domination and oppression in the present.

In Thesis VII, Benjamin explains why the ‘*cultural treasures*’—the great and celebrated artistic achievements of class society—are to be viewed ‘*with cautious detachment*’ by the historical materialist:

*They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great geniuses who created them, but also to the anonymous toil of others who lived in the same period. There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to another.* (Benjamin ‘Theses’ 47)

While works of art—the quintessence of civilization—are offered up as commodities for enjoyment and appreciation, the exploitation and oppression that made them possible, and the brutality that enabled their possession by history’s victors, are obscured and mystified. In contrast, the historical materialist aims to ‘*brush history against the grain*’ by identifying not with the victors, those who own the culture and write the histories,
but with the ‘anonymous toilers’ and the invisible victims (Benjamin ‘Theses’ 47). Benjamin here is engaged in ‘de-reification,’ and what his friend Bertolt Brecht called verfremdungseffekt or the effect of making strange: he defamiliarizes the dominant version of cultural history while exposing the concealed labor and the violence—the barbarism—behind the cultural product. This acknowledgment, however, does not lead him to condemn or reduce the value of art. Löwy writes of Benjamin: ‘far from rejecting the works of “high culture” as reactionary, he was of the opinion that many of them were overtly or covertly hostile to capitalist society. The point was, then, to recover the utopian or subversive moments hidden in the “cultural” heritage’ (Fire Alarm 55). This means both consciously practicing cultural ‘history from below’ while acknowledging and grappling with the political battles surrounding continued cultural production and reception. Benjamin’s interest was not restricted to ‘High Art’ but ranged broadly over diverse areas of culture. He can be considered an early practitioner of cultural studies in that he ‘opened up entirely new areas for Marxist analysis in relation to folk, popular, and mass cultures’ (Davidson ‘Walter Benjamin’ 212).

Benjamin’s most famous passage, in Thesis IX, provides the searing image of the ‘Angel of History’ which begins as a response to Paul Klee’s 1920 painting ‘Angelus Novus’:

> Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and burrs it at its feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows towards the sky. What we call progress is this storm. (Benjamin ‘Theses’ 62)

History, documented by the victors as a steady march of progress, is refigured as a succession of violent catastrophes leaving a trail of victims in its wake. This has particular resonance for our century, as Michael Löwy notes:

> Quite clearly, it has seized the imagination of our age—doubtless because it touches upon something profound in the crisis of modern culture. But also because it has a prophetic dimension: its tragic warning seems to prefigure Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the two greatest catastrophes of human history... (Fire Alarm 62)

The ideology of progress has been displaced in our age by the doctrine of inevitability: the commonplace truism repeated with wearying monotony that this capitalism we inhabit is, if not the ‘best,’ certainly the ‘only’ system imaginable or possible because, in the indelible words of Margaret Thatcher, ‘there is no alternative.’ The relentless pessimism of Benjamin’s
vision, in contrast, is tempered by his insistence that none of the outcomes of history were inevitable, and alternatives remain as objective possibilities. Benjamin’s method ‘recovers the hidden explosive energies that are to be found in a precise moment of history. These energies, which are those of the Jetztzeit, are like the spark produced by a short circuit, enabling the continuum of history to be “blasted apart”’ (Löwy Fire Alarm 94). This is not a purely academic exercise, but always in the service of praxis. Characterizing Benjamin’s project as one of ‘opening up’ history, Löwy writes: ‘open history means … taking into account the possibility—though not the inevitability—of catastrophes on the one hand and great emancipatory movements on the other’ (Fire Alarm 110). This resonates with the perspective captured by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) in his famous dictum ‘pessimism of the intellect; optimism of the will.’ Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks, written during his imprisonment by Mussolini’s fascists from 1926 to shortly before his death in 1937, represents an equally stunning contribution to emancipatory thought produced in catastrophic circumstances.

Benjamin’s own life was brutally cut short in 1940, at what Victor Serge called the “‘midnight in the century’” (qtd. in Löwy Fire Alarm 18, 45). With many other Jews and other targets of fascism, he was forced into exile from Germany. Attempting to flee Vichy France, Benjamin was apprehended as an ‘illegal refugee’ trying to cross the border with Spain, and, facing a worse fate, took his own life. This harrowing tale, tragic in itself, inevitably now also evokes the overwhelming crises faced by today’s ‘illegal refugees’ seeking to cross borders in unprecedented numbers, escaping the devastation of war and destitution only to find not sanctuary but persecution and criminalization. Not far from the celebrated theaters of the Shakespeare industry, whether of North America or Europe, desperate refugees are denied entry across borders, detained, deported, and hounded to premature deaths.

The Storm of History explores The Tempest through these Benjaminian lenses: the barbarism behind the cultural treasure; history as a succession of catastrophes; the disruptive and generative power of the traditions of the oppressed; and contestation surrounding the transmission of culture, as Shakespeare is used both to reinforce barbarism and to preserve emancipatory potential. My argument is threefold. First, The Tempest is a unique artistic expression of the upheaval and metamorphoses provoked by the transition to capitalism—in the broader society, in the theater, and in Shakespeare’s work—readable in its thematic preoccupations, remarkable mutability, and openness to radically divergent meanings. The violence of the primitive accumulation of capitalism is both the precondition for the play, and deeply embedded in its thematic and figurative patterns. Second, some of these distinctive qualities—preoccupation with storm and sea-change, usurpation and dispossession; the habit of looking backward and forward; disquieting apprehension of dissolution and simultaneous hope for restoration—not only emerge from a world turning upside down, but also take on particular significance at future moments when capitalism
sharply experiences social upheavals. Third, as artists and commentators take up, rework, incorporate, and sometimes disavow the play over the ages in clusters of parallel cultural developments impacted by commonly experienced sociopolitical forces, their creative visions become attached to it, so that subsequent generations are not only ‘meaning by’ The Tempest, but also by the myriad artistic creations floating in its wake: the creative work of T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Sylvia Plath, George Lamming, Kamau Brathwaite, Sylvia Wynter, and countless others responding to the play are now part of the associative web that surrounds it.

My historical investigation is thus reciprocal—exploring both how the changing fortunes of capitalism impact the play and, in turn, what cultural and artistic forms tell us about those conditions—while remaining cognizant of The Tempest and subsequent cultural responses as unique works in their own right. Shakespeare is a commodity to be consumed—whether as a performance or as a text—in the Renaissance as much as today. The Shakespeare industry is not innocent of the conditions of violence that made and make it possible: the ‘cultural treasure’ owes its existence to the ‘invisible toil’ of those laboring behind the scenes. The play is not reducible to those conditions, however: it remains distinct as a dramatic work with specific aesthetic and formal qualities that speak to successive historical moments in particular ways.

Sea-change

One of the play’s most significant qualities can be found in the term quoted more than any other in contemporary culture in the United States: ‘sea-change.’9 In a beautiful formalist reading of 1951 that is characteristic of the era of the New Criticism, literary critic Reuben Brower takes up ‘sea-change’ as the play’s ‘central metaphor.’ Meticulously tracing figurative patterns, he identifies the main connected ‘continuities’ (he tells us there are six, but actually gives us seven): “strange-wondrous,” “sleep-and-dream,” “sea-tempest,” “music-and-noise,” “earth-air,” “slavery-freedom,” and “sovereignty-conspiracy” (Brower 185). Exploring how these patterns emerge in the themes, dramatic action, imagery, tropes, and also the meter, rhythms, and rhymes, with a breathtaking attention to detail, Brower distinguishes how the language works on us at an emotional, even visceral, level, independent of, but in tension with, the explicit plot or subject matter.

New Criticism was itself a product of a cold war conservatism that dis-embedded culture from history: its orthodoxy held that it is both possible and desirable to insulate literary exegeses from history or politics. Disregarding the play’s origins in the new business of theater, Brower treats The Tempest as a disembodied text to be unlocked, unpacking its rich layers of signification through close reading, revealing its magical qualities, and explaining its special features. He points to Ariel’s ‘Full fathom five’ song and Prospero’s ‘Our revels now are ended’ speech as moments where the dense layers of analogies converge. Of Ariel’s song he writes:
In addition to the more obvious references to the deep sea and its powers and to the ‘strangeness’ of this drowning, there are indirect anticipations of other analogies. ‘Fade’ prefigures the ‘dissolving cloud’ metaphor and the theme of tempest changes, outer and inner. ‘Rich,’ along with ‘coral’ and ‘pearls,’ anticipates the opulent imagery of the dream-world passages and scenes, the ‘riches ready to drop’ on Caliban and the expressions of wealth and plenty in the masque. The song closes with the nymphs tolling the bell, the transformation and the ‘sea sorrow’ are expressed through sea music. (Brower 195)

These same patterns are intensified in Prospero’s speech:

The language evokes nearly every continuity that we have traced. ‘Melted into air,’ ‘dissolve,’ ‘cloud,’ and rack’ bring us immediately to Ariel and tempest changes, while ‘vision,’ ‘dream,’ and ‘sleep’ recall other familiar continuities. ‘Revels,’ ‘gorgeous palaces,’ and ‘pageant’ ... are echoes of the kingly theme; and ‘solemn’ is associated particularly with the soft music of change. The ‘stuff’ of dreams is at once cloud-stuff (air) and cloth, both images being finely compressed in ‘baseless fabric.’ ... Within the metaphor of tempest-clearing and of cloudlike transformation, Shakespeare has included allusions to every important analogy of change in the play. (Brower 196)

While his choice of the key ‘continuities’ is somewhat selective—I would want to emphasize at least ‘deformity/beauty,’ ‘reason/madness,’ ‘birth/death,’ ‘exploitation/empathy,’ ‘fertility/sterility,’ and ‘youth/age’—Brower gets to the heart of The Tempest’s preoccupation, at every level, with change and contradiction, and captures much of the play’s haunting, disconcerting, and emotionally powerful properties. Also, true to New Critical practice, Brower moves from rigorous and specific textual analysis toward highly abstract and formulaic conclusions that are banal even while they claim ‘universalist’ credentials: the play is concerned with ‘moral and psychological transformations’ (200); it is a ‘metaphysical poem of metamorphosis’ (202); its message is that ‘like the actors and scenery of the vision, earth’s glories and man shall vanish into nothingness’ (196). None of these conclusions are, in fact, politically neutral or ‘objective’: the play is absorbed into a particular conservative worldview, and certainly much gets left out in the process.

If, instead, we map these specific qualities on to an equally particularized historical framework, we can understand the rich tapestry of ‘sea-change’ as one of the singular ways that the play speaks to the instability of the moment. Even more so than for the other plays, transition and upheaval are everywhere in The Tempest’s open-ended, ambiguous, fluid, and densely associative figurative language: more than anything else, the play artistically embodies contradiction. While Brower sees the ultimate expression of harmony, it can equally be said that running threads of dichotomy and
transformation produce *discordance*, the antithesis of harmony. The central image of solidity melting into thin air also provides a key link in the chain of connections between the play then and the play now. The image is famously echoed in Marx’s description of capitalism:

> Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind. (*Communist Manifesto* 44)

‘All that is solid melts into air,’ in turn, provided the title to Marxist philosopher Marshall Berman’s (1940–2013) landmark statement on modernity, and the image is at the heart of his argument:

> To be modern ... is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one’s world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air. (345)

Berman takes Goethe’s *Faust*, which ‘universally regarded as a prime expression of the modern spiritual quest, reaches its fulfillment—but also its tragic catastrophe—in the transformation of modern material life,’ as the work of art that best represents Romanticism and anticipates modernity (Berman 88). Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, predecessor to Goethe’s *Faust*, is an important partner text for Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, with which it shares maelstrom, sorcery, and ‘melting vision,’ all of which find their way into Marx and Berman. *The Tempest*’s reiterative interest in transmutation emerges in its swings between the dichotomies of harmony and disharmony, forgiveness and punishment, freedom and imprisonment, closure and rupture. In marking the shift from medieval to early modern concepts of subjectivity, the play also registers emergent notions of human identity around race, gender, and disability. In these ways, as the Russian Marxist and critic Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875–1933) found, *The Tempest* embodies the dialectic between being ‘thankful for mutability’ and ‘discovering therein cause for melancholy’ (242).10

**The storm of history**

These particular attributes allow *The Tempest* to become a bellwether for the changing dynamics of global capitalism over time. My study is chronological, traveling from the play’s origins to the present. My goal, however, is not to provide a historical survey of its reception history but rather to
identify and trace particular episodes when the play has been associated with capitalist crisis, revolutionary upheaval, and social change, and in so doing unearth a dynamic strand that links ‘then’ and ‘now.’ I consider performance, adaptation, appropriation, criticism, and allusions and references in culture ‘high’ and ‘low,’ while striving to recognize what is distinct in each form and genre. Rejecting the notion of inherent, unchanging aesthetic value, and recognizing that works move from ‘popular’ to ‘canonical’ and back again, I nonetheless where possible (given the breadth of materials) consider each work according to the specific criteria of its genre—which is essential to the project of appreciating art on its own terms.

Although the examples I consider are for the most part restricted to the Anglophone sphere (this is due to my own linguistic limitations as much as the need to place some boundaries on a potentially inexhaustible field of inquiry), and primarily transatlantic (my life has been divided between England and the United States), my scope is inescapably global. In this, I am influenced by recent interdisciplinary scholarship that foregrounds capitalism and class antagonisms while interrogating the ubiquitous division of world culture into that of ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest.’ Such an approach leads to a recognition, for example, not only of the influence of the Ottoman empire on the London of The Tempest in 1611, but also the centrality of workers in Honduras and Haiti to contemporary productions: souvenir ‘Brave New World’ T-shirts from theater gift shops in Stratford Ontario, for one illustration of many, bear the label ‘Gildan,’ a multinational company that subcontracts to sweatshops in the global assembly line. It is a central premise of this book that cultural production in ‘the West’ is and always has been deeply implicated in global forces.

Such a reading is a countermodel to a static treatment of the past as an undynamic artifact, holding instead that past events are not ‘dead’—fixed and isolated—but in a sense living, implicated in subsequent moments including the present. ‘Then’ is constantly refigured and renegotiated by ‘now,’ and is not a static monolith waiting to be discovered. In my work, I strive to hold this principle together with an appreciation that ‘then’ was unlike ‘now,’ remaining open to the diverse interpretive possibilities of discrete historical and local contexts that are at variance with the ‘commonsense’ assumptions of my own time and place. This entails resisting the tendency toward presentism—imposing contemporary concerns and assumptions on to periods prior to their inception in ways that naturalize social forces and ideologies. The dangers of presentism were recognized in a particularly sharp way by scholar of African-American history Lerone Bennett (1928–2018). In his influential 1975 study of early American history, The Shaping of Black America, Bennett registered the importance of thinking beyond one’s own moment for the ongoing struggle against racism: ‘most important, if hardest for us to understand, race did not have the same meaning in 1619 that it has today. The first white settlers were organized around concepts of class, religion, and nationality, and they apparently had little or no understanding of the concepts of race and slavery’
This truth—that many concepts familiar to oneself may be utterly foreign to earlier generations, and indeed to various communities today—has been a central principle as I have sought to grasp the play in its early seventeenth-century contexts and across time and place, and to understand why it has generated such fascination and dichotomous readings in the current age.

The world of theater in 1611 represented a ‘golden age’ of artistic innovation and achievement: a new generation of playwrights and players were drawn from a hitherto unimaginable diversity of class backgrounds; shockingly new commercial amphitheaters, drawing audiences from even more differentiated social strata, proliferated on the outskirts of the city that was at the heart of innovation. While most of the plays produced in this period have not survived, and we have no way of knowing what other ‘treasures’ were lost, we have this body of Shakespeare’s work because it was preserved in the Folios. The plays represent a stunning display of imaginative and linguistic creativity and remain one of the great gifts to humanity from the Renaissance.

This trove has also been fully ‘possessed’ by subsequent ruling classes and yoked into the service of oppressive practices and ideologies. The rendering of Shakespeare’s plays as national heritage, epitome of ‘universal’ values and ‘human nature,’ extracts them from their dynamic history, disguising the historical atrocities behind the artistic achievements of the European Renaissance. Dispossession and genocide were the preconditions for the Renaissance—and for The Tempest in many very concrete ways. Shakespeare’s company at the time, The King’s Men, was connected to the old order, the English monarchy: they had the sponsorship of the reigning monarch and performed more than three dozen times at court in 1610 and 1611, and to do so they would have had to comply with the Royal censors. The English monarchy were the beneficiaries of a patriarchal feudal order resting on centuries of brutal exploitation, and, especially at times of revolt, suppression of the peasantry. This included the particular subjection of women, as evidenced most gruesomely by the practices of torturing and executing elderly women without means who were accused of witchcraft, and more broadly the association of bodily ‘deformity’ with moral lack.

At the same time, the play is embroiled in the emergent order made possible by the ‘primitive accumulation’ of capital: the processes of enclosure and land appropriation that dispossessed the peasantry and turned them into wage laborers. Shakespeare was a shareholder in his own theater, and was close to the Virginia Company, in which his sometime patron Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and others of his acquaintance were investors. The playwright was thus a participant in the emergent market economy. Sources for the play further indicate the proximity of this world to the drama: they include several documents associated with the early colonial expansion that was central to mercantilism, particularly narratives describing the wreck of the Sea Venture—the flagship of a fleet traveling to the struggling Virginia Company—in the Bermudas. The English
geographer and promoter of the colonization of the Americas Richard Hakluyt (c1552–1616) summarized the case for expansion in his 1585 essay ‘Reasons for Colonization’:

1. To plant Christian religion.
2. To traffic. \{Or, to do all three.\}
3. To conquer. (Hakluyt 129).

England’s direct participation in the project was in its early stages, but the ‘conquest of the Americas,’ representing genocide on a scale never before seen, had already profoundly impacted the entire global system and England’s place in it.

The play itself foregrounds the master/slave relationship, and evokes capital punishment, torture, incarceration, criminalization of recalcitrant servants and insubordinate women, discrimination against alterity and disfigurement, and persecution of ‘witches.’ A tremendous sleight of hand is required to remove these violent historical realities. Conversely, the play lends itself to allegory, conjuring characters who seem to be prototypes for these broader social forces and emblematic of relationships of oppression and exploitation. As historian Sylvia Federici writes in her account of primitive accumulation, *Caliban and the Witch*, ‘Caliban represents not only the anti-colonial rebel whose struggle still resonates in contemporary Caribbean literature, but is a symbol for the world proletariat’ and Sycorax becomes symbolic ‘as the embodiment of a world of female subjects that capitalism had to destroy: the heretic, the healer, the disobedient wife, the woman who dared to live alone, the obeah woman who poisoned the master’s food and inspired the slaves to revolt’ (11). A ‘salvage and deformed slave’ and an Algerian ‘witch’ are at the center of the action, and their symbolic potency has been taken up by conservatives, racists, and misogynists as well as socialists, anti-colonialists, and feminists with such frequency that they have become metonymic for oppression and resistance.

This recognition is at the heart of a powerful 2002 essay on *The Tempest* by global studies scholar and founder of the Harmattan Theater in New York City, May Joseph. Joseph identifies dispossession of indigenous women as central both to the play and to the primitive accumulation that set in motion the rise of capitalism in Europe. Sycorax, the demonized Algerian witch who is the precondition for the plot, is figured as ‘both cannibal and cannibalized,’ and remains a stubborn presence despite a long history of attempts to silence and erase her. Joseph traces the deep connections between the history of colonial violence, persecution of witches, the rise of systemic racism, and the early development of capitalism, which in the twenty-first century engulfs the entire globe: ‘Through the deployment of cannibalistic logic, of devouring and being devoured, a colonial, pre-industrial and yet very contemporary theory of use/exchange value can be read in the play’ (212). These historical forces are structurally crucial to
the drama in its original moment and subsequent reception: to omit them from discussion of the play is to obscure the barbarism behind and in the cultural treasure.

The contradictory historical forces surrounding Shakespearean theater more broadly thus condense in an acute way around *The Tempest*, leading generations of critics to argue over whether the drama endorses or challenges the established order, whether it is ‘radical’ or ‘conservative.’ The fact that profoundly dichotomous judgments coexist in itself speaks volumes about the play’s vocalization of the troubled legitimacy of the old and rising ruling classes during the transition to capitalism. The era presented complex and shifting alliances and emerging areas of influence that make it impossible to identify a stable singular dominant ideology; the feudal absolutism of the Tudor and Stuart state oversaw the precarious balance between existing and emergent classes.  

Moreover, the theater itself was in a contradictory relationship to this shifting balance of forces. The court both sponsored and censored the theater companies, and periodically closed them down at times of heightened social conflict. City officials and Puritans frequently denounced the theater as ungodly and immoral, and many of those engaged in new world colonization were in the same camp: the Virginia Company was officially hostile to the theater, and defensive about representation of its activities on the stage. One of *The Tempest*’s particular achievements, in addition to marvelously evocative language and imaginative power, is that it holds together the contradictions of an era that saw the temporary balance of old and new orders, in a society hurtling toward one of the earliest bourgeois revolutions. Thus, the play looks back to older frameworks—those of magic and divine right—even as it reaches toward the new—the language of exploration, discovery, and shipping. Scholar of early modern culture Crystal Bartolovich draws out the implications of these dynamics in her persuasive 2000 essay “‘Baseless Fabric’: London as a “World City”’: ‘Shakespeare’s play turns to a familiar and soon-to-be-anachronistic discourse—magic—to work through a novel crisis in the social order, as is typical at moments of radical disruption’ (25). In keeping with these formative ties to both old and new, the play also borrows freely from the classics, particularly Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, while drawing on ‘ripped from the headlines’ sources, like William Strachey’s yet-to-be-published letter.  

The play’s political ambivalence ultimately derives from its status not as a political treatise, but as a work of art. Not, as it was subsequently to become, High Art, a canonized literary text, but an example of ‘common’ popular culture, a live performance coming from the diverse experiences and allegiances of the theater company, and directed to the heterogeneous audiences of the Court, Globe, and Blackfriars theaters. Its polyvocality is surely bound up with the imperative to be successful—and thus make a profit—by entertaining as large a number of people as possible: audiences for the plays would have included royalty, nobility, merchants, yeomen,
agricultural and urban laborers, and the ambiguous plebeians known as the ‘penny stinkers’ who paid the cheapest entry price to watch plays standing in the theater yard.

Finally, our understanding of this period that saw the emergence of capitalism is inevitably shaped by the subsequent history: the most challenging reality of all for us to grasp is that today’s rulers were yesterday’s rebels. Neil Davidson articulates this conundrum in an essay on Walter Benjamin: ‘The peasants who revolted against the English monarchy in 1382 and their yeoman descendants of the New Model Army who overthrew it in 1639 ... are the ancestors—in some cases quite distant ancestors—of the present capitalist class, of “the current rulers” (Holding 223). This means that while we may recognize the achievements of the agents of the early bourgeois revolutions, we inhabit a world now ruled by their beneficiaries, while the ‘invisible toilers’ who made capitalism’s triumph possible are the antecedents of the global working class, representatives of a long battle over the commons. All of this not only obviates the attempt to ideologically fix Renaissance cultural forms as either ‘radical’ or ‘conservative’ but also demonstrates the continuing political contestation over the ‘cultural treasures’ of class society.

A four-hundred-year culture war

This book takes up the play as a monad that captures the dizzying contradictions of the early transition to capitalism and thus becomes the font of a four-hundred-year culture war, as successive generations battle over its soul. The Introduction, ‘Primitive Accumulation,’ maps out the forces shaping The Tempest at its moment of production in 1611. Global processes of dispossession accompanied the primitive accumulation of capital, while shifts in the global balance of forces paved the way for England’s emergence as world power. The tumultuous changes transforming England fashioned the new institution of the theater in the rapidly growing city of London, while the conflict between old and new shaped Shakespeare’s career in general, and in particular ways the plays of the ‘late period.’ Chapter 1, ‘The Storm of History,’ seeks to understand the play against these 1611 contexts while also asking why it has exerted such fascination in our own era: why it is, as scholar of early modern culture Peter Hulme wrote in 2000, that the play ‘has been re-read and re-written more radically, perhaps, than any other play’ and has ‘emerged as one of the most contested texts in the critical sphere’ (xi).

The remaining chapters trace the play’s reception at various points in the subsequent four centuries, paying especial attention to moments when it is associated with capitalist crisis and political challenges from the oppressed. The chronology of the central chapters is informed by the periodization used by Eric Hobsbawm in his monumental histories—The Age of Revolution 1789–1848, The Age of Capital 1848–1875, The Age of Empire 1875–1914, and The Age of Extremes 1914–1991—although
my book starts earlier, in 1611, and continues up to 2011, marking the 400th anniversary of the play. Chapter 2, ‘Hostile Takeover, Consolidation, and Destabilization,’ considers the long stretch of time from the closing of the theaters in 1640 through to the end of the nineteenth century. In the Restoration, when Shakespeare’s plays were found wanting, The Tempest fell out of favor. John Dryden and William Davenant’s revised version, The Enchanted Island, which retained less than a third of the original, was considered by contemporaries to be an improvement and supplanted Shakespeare’s play on the stage through the eighteenth century across the Anglophone world. But with the great wave of revolutions in Europe, North America, and Haiti, Shakespeare’s Tempest took on heightened significance. The Romantic poets, among whom were some of the ‘first critics of modern bourgeois society, of the capitalist civilization created by the Industrial Revolution,’ associated the play with opposition to conventional mores and the subjection of artistic creation to the market, and established a set of debates that we have inherited (Löwy and Sayre 891). Building on the Romantics, during the Victorian era the anti-capitalist tradition erupted periodically in the working-class ‘radical bardolatry’ which contested patriotic and imperialist claims on the play from the establishment.

Chapter 3, ‘Crisis, War, Revolution,’ considers the transformation of The Tempest in the century witnessing the world’s only successful (albeit briefly) socialist revolution and two cataclysmic world wars. Socialist writers championed Caliban as the universal symbol of the exploited proletariat while conservatives dismissed him as a brainless revolutionary. Transatlantic modernism generated a newly dystopic Tempest, from Eliot’s allusions in The Wasteland to Huxley’s ironic and iconic Brave New World. In the wake of World War Two, many of the century’s most famous transatlantic poets, including H.D., Sylvia Plath, and W.H. Auden, found in the play intimations of both creative inspiration and apocalyptic crisis. And in the century that furthered the globalization of capitalism and of English literature, through processes associated with war and empire, The Tempest was connected with opposition to capitalism and imperialism not only within the transatlantic world but also increasingly within parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia.

The fourth chapter, ‘Independence,’ looks at the impact of the global revolts of the 1960s. A generation of writers who grew up under colonialism and came of age in the era of national liberation, including Aimé Césaire, George Lamming, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, and Edward Brathwaite, rejected imperialist uses of the play and claimed Ariel and Caliban as anti-imperialist freedom fighters. Marxist critics interpreted the play as an expression of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and radical writers and dramatists moored it to a critique of contemporary capitalist structures and inequalities: the play came to symbolize the international ‘tempest of dissent.’

Chapter 5, ‘Overproduction,’ begins in 1980 and looks at the fate of the play in the contradictory climate of neoliberal backlash: in academic literary criticism a new ‘political Shakespeare’ came to the fore, even while the
longer history of political contestation was often forgotten, and the play got caught up in both the ‘linguistic turn’ and the ‘culture wars.’ While the period was marked by a conservative restoration that rolled back the gains of the movements of the previous decades, in performance there emerged a *Tempest* counterpoised to Thatcherism and Reagonomics, while a wave of feminist and womanist readings drew attention to first Miranda and then Sycorax and the intersections of class inequality, patriarchy, and racism. As Ania Loomba argued in her groundbreaking book, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, the play came to signify ‘[t]he connections between witches and transgressive women, between witch-trials with the process of capital accumulation, and between the economic, ideological and sexual subordination of native women by colonial rule’ (152). Shakespearean drama’s deep imbrication in historical and continuing structures of social inequality was exposed in new ways, even while such ‘politicization’ of the bard was denounced in some quarters.

The final chapter, ‘Deregulation,’ traces the fortunes of the play in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Far from becoming less relevant at the end of the twentieth century, as some had anticipated in the wake of decolonization, the play’s timbre only intensified. The full globalization of capitalism drew attention to the play’s international dynamics, revealing, as Crystal Bartolovich wrote in 2000, that ‘even at the moment of the emergence of capital, the world was “in” London and London in the world in novel ways in the seventeenth century’ (‘Baseless Fabric’ 20). The play was positively and negatively associated with the global justice movement, which placed anti-capitalist critique at the forefront of political and cultural debates. As the decade advanced, it became symptomatic of acute anxieties about permanent war, indigenous dispossession, and ecological destruction. The Great Recession provided the crucial context for a cluster of critical and creative responses associating the play with the convulsions and disposessions of capitalism’s youth and old age.

In the Afterword, ‘State of Emergency,’ I explore the proliferation of deeply contradictory *Tempest* s that surrounded the play’s 400th birthday. It was claimed not only by conservatives objecting to the by-now long-standing radical tradition of appropriation, but also by a new generation of anti-capitalists that sprang from the mass wave of rebellion from the Arab Spring to Occupy and the Indignados. The era also consolidated a neoliberal multiculturalism that co-opted the radical reading for the age of austerity, as exemplified by the play’s location in the London Olympics and Paralympics. In the period marking the emergence of Shakespeare Disability studies, the play now also became emblematic of the ‘sea change in attitudes toward disability’ in the early modern period (Hobgood and Wood 15). This was when my students registered more contemporary allusions and references than ever before and I identified the pattern of association with capitalist crisis.

In this historical account, I distinguish three overarching categories which I refer to as ‘integrative,’ ‘disintegrative,’ and ‘liberatory.’ The first
two terms are taken from Ernest Mandel’s Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime History, which sketches a Marxist analysis of the crime genre as social form. Mandel distinguishes between ‘integrative’ crime fiction that solves the murder and restores the social order, and ‘disintegrative’ examples that instead problematize the notion of justice, ending on a discordant note that implicitly critiques the dominant social order. While evoking an analysis of murder mysteries in this context may be unorthodox, Mandel’s paradigm is pertinent on many levels. Walter Benjamin, who embraced both ‘high art’ and ‘popular culture’ as subjects for critique, took a perennial interest in the mystery genre, even harboring long-term plans to write a detective novel himself. My own study considers a broad range of ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture, while recognizing that Shakespeare’s plays were at their inception popular culture, arguably closer to genre fiction than to other areas of modern literature.

Mandel’s categories readily lend themselves to the reception history that is at the center of my book. The overwhelmingly dominant Tempest—repeated in the playbills of innumerable performances—is ‘integrative,’ affirming the conservatism of the plot (the restoration of the ‘rightful’ duke, the thwarting of attempted usurpation, and the disciplining of rebellion from the lower orders) and emphasizing themes of reconciliation, resolution, and harmony. The resultant play is a magical fairy tale with a happy ending, its central power residing in ‘universal’ questions of human nature and art, its primary note one of forgiveness. While presenting itself as apolitical, common sense or transparent, this version is only possible through significant omissions and distortions: it erases the ‘barbarism’ behind the ‘cultural treasure,’ to use Benjamin’s terms, and in the process it typically affirms the dominant social order past and present. The integrative has long been the default mode, especially in performance, but it has coexisted with two dissident versions. The primary alternative is the ‘disintegrative’ Tempest: this countervailing variety emphasizes the violence and conflict that are central to the plot and language, and highlights irreconcilable contradiction, resistance to closure, and dissonance. The resultant Tempest is a disturbing play that addresses slavery, incarceration, social power and powerlessness; its unsatisfying ending cannot quell the jarring dynamics that supply its emotional force. While the overarching opposition between the harmonious and discordant Tempests tends to correspond to worldviews that respectively endorse or question the prevailing social order, as in Mandel’s account, disintegrative Tempests are not necessarily politically radical or progressive. There is, however, another dissident Tempest—the ‘liberatory’ version—that not only lays bare the ‘barbarism,’ but also seeks to preserve the emancipatory potential within and around the artwork. While the liberatory Tempest emerges as a major force in the 1960s in the era of the great global liberation movements, its longer lineage can be traced back to the eighteenth century, when the Romantics associated the play with revolutionary politics, and forward to the present.
The more extreme integrative readings have to rewrite the play, sometimes literally, as in the prototypical example, Restoration playwrights William Davenant and John Dryden’s 1670 *The Tempest; or, The Enchanted Island* (discussed in Chapter 2), or sometimes through omission. Similarly, the fully liberatory *Tempests* have to overhaul Shakespeare’s play, either in pure form such as the Martinican revolutionary poet Aimé Césaire’s 1969 *Une Tempête (A Tempest)—discussed in Chapter 4*, or again through selectively removing aspects of the plot or downplaying them in performance. The play’s contradictory, discordant, and open-ended qualities lend themselves more organically to the disintegrative mode.

**The personal is political**

In the long process of working on this project, it became very clear to me that the patterns I was unearthing have profoundly influenced my own relationship to *The Tempest*, and, in turn, mediated my reading of the play in ways that illustrate the reciprocity of social and personal forces as they coalesce around cultural texts. In England in the mid-1980s when the play was receiving renewed attention, *The Tempest* was the first live performance I attended by the Royal Shakespeare Company, as part of a school trip to Stratford-upon-Avon organized by the English department at Gordano Comprehensive School in Portishead, the small town in South West England where I grew up. The unremarkable and integrative performance was to my eyes—having recently been introduced to the exciting worlds of Marxist theory in History classes and Brechtian drama in Theater Studies—disappointingly conventional and old school. But one of my brothers, living in London, recounted a decidedly liberatory version he had seen that featured a heroic black Caliban, vicious white racist Prospero, and an anti-imperialist aesthetic; he also introduced me to Derek Jarman’s recently released iconoclastic and deeply disintegrative film of *The Tempest* which convinced me that Shakespeare in performance could pack some serious shock value. Soon after, reading English at Essex University, I studied with Peter Hulme and Francis Barker, and was introduced to their landmark disintegrative interpretations of *The Tempest* that drew attention to the primacy of the Caribbean, colonial discourse, and England’s ‘masterless men.’ Radicalized by the epic battle represented by the Great Miners’ Strike, and the struggle against the anti-gay legislation known as Clause 28, I saw a production of Gay Sweatshop Theater Company’s *This Island’s Mine*, a liberatory reimagining of *The Tempest* through the lens of oppression and solidarity in contemporary Britain, in London in 1988.

In face of the bleak realities and diminished funding opportunities of Thatcher’s England, I was advised to pursue postgraduate studies abroad, which led me (and countless others of my generation who were part of the British ‘brain drain’) to the United States and in due course a teaching assistantship and PhD in literature at Brown University. There I was able to work closely with Caribbean scholar Paget Henry, postcolonial literary
critic Neil Lazarus, and Romanticist William Keach, who collectively gave me new perspectives on Marxist theory, while exposing me to many great anti-imperialist writers of the era of decolonization, all of whom, it turned out, had engaged with *The Tempest.* In these years, I was also introduced to Ania Loomba’s 1989 *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama,* Kim Hall’s 1994 *Things of Darkness,* and Marina Warner’s 1992 novel *Indigo,* which variously located the play in the context of the development of capitalism, colonial dispossession, women’s subordination, and the rise of racism, while elaborating some liberatory conclusions. I took up my position at UVM as a specialist in postcolonial Anglophone literature in 1999, where I designed my course on *The Tempest.*

At the verge of my career, after presenting a range of debilitating physical symptoms, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, which profoundly changed my life. I now had specific impairments that restricted what I was able to do and caused varying levels of pain and discomfort. Exacerbating this was a culture that does not recognize the full subjectivity, autonomy, or voices of disabled people. In the broader society, my MS was disabling and for some time it seemed unlikely that I would be able to continue with the academic career for which I had long been training. However, while the condition did place new parameters on my activities, with support and resources over time I developed a regimen that enabled me to continue an active public life. In my workplace a supportive department, backed up by a strong union contract with provisions for health care and paid medical leave, provided me with reasonable accommodations that fostered my continuing ability to contribute as a teacher, scholar, and socialist activist. None of this was inevitable: at many points MS exacerbations could have led me to lose my job, and, in turn, access to crucial enabling resources and systems of support, as routinely happens to people with this and many more conditions that should not, but often do, serve as obstacles to full social participation.

The experience changed me in many other ways. I became more attuned to questions of alterity and the lived experience of oppression. I was forced to slow down, and while for a long time I saw this as a weakness, I eventually developed a sharp critique of the capitalist treadmill that demands ever-increasing levels of ‘productivity’ and defines personal worth in terms of externally driven markers of ‘success.’ I learned about the ‘social theory of disability,’ that crucially distinguishes between impairment, something experienced by individuals, and disability, which is largely determined by social forces. Even while understanding at a theoretical level that disability is a social, not only an individual, question, and that ‘our world is a place of compulsory able-bodied-ness that insidiously excludes, stigmatizes, and devalues difference’ (Hobgood and Wood 3), I had hitherto cordoned off the experience of disability from my professional persona. The decision to discuss this personal history in a book about Shakespeare’s *Tempest* was sparked by the recent consolidation of disability studies within literary scholarship, a development that challenges the long-standing dictate that academics should present themselves as disembodied minds removed from
social forces and corporeal experiences. Furthermore, my own encounter with the politics of disability drew my attention to the play’s remarkable and disturbing pattern of representation around the body: the central portrait of the ‘deformed’ Caliban and the trope of physical difference as monstrosity; the contrast between the visual appearances of Sycorax and Miranda, and pursuant association of ‘ugliness’ with moral turpitude and ‘beauty’ with virtue; and the overarching mind/body dualism that structures the entire play. These patterns intersect with unfixed residual and emergent notions of identity around race and gender in the play’s economy of representation.

As this indicates, my work, at every step, has been kindled and sustained by contemporary intellectual, political, and cultural currents—mediated by institutions and individuals whose lives touched mine—that gave The Tempest an oversized role in my own Erziehungsroman. As should also by now be clear, The Storm of History is a book about ‘The Tempest and its travels,’ but it is also intended more broadly as a contribution to Marxist cultural analysis. While I certainly hope that Tempest scholars will find it worthwhile, the book is designed for nonspecialists: literature and theater studies students engaging with the play; dramatists staging performances; socialists and others interested in exploring the dialectical reciprocity between culture and history as part of a broader emancipatory project. I am not attempting an exhaustive survey, but a focused and selective exploration of those moments when The Tempest gets caught up in and speaks to capitalist crisis and episodes of emancipatory struggle and is transformed in the process.

I draw attention to points in history when struggles of the oppressed ‘get into’ responses to the play, and, whether the immediate battle is victorious or goes down to defeat, new forms of thought and expression find their way into the broader culture. Such moments include epochal revolutions, such as those in Haiti in 1804 and Russia in 1917; mass movements, such as the Labor wars of the 1930s, Black, Latinx, Women’s and Gay Liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the campaign against South African Apartheid in the 1980s; regional revolts combining economic and political aspirations, such as the Arab Spring of the early twenty-first century; and ongoing struggles against imperialist wars and colonial occupations, for LGBTQ equality, and around labor, environmental, migrant, indigenous, and disability rights. This is not a ‘disinterested’ or academic project, but one that believes that ‘Marxism has no meaning if it is not, also, the heir to—and executor of—many centuries of emancipatory dreams and struggles’ (Löwy 36).

Notes

1 Bardolatry, the excessive worship of Shakespeare—dubbed the ‘Bard of Avon’—first developed in the nineteenth century. The origin of the word is usually dated at 1903 and attributed to George Bernard Shaw, who admired Shakespeare’s plays but loathed the practice of idolizing the playwright.
The quotation is from the cover blurb for *William Shakespeare’s The Tempest*, produced for television by George Schaefer in 1960. Laura Bohannan’s 1961 ‘Shakespeare in the Bush,’ an English anthropologist’s story about her attempt to retell the story of *Hamlet* while living in a small village of the Tiv in Nigeria, suggests some of the countless ways that very specific cultural assumptions are deeply embedded in the plays, and do not automatically translate to different locations. As is typical, her reading of the play reveals as much about the author’s cultural location and ideological compass as it does about either the play text or research subjects.

These examples are discussed further in Chapter 6. American poet Jorie Graham’s 2008 *Sea Change* and a 2008 Canadian Wildlife Federation essay called ‘Climate Change; Sea Change.’ British comedian Rob Newman’s comedy routine, ‘From Caliban to the Taliban.’ The blog: ‘Unoccupied Territory: The rage of Caliban.’ Posted by Mark Gullick. McLean and Nocera’s book, *All the Devils are Here* and Anaal Nathrakh’s album, *Hell is Empty and All the Devils are Here*.

Hawkes elaborates this position in his 1992 book, *Meaning by Shakespeare*, and the term has been taken up by many others in subsequent years.

In the monumental work, *The Accumulation of Capital*, first published as *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals* in 1913, Rosa Luxemburg builds on Marx’s *Capital* to develop an account of the mechanisms by which capitalism expands, emphasizing the centrality of imperialist conquest and militarism to the economic process.

Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) was a German Jewish literary critic, writer, Marxist, and cultural theorist, whose life was cut short by the rise of fascism. His primary attention to cultural critique and his heterodox frame of reference have led diverse figures to question his Marxist credentials, and he has often been placed outside of the Classical Marxist tradition by those both friendly and hostile to this pantheon. This judgment, however, rests on an overly restrictive understanding both of Benjamin and of Marxism: the innovations of the former are better understood as enhancing rather than undermining the latter. In his ‘Walter Benjamin and the Classical Marxist Tradition,’ Neil Davidson concludes: ‘we need to see Benjamin’s work, not in opposition to the classical tradition, but as a contribution that enriches it, by deepening our understanding of some key themes and addressing others that had hitherto been absent’ (227).

The text of Benjamin’s ‘On the Concept of History’ I am using is that given by Michael Löwy in his book, *Fire Alarm*, which also supplies detailed explanatory context and line-by-line explication.

‘What happens to a dream deferred? // Does it dry up /
Like a raisin in the sun? // Or fester like a sore—/
And then run? // Does it stink like rotten meat? /
Or crust and sugar over—/ like a syrupy sweet? // Maybe it just sags /
like a heavy load. // Or does it explode?’

The term’s entry into common parlance in the English lexicon is a recent development, dated by linguists to the 1970s.

Lunacharsky was part of the second international—the global socialist movement that had mass membership in the first decade of the twentieth century—and mixed with such figures as the Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg and Russian author Maxim Gorky. He joined the Bolsheviks after the outbreak of World War One, and was a major figure in education and culture after the revolution. He was, like most of the leading Bolsheviks, ousted by Stalin in the late 1920s.
Many others have contributed to the wealth of available information about the play’s reception history. The impressive body of scholarship contributed by Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan warrants particular recognition, and is frequently referenced throughout this book.


The Court supported and financed the development of a naval and merchant fleet that could expand Britain’s trading power and combat the strength of Spain. During this period the alliance between Parliament, representing the interests of merchants, and the Court, representing landowners, held. But as the bourgeoisie increasingly escaped dependence on the monarchy, they were seen as a threat to the crown, and conflicts built in the decades leading to the English revolution.

William Strachey’s letter to his ‘Excellent lady,’ subsequently published as ‘A True Reportory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas.’ This was Strachey’s eye witness account of the wreck of the Sea Venture, published in 1625 but available to Shakespeare before 1611.

While for the most part this study focuses on Anglophone works, I do include Césaire’s Tempest due to its wide availability in English translation and its oversize influence on Anglophone postcolonial appropriations.

Ernest Mandel (1923–95) was a German-born Marxist economist, survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, influential Trotskyist journalist, theorist, and critic. Others have used the distinction between ‘integrative’ and ‘dis-integrative’ in discussions of The Tempest (Coursen, ‘Review’ 219). A related opposition is between ‘spangled’ and ‘plain’ productions (Greenwald quoting Trewin 113).

This resonates with what Stephen Orgel refers to as the critically normative ‘sentimental’ reading, which he defines through a quotation from Madeleine Doran: “the action of the play is Prospero’s discovery to his enemies, their discovery of themselves, the lovers’ discovery of a world of wonder, Prospero’s own discovery of an ethic of forgiveness, and the renunciation of his magical power” (Introduction 13).

Paget Henry would go on to write a significant work with The Tempest at its core: Caliban’s Reason.

The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), ‘a tiny group of disabled socialists,’ published the groundbreaking Fundamental Principles of Disability in 1975 that defined disabled people as an oppressed group, and asserted the ‘pioneering distinction between impairment and disability’ (Slorach 19). While elements of the social theory have subsequently been adapted and critiqued, its central assertion that disability is both personally experienced and socially determined remains invaluable. Marta Russell (1951–2013) is a particularly important figure within Marxist disability theory and activism. See Rosenthal, ed.

The Erziehungsroman is a variant of the Bildungsroman, or novel of development, specifically concerned with the process of education.

The quoted term comes from the 2000 collection edited by Peter Hulme, The Tempest and its Travels.
It all began in the classroom, and the process of watching, reading, and analyzing *The Tempest* with my students. Thank you to all who have been in these classes at the University of Vermont, and especially those who continue to send me *Tempest* ‘sightings’ years after graduating. Ann Donahue encouraged and supported the original book proposal. Anthony Arnove and Chris Scott both gave me crucial feedback on the preface; William Keach, Nagesh Rao, and Ashley Smith generously supplied insightful and detailed responses to complete drafts of the manuscript. Kaitlin Chase provided much-needed assistance with the bibliography. Pranav Jani, Deepa Kumar, Gill Scott, and Nancy Welch clarified my thinking and shored up my confidence in countless conversations. Thanks to all my colleagues, family, and friends for watching and discussing *The Tempest* with me, and for humoring my obsession. Deepest love and appreciation to Ashley Smith for accompanying me to dozens of performances (now we can see other plays!), for invariably giving me new ways of understanding *The Tempest* and the world, and for being my beacon in the storm.
Introduction
Primitive accumulation

These are not natural events, they strengthen
From strange to stranger. Alonso V.i

The world turned upside down
Emerging from a unique moment of innovative theatrical production, The Tempest was one among thousands of contemporaneous dramatic works, many of which did not survive in print form. It is a vestige of an exceptional era of mass entertainment that staged the questions being raised in the broader society and left a precious cultural legacy. Paul O’Flinn, author of a delightful short work of Marxist literary criticism of 1975, wrote of the play: ‘Prospero literally waves a magic wand and freezes for the moment all the life-denying forces in violently emerging capitalist society’ (Chapter 11). The implication here is that behind this ‘cultural treasure’ lie the devastating processes of the primitive accumulation of capital, including genocide, dispossession, and forced labor. While at the level of plot these ‘life-denying forces’ are kept at bay, they remain as a looming presence. With its formal and thematic preoccupation with usurpation and restoration, enslavement and insurrection, old worlds and new, dissolution and metamorphosis, The Tempest was a singular distillation of the spirit of the age. Its distinctive voice has spoken to successive generations in the modern era meditating on their own times of capitalist crisis and change.

The phrase coined by Antonio, ‘what’s past is prologue’ (II.i.253), suggests the dual sense of nostalgia and futurity that characterized early modern theater. Looking back to the classical era and forward to modernity, the Renaissance was a product of the long transition from feudalism to capitalism. This was precipitated by the Protestant Reformation—an assault on the Catholic Church, the foundation block of feudalism—and by the European mercantilism that carved out colonial empires, paved the way for the triangular slave trade, and provided the building blocks for the development of capitalism. The century of change and revolution saw England transform from a second-class power into the world’s dominant empire. In the words of the broadside ballad of 1646, this was when the world turned upside down.¹
The Tudor and Stuart state balanced between the old feudal lords and the rising capitalists: it had its base in those rulers committed to maintaining the old order, but it also enabled the development of capitalism through state-sponsored enclosures of land, which offered some yeoman farmers and landlords the opportunity to develop agricultural capitalism. The state also facilitated the colonial expansion that enabled the rise of the new merchant capitalists and by 1649 a coalition of rising capitalist farmers, lords, new merchants, and urban ‘middle sorts’ who were able to overthrow the old state and replace it with a new one—consolidated in 1688—that removed remaining impediments to capitalist development.  

The new capitalist class hailed from sections of the landed aristocracy who turned to agricultural capitalism, and from the artisanal and mercantile capitalists who made their money through the wool and cloth industries and world trade. These developments were made possible by the ‘primitive accumulation’ of capital—laborers were separated from the land and the products of their work and compelled to enter the wage labor market—described by Marx in *Capital* (‘Part Eight: So-Called Primitive Accumulation’ 871–940). By the end of the sixteenth century, enclosure—the appropriation of common land and expropriation of the peasant proprietors—along with deforestation and urbanization, had already dramatically altered the demographic as well as the geographic landscape of England: ‘A mass of “free” and unattached proletarians was hurled onto the labour-market by the dissolution of the bands of feudal retainers,’ writes Marx in *Capital* (878). He goes on to quote an account from Harrison’s *Description of England*, which was prefixed to one of Shakespeare’s perennial sources, *Holinshed’s Chronicle*: “cities and townes either utterly decayed or more than a quarter or half diminished” (qtd. in *Capital* 878–9). By the end of the seventeenth century, a quarter of England had been enclosed, dramatically increasing the number of people without land, feudal ties, or property: these ‘masterless’ men and women were, in turn, criminalized by successive laws against ‘vagrancy’ and ‘vagabondage’ in acts passed by Elizabeth I and James I: ‘Thus were the agricultural folk first forcibly expropriated from the soil, driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded and tortured by grotesquely terroristic laws into accepting the discipline necessary for the system of wage-labour’ (Marx *Capital* 899).

The rise of the capitalist system generated entirely new world views reflected in the scientific and philosophical thought of the Enlightenment. Over the course of capitalism’s early development, the very notion of humanity, previously understood in terms of social groups and the larger communal whole, was redefined to signify autonomous individuals driven by a competitive ‘human nature’ and disconnected from a now abstracted entity, ‘society.’ Cartesian subjectivity and possessive individualism were to be codified in the near future, and the early modern period was on the cusp of the emergence of a new normative model of selfhood. While bourgeois ideology rests on the notion of ‘individual freedom,’ Marx pointed out that laborers were ‘freed’ from their property but bound to the invisible chains
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of the market system where they were forced to sell their only remaining possession—their labor power—in order to survive: ‘the bourgeoisie endowed the individual with an unprecedented importance, but at the same time that same individuality was annihilated by the economic conditions to which it was subjected, by the reification created by commodity production’ (Lukács History 62). As a corollary, the new triangular trade literally enslaved entire populations, denying them possession of even their own labor power. Marx famously captured the intimate relationship between the two sides of capitalist development, as well as its profound brutality, in Capital:

In fact the veiled slavery of the wage labourers in Europe needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.

*Tantae molis erat* to unleash the ‘eternal natural laws’ of the capitalist mode of production, to complete the process of separation between the workers and the conditions of their labour, to transform, at one pole, the social means of production and subsistence into capital, and at the opposite pole, the mass of the population into wage-labourers, into the free ‘labouring poor,’ the artificial product of modern history. If money, according to Augier, ‘comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek,’ capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt. (*Capital* 925–6)

The implications were immense. The naked contradiction between the ideology of bourgeois individualism and the fact of slavery was justified by the development of systemic racism, which denied the enslaved human status. Possessive individualism led to a notion of ‘productive’ personhood against which impairments were refigured as ‘difference’ and ‘lack.’ In marked contrast to the feudal model of collective labor in which a broader spectrum of ‘abilities’ could be accommodated and was understood on communal rather than individual bases, this paved the way for the modern category of ‘disabled’ persons.

The dispossession of the peasantry and the creation of the modern proletariat were processes that took hundreds of years and tremendous class struggle. Peasant revolts periodically erupted in the late sixteenth century and into the seventeenth. The famous Kett’s Rebellion of 1549 espoused the idea that “all bond-men may be made free, for god made all free with his precious blood sheddying” (qtd. in Federici 73). Similar revolts had broken out closer to the time of The Tempest’s composition, such as the Enslow Hill Rebellion of 1596 and the spectacular 1607 Midlands Revolt. Each case was met with harsh suppression:

In 1611, the year *The Tempest* was first performed, in Middlesex alone (which county already contained the most populous parishes of London) roughly 130 people were sentenced to the gallows and ninety-eight were actually hanged, considerably more than the annual average of about seventy. (Linebaugh and Rediker 31)
The revolts and their suppression suggest the volatility of the period, which also saw increased social fluidity, as new social forces emerged from the decay of feudal estates and the disequilibrium stemming from land transfers. Francis Bacon, a figure often associated with Prospero, was among those who noted these developments and warned of the potential for further social upheavals.5

An indication of how these changes were disrupting the English social hierarchy can be found in legislation around appropriate clothing. Sumptuary laws, which dictated class specific dress, dated back through the middle ages, but attempts to strengthen and enforce them under Elizabeth I suggest that the era was subject to increasing violations. A proclamation of 1574 betrays official anxieties surrounding dress and upward mobility: the greater availability of foreign goods—‘such superfluities of silks, cloths of gold, silver and other most vain devices’—presented dangers to the realm, particularly in the form of ‘young gentlemen, otherwise serviceable, and others seeking by show of apparel to be esteemed as gentlemen.’ Such men may bankrupt themselves, or turn to ‘unlawful acts’ to achieve their goals (Aughterson 164). The sumptuary laws, always difficult to enforce, were repealed by parliament in 1604, but clothing and class mobility continued to be contentious issues throughout the period.

The broader upheavals were accompanied by hitherto unparalleled urbanization. While other towns developed in this period, London was the urban heart of England’s early capitalism, and boasted conditions that stood in sharp contrast to the circumscribed environment of the previous era and to rural regions. The population of London is reckoned to have increased eightfold from the beginning of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century (Hill World 40). Stephen Greenblatt describes it as a ‘city of newcomers’ which was home to an ‘unprecedented concentration of bodies’ (Will 163, 169). The fixtures of the medieval world were being buffeted by ‘the new forces of capitalism, the merging relations of economic and cultural exchange, the volatile and increasingly placeless institution of the market’ (Weimann ‘Representation’ 508). Greenblatt’s observation that London ‘escaped the local’ (Will 166) echoes Crystal Bartolovich’s commentary on the significance of the term ‘baseless fabric’ in The Tempest: ‘at the moment of the emergence of capital, the world was “in” London and London in the world in novel ways ... as labour and trade practices transformed, rendering it “baseless”, in the sense of dislocated’ (“Baseless Fabric” 20).

Global production and reproduction

All of these developments were both precipitated by and fueled global dynamics.6 Feudal Europe was shaped by the Mongol Empire and the Ottoman Empire, and these interactions fed into the conquest of the Americas, the triangular slave trade between Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean, and
the colonization of Asia. Capitalism developed first in (what would become) Europe not due to the mythic superiority of the West, but rather due to its ‘privilege of backwardness’ relative to the extant regional powers. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire ‘actively and directly brought about a structural shift away from Mediterranean trade and the concomitant ascendency of Italian city-states, toward the Atlantic powers that would eventually come to dominate the world through colonialism’ (Anievas and Nişancioğlu 120). The importance of the Ottoman empire for Renaissance England and the plays of Shakespeare can hardly be overstated, as Matthew Dimmock, among others, has pointed out.7

Nor should we underplay the significance of the ‘discovery’ and ‘conquest’ of the Americas, referred to by Tzvetan Todorov as ‘the greatest genocide in human history,’ that marked the start of modernity (5). Spain’s leading role prepared the way for the latecomer, England, facilitating its rapid capitalist development and ascendance as a global power. More broadly plunder and genocide in the New World generated ideological paradigms—that formed the building blocks of modern racism and Eurocentrism (Anievas and Nişancioğlu Chapter 5). English domestic enclosure and dispossession were thus inextricable from global processes. The primitive accumulation that dispossessed the English peasantry took place in the context of shifting relationships on the world stage that allowed mercantilism to develop, created new international fault lines of oppression, and led to the development of Atlantic slavery and racism.

The second phase of European incursion into the Americas was beginning at the opening of the seventeenth century. Portugal, Holland, France, and England all launched commercial cultivation of sugar and tobacco in their own colonies, relying first on European indentured servants and then increasingly on enslaved Africans: ‘In 1500, Africans or persons of African descent were a clear minority of the world’s slave population; but by 1700, the majority’ (Manning, 30). Britain’s East India and Levant Companies had already advanced England’s maritime power and commercial expansion overseas:

[England] was able to concentrate the great part of its expenditures, both royal and private, on overseas expansion and the fleets with which to pursue it: from 1545 to 1625 the Royal Navy increased in both numbers and tonnage twofold, the merchant marine fivefold, and England was prepared to say, with Ralegh, ‘whoever commands the sea commands the trade, whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself.’ (Sale 266)

The Jamestown Colony was established in 1607 in the region of the Powhatan tribes, who by 1609 were actively resisting their colonizers. The Virginia Company was established as a joint stock venture by charters in 1609
and 1612, and although its life was brief, it established a permanent colony and paved the way for a new generation of independent entrepreneurs to develop the immense plantation economy and triangular trade that would reshape the world.

The period was thus a key moment in the transformations that would lead to European global dominance, the emergence of England as the preeminent imperialist power, and the establishment of racial slavery. These social changes were accompanied by the growth of ideologies—possessive individualism, Eurocentrism, modern racism—that have persisted, albeit constantly shaped and reshaped, into our own era. In 1611, ‘Black’ and ‘white’ identities were not the seemingly secure and definitive categories that they were to become, and slavery was not yet racialized. As Eric Williams famously argued in his influential history, *Capitalism and Slavery*, ‘[u]nfree labor in the New World was brown, white, black and yellow’ (7). Barbara Fields elaborates this argument in a landmark 1990 essay, arguing that the early colonial development in North America ‘rested primarily on the backs of English indentured servants, not African slaves’ and this did not change until late in the seventeenth century (101–2). The era of formal European colonialism deepened and schematized racist thought. Michelle Alexander reminds us of this:

> The concept of race is a relatively recent development. Only in the past few centuries owing largely to European imperialism have the world’s people been classified along racial lines. Here, in America, the idea of race emerged as a means of reconciling chattel slavery—as well as the extermination of American Indians—with the ideals of freedom preached by whites in the new colonies. (23)

Racism initially reconciled the fact of mass enslavement with the ideology of individual freedom and proceeded to function also as a central lynchpin in the maintenance of class inequality. Of Renaissance England, then, it is true to say both that ‘race did not have the same meaning ... that it has today’ (Bennett 10) and that processes were underway that would lead to entirely new structures and ideologies of class and race that define our own age. As Ronald Takaki argued in an influential 1992 essay, *The Tempest* ‘invites us to view English expansion not only as imperialism but also as a defining moment in the making of an English-American identity based on race’ (892). 8

As the broader social system was convulsing, the role of women, in particular, was subject to dramatic and contradictory transformations as not only the conditions of production but also of social reproduction changed. While patriarchy and women’s subordination were central to feudalism, women’s domestic work had included productive labor that was socially valued. The processes of separating public and private realms, removing productive work from the extended family, and dismantling practices and
rights that had been secured by the peasantry under feudalism, all contributed to a devaluation of women’s reproductive and domestic roles. In his account of the impact of European conquest of the Americas, Kirkpatrick Sale spends some time describing gender egalitarianism in many of the Native American tribes, and draws the contrast with the predominant patriarchy in Europe. Women’s full participation in economic life and autonomy in personal relationships were incomprehensible to the early European travelers in the new (to them) world:

Since this contrasted so sharply with the position of women in contemporary European society, where women’s economic and social power, already constricted by a patriarchal culture, was further undercut by the new capitalist economies stressing production by men and outside the home, it is hardly surprising that the men who wrote about it were generally confounded about what they saw. (Sale 300)

Sale here emphasizes the corrosive impact on women’s status precipitated by early capitalism. In Caliban and the Witch, Silvia Federici identifies the violent suppression of disobedient women—including the witch-hunts that escalated in the mid-sixteenth century when witchcraft was legally encoded as a capital crime punishable by death—as a crucial feature of primitive accumulation. She also documents women’s participation in the era’s rebellions: she cites for example, one case in Warwickshire (‘Shakespeare’s county,’ as the county road sign declares today) in 1609: “fifteen women, including wives, widows, spinsters, unmarried daughters, and servants, took it upon themselves to assemble at night to dig up the hedges and level the ditches” (qtd. in Federici 73). The government soon ‘started arresting and imprisoning women involved in anti-enclosure riots’ (Federici 73).

The emergence of capitalism, paradoxically, included challenges to women’s subordinate role in the patriarchal order, as part of the revolutionary questioning of all aspects of feudal society: the Levellers, Diggers, and Ranters variously interrogated aspects of women’s oppression, and women played an increasing role in the dissenting movements throughout the century, which also saw challenges to the system of primogeniture that rested on the subordination of women.9 This illustrates the many ways that the period of global transformation was characterized both by immense creative energy that blasted open the bedrock of feudalism, and also by violent dispossession and exploitation.

These shifts in racialized and gendered realities and ideologies are inseparable, despite the common practice of studying the histories of the early modern Atlantic, slavery, and women’s oppression in isolation from one another. Jennifer L. Morgan’s Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery explores the centrality of Black women’s productive and reproductive labor to racial slavery and thus the entire
Atlantic world. Given that this was ‘a coercive labor system predicated upon a fictive biological marker conveyed by the mother,’ the entire system pivoted upon enslaved women’s reproductive capacity (Morgan 3–4). While ‘[a] concept of “race” rooted firmly in biology is primarily a late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century phenomenon,’ ideological and social shifts were taking place earlier and the processes that generated these concepts were underway in the seventeenth century (Morgan 13). Morgan’s analysis of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European travel narratives confirms this:

By the mid-seventeenth century, what had initially marked African women as unfamiliar—their sexually and reproductively bound savagery—had become familiar. To invoke it was to conjure a gendered and racialized figure that marked the boundaries of English civility even as she naturalized the subjugation of Africans and their descendants in the Americas. (49)

The early emergent period of capitalist development as much as its subsequent history rested on the violent appropriation of Black women’s bodies.\(^10\)

**Theaters of court and commerce**

Renaissance theater as an institution was a microcosm of these broader social contradictions, conflicts, and transformations. On the one hand, the theater had strong connections with the past, in particular, the Medieval Morality Plays and Mystery Cycles, which continued into the 1570s and were likely familiar to Shakespeare in his childhood. On the other, it was a radically new institution. Thomas Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* (c1588) heralded a breathtaking and prolific outpouring of dramatic works in the coming decades: more than 1,500 plays are known to have been written between 1590 and 1642, and many more left no record.\(^11\) The first freestanding theater, the Red Lion, was opened in 1567. The first public amphitheater—a purpose-built permanent venue for open-air performance—was constructed in 1576 (The Theater), and by 1603 there were a dozen in London.\(^12\)

The period gave rise to a new generation of playwrights, including Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, George Peele, and Thomas Watson, whose exceptional qualities are identified by Stephen Greenblatt:

They were an extraordinary group, of the kind that emerges all at once in charmed moments, as when a dozen or more brilliant painters all seemed to converge at the same time on Florence or when for years at a time New Orleans or Chicago seemed to have a seemingly limitless supply of stupendous jazz and blues musicians. (*Will* 199)
The context for this golden age of theater included ‘the phenomenal growth of the urban population, the emergence of the public theaters, and the existence of a competitive market for new plays’ (Will 199). The class backgrounds of these so-called ‘university wits’ were mixed to an extent unthinkable in earlier generations: they included the sons of old and new wealth, and some were scholarship recipients from financially humble families, beneficiaries of the grammar schools established in the sixteenth century. These educated men, for whom society as yet had no obvious productive role, were also often in an antagonistic relationship to the status quo. Christopher Hill describes the tremendous opening up of possibilities that helped forge the ‘great themes of late Elizabethan and Jacobean drama’:

The boundless individualism of Marlowe’s heroes, or of Macbeth, their unlimited desires and ambitions for power beyond power, set them in conflict with the standards of existing society. Yet their world itself has lost stability. Authority has gone, nothing can be taken for granted … we could tell simply by reading the literature of the time that two sets of standards were in conflict. (Century 96)

The theater thus registers the upheavals, contradictions, conflicts, and immense energy associated with the broader period.

The theater companies were tied to the court and nobility. Players, named in the 1572 Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds, were required to have patronage under threat of criminal penalty, hence The Earl of Leicester’s Men, the Admiral’s Men, The Queen’s Men, the Earl of Pembroke’s Men, and so on. The ‘boy companies’ were recruited from the chapels of the royal household. Under both Elizabeth and James, royal performances took place in the Whitehall Palace Theater, the Cockpit-in-Court. The Master of the Revels, established under Henry VIII to oversee court entertainment, took on the broader role of court censor under Elizabeth.

The theater companies were in these ways connected to the old society, but they were equally a product of the new: ‘the public playhouses and their professional acting companies were phenomena so turbulently new to London that no comfortable conceptual models had yet accommodated them’ (Barroll 8). Noble patronage notwithstanding, they established commercial joint stock companies with the central goal of making a profit; the term ‘box office’ stems from this time. Shakespeare’s company under the reign of Elizabeth, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, established the Globe theater in 1599: its capacity is estimated to be as much as 3,000, and standing room in the yard, which was exposed to the elements, cost a penny; the first and second galleries, both covered, cost two and three pennies respectively. This proved a profitable enterprise: the shareholders made significant money, which allowed them to purchase land, and in some cases noble titles. Under James, they became the King’s Men, and after 1608 they took over the
indoor Blackfriars hall theater, and this too was lucrative. Although the capacity was smaller and the audience more select, the seats were more expensive: the cheapest cost sixpence, the most prestigious double that amount. The company continued to play in both locations as well as at the court, so the audience for *The Tempest* was socioeconomically diverse: the public and democratic amphitheaters; the private and restricted royal court; and the public but more elite commercial indoor theater. There is evidence that other changes accompanied the opening up of Blackfriars, such as increased use of music, song, and dance in performance, and new stage technology that enabled special effects such as actors flying and disappearing.

Like those of the university wits, the status and social backgrounds of the practical men of the theater—women did not have a major presence on the stage until after the Restoration—are richly illustrative of shifting class dynamics. John Brayne, the figure behind the Red Lion, was a successful London Grocer; James Burbage, leading player in the Queen’s Men, was a carpenter. Of the six shareholders of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, William Kempe had been a jester with the Earl of Leicester, and Thomas Pope was also part of the Earl’s retinue; John Heminges was a wealthy London grocer and became the company bookkeeper (he was later famous as the co-editor of the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays, with fellow actor Henry Condell); Cuthbert and Richard were sons of James Burbage. The temporal dualism suggested by these biographies defined the institution of the theater:

Situated on the cusp of residual and emergent modes of production, they retained aspects of the guild and patronage systems, while in other respects assuming the innovative form of joint-stock, proto capitalist ventures. As such, they were open to attack by civic and religious authorities. (Dowd and Korda 3)

Consequently, the companies had a structurally ambivalent relationship to the various sites of power in the broader society. The push and pull of old and new played out in particular ways on Shakespeare’s biography, as far as it can be reconstructed. His parents were from old rural Warwickshire families whose world was already transformed by the Reformation and changes in land use; the Shakespeares lived in a town and were part of the rising middle class. In the early part of William’s childhood, the family’s fortunes steadily rose and John Shakespeare became a respected alderman. But while his rise illustrates the new potential of social mobility, the subsequent precipitous drop in the family’s position demonstrates the precarity of the age. John was in the guild protected gloving trade; he was also a brogger, an illegal wool trader, and some research suggests that his sudden financial reversal was precipitated by the crackdown on this practice, as the established wool merchants attempted to exert control over the trade and exclude new
competition on the heels of economic crisis in the 1570s. While William Shakespeare would have attended the Grammar school, he famously did not go on to university. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, who was of a long-established family of substantial farmers and householders. But just a few years later, he joined the tide of humanity making its way to London.

This conspicuous equilibrium between the contradictory forces of the old and the new is a common theme in early twenty-first century biographies. For Michael Wood, Shakespeare ‘was lucky to be born on the cusp of history’ and was ‘the first modern man … also the last great product of the Gothic Christian West’ (13); Greenblatt notes that his family history gave him ‘the sense of what it means to go up and down’ (79), and that he became ‘master of double consciousness’ (142); Peter Ackroyd argues that Shakespeare ‘saw what was happening’ in the ‘change from medieval to early modern England’ and, further, he ‘was perhaps the last English dramatist to reconcile the two cultures’ (17).

Despite the immense body of historical scholarship investigating Shakespeare’s biography, ultimately any coherent narrative relies heavily on speculation and imagination. The modern notion of authorship would have been unrecognizable in a theatrical mode that was fundamentally collaborative and public rather than individual and private. As James Shapiro has argued, the very concept of literary biography was unknown during Shakespeare’s lifetime (Contested 18). Recent scholarship has confirmed the extent to which collaboration was part of playwriting as much as performance; many of Shakespeare’s works, especially in the Jacobean period, were co-authored, and at least three of his late plays were written in collaboration with John Fletcher.

It is nonetheless possible to map key circumstantial parameters. The Russian revolutionary and cultural critic Anatoly Lunacharsky identifies the ‘social type’ represented by Shakespeare, which he sees condensed in Prospero’s ‘Our revels now are ended’ speech:

It goes without saying that such a mood is neither the ‘beginning’ nor the ‘end’ of human wisdom. It is the distinctive mood of a class. The great mouthpiece of a déclassé, changing aristocracy in the process of transition into a class of bourgeois magnates and himself the representative of the class of bettered craftsmen who provided the nobility with their cultural distractions, Shakespeare, in that epoch when the middle classes as a whole were developing into the incarnation of avarice, hypocrisy and puritanism, could see no bright rifts in the massing clouds ahead. No such rifts were promised by the monarchy which was being built up from these confused social relationships. There was no way out. The alternatives were to kill oneself, or to grumble on endlessly about the unfortunate way the world had been made, or to be thankful for mutability, instead of discovering therein cause for melancholy. (242)
Understanding Shakespeare in this framework—as a particular embodiment of a contradictory and emergent class for whom the only given certainty was mutability—makes it possible to imagine a living breathing human being while avoiding an anachronistic notion of bourgeois subjectivity that was barely embryonic during Shakespeare’s lifetime.

**The sources: looking backward and forward**

*The Tempest*, then, emerges during an intensification of the broader nexus of transition, transformation, and movement between the old and the new. These forces are also at the thematic and formal heart of this play, which is both ‘about’ transformation, and signifies transience through the extended metaphors of sea-change and tempest. In addition, it explicitly registers global issues: the major themes are travel, discovery, shipwreck, new worlds and old. Atypically lacking a single original source play, *The Tempest* also looks to both past and present for inspiration.

The principal of the classical sources are Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The *Aeneid* is echoed in the plot, through themes of usurpation and exile, sea voyage, Mediterranean shipwreck, a father planning a political match for his daughter, romantic love, punishing harpies, and more. It is also quoted in Ferdinand’s lines when he first sees Miranda (I.ii.422-3), which recall Aeneas’ words to his disguised mother (*Aeneid* Book 1 lines 328–34). It is also quoted in Ferdinand’s lines when he first sees Miranda (I.ii.422-3), which recall Aeneas’ words to his disguised mother (*Aeneid* Book 1 lines 328–34). It is explicitly foregrounded in the (otherwise inexplicable and frequently cut in performances) comical exchange about Widow Dido between the nobles in the third scene (II.i.77-102). The overarching leitmotifs of the play, transformation and impermanence resonate too with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which is also alluded to, most famously in Prospero’s renunciation speech at the start of the final act. This connection further accentuates change, the passage of time, creation, and destruction. The key classical sources thus themselves represent a split between integrative and disintegrative modes. The *Aeneid* can be understood as a piece of poetic propaganda, presenting the triumph of order over chaos in celebration of the rule of Augustus. *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, is an anti-epic, subversive and demythologizing. These dual sources contribute to the structural tension between these two modes.

While thus evoking classical sources of long-established and rich cultural association, *The Tempest* simultaneously draws on the utterly contemporary, notably Michel de Montaigne’s essay ‘Of the Cannibales,’ paraphrased in Gonzalo’s Commonwealth speech, and new world travel narratives available in London in 1610: John Smith’s *True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate* (a Jamestown narrative published before the wreck); Richard Rich’s *Newes From Virginia: the Lost Flocke Triumphant*; Silvester Jourdain’s *Discovery of the Barmudas, Otherwise Called the Ile of Divels*; and the Virginia Company of London’s *True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia*. These last three describe the story of the
Sea Venture; the company published both Jourdain’s and its own official account.

Another significant contemporary source is William Strachey’s Letter to his ‘Excellent lady,’ subsequently published as ‘A True Reportory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas.’18 This was Strachey’s eyewitness account of the incident, published in 1625 but available to Shakespeare before 1611. Strachey was a figure with marked resemblance to Shakespeare in background and circumstances. Cambridge educated (unlike Shakespeare), Strachey failed to achieve fame and fortune as a poet, and so was on board the Sea Venture as a prospective planter and chronicler of life in the new world. His lengthy account of the shipwreck, sojourn in the Bermudas, late arrival in Virginia, and return to London was available in 1611 although not formally published. Hobson Woodward, the author of a history of the Sea Venture incident, underscores the story’s contemporary resonance: ‘The presses of the city were dominated by publications about the New World’ and ‘[since] the first Jamestown fleet departed England in 1607, exploration of the New World had been the talk of London’ (150, 152).

Woodward’s account imagines William Strachey attending a performance of The Tempest and recognizing in Gonzalo a figure akin to George Somers, admiral of the fleet and later founder of the English colony in Bermuda. Woodward argues that Gonzalo’s Commonwealth speech (2.i.144-161) is,

a virtual recapitulation of the Virginia Company pamphlets that depicted Jamestown as a paradise awaiting the establishment of an ideal commonwealth. Gonzalo’s imagined plantation was Shakespeare’s distillation of the arguments of the colonialists at their wildly optimistic peak. (173–4)

In contrast, Alden Vaughan has found that Strachey’s report exposed the rebellion in the Bermudas and was critical of the Virginia colony: ‘Strachey’s exposé would have threatened the company’s pressing need to raise the funds and recruit competent colonists’ (‘William Strachey’s “True Reportory”’ 247). Virginia Company propaganda is also challenged by Montaigne’s doctrine of primitivism that posited the ‘noble savages’ of the Americas as morally superior to ‘civilized man.’ Gonzalo’s speech borrows heavily from and paraphrases Montaigne’s ‘Of the Cannibales’ ‘which is one of the great anti-colonial texts of literature’ (Hendrick 39).19

The particular details of the Sea Venture story crystallize the larger issues of the transition to capitalism while anticipating historical developments that would become far more significant than anyone at the time could possibly have predicted. First, like the acting companies and amphitheatres, the crown-chartered commercial operations of the turn of the century were finely balanced between old and new worlds, and they also had a fleeting existence. The Virginia Company (chartered in 1609 and 1612) was dissolved
in 1624. Unlike the theaters, though, these were not in themselves profitable ventures. Some of the most powerful merchants in London took part in this first systematic commercial enterprise in the new world, but most were unsuccessful and the established merchants quickly withdrew. This left the field open to new, independent entrepreneurs who would go on to build the triangular slave trade and plantation economies that were to be central to Britain’s economic and colonial ascendency. Aptly enough, the only one of the colonial companies to last longer (until 1684) was the Somers Island company, named for the admiral of the fleet who successfully took *Sea Venture* to ground and went on to become the founder of the colony of Bermuda (Robert Brenner 92–7). Punctuating the symbolic significance of this moment in the history of English expansionism, memorials to Somers exist both in his home-town of Lyme Regis on the South coast of England and in the town of St George’s, Bermuda, first settled by the English colonizers in 1612. There, rather grotesquely, his heart and bowels were buried.

Although the *Sea Venture* story is unusual, it is paradoxically emblematic of the contradictions of the moment. Those who worked and sailed on the ship constituted a remarkable demographic mix: Africans were among those who loaded the ship at Plymouth; at least two Native Americans, Powhatans, were on board. Among the crew were mercenary soldiers newly unemployed since the peace treaty between Spain and the Netherlands in 1609, in addition to the usual mariners and ‘masterless men.’ The elite of the Virginia Company included Gentlemen, such as Sir Thomas Gates, who would become Governor of Jamestown—the aforementioned Sir George Somers, mayor of Lyme Regis—and Christopher Newport, captain of *Sea Venture*. John Rolfe, of Pocahontas legend, was also on board.

The company had campaigned to recruit professionals who would be of use in the new colony, but the perils of the enterprise made it likely that many of those who signed up ‘were on the margins of their professions’ (Woodward 20). The bulk of the 153 people aboard were commoners, largely hailing from the evicted peasantry and urban laborers who had been dispossessed by the social upheavals described above. These ‘masterless men and women,’ symbolically registered as ‘a hydra-headed monster’ by the English ruling class, included ‘entertainers of the day—the jugglers, fencers, minstrels’ (Linebaugh and Rediker 19). In ‘The Wreck of the *Sea-Venture,*’ the first chapter of their expansive sociocultural history, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker understand the story as a microcosm of the changes accompanying the early development of capitalism:

...the shift in agriculture from arable subsistence to commercial pasture; the increase of wage labor; the growth of urban populations; the expansion of the domestic system of handicraft or putting-out; the growth of world trade; the institutionalization of markets; and the
establishment of a colonial system. These developments were made possible by a profound and far-reaching cause: the enclosure of land and the removal of thousands of people from the commons, who were then redeployed to the country, town, and sea. Expropriation was the source of the original accumulation of capital, and the force that transformed land and labor into commodities. This is how some of the workers aboard the Sea-Venture had become ‘hands.’ (16)

Although the colonies depended on these laborers, the Colonial elite used vicious class invective against them, especially as tales of the hardships facing indentured servants in the new world circulated in London, making it harder to recruit volunteers. Woodward cites a sermon given by one Reverend William Crashaw prior to another voyage to Jamestown in 1610, when the fate of the Sea Venture was still unknown:

The ‘loose, lewd, licentious, riotous, and disordered men’ of the earlier expeditions were ‘the very excrements of a full and swelling state.’ Yet, Crashaw said, ‘such fellows as these that be the scum and scouring of the streets and raked up out of the kennels are like to be the founders of a worthy state.’ All that was needed was discipline imposed by a robust commander. (Woodward 113–4)

This ‘discipline’ translated into marshal law both in the temporary settlement in Barbados, and the colony in Jamestown.

Despite a ferocious storm that lasted several days and wrenched the ship off course, remarkably no one was killed or seriously injured in the shipwreck. Narrowly avoiding two lethal rock formations (inevitably evoking Scylla and Charybdis), Sea Venture navigated into the only point on the coast of sufficient depth to prevent the vessel from capsizing. Conditions on the island were such that it was possible to survive and even thrive, in contrast to the Jamestown colony beset by famine and war. While the Company officials were eager to construct a ship and forge ahead to Virginia, dissent broke out among the passengers and crew, leading to mutiny and desertion, followed by harsh repression. Many of the commoners wanted to stay on the island, which Linebaugh and Rediker interpret as an attempt to construct an alternative way of life:

When the commoners of the Sea-Venture decided that they wished to settle in Bermuda rather than go on to Virginia, they explained to the Virginia Company officials that they wanted the ease, pleasure, and freedom of the commons rather than the wretchedness, labor, and slavery awaiting them in Virginia. (21)

The Virginia Company responded to the Bermuda rebels with capital punishment and martial law (as would happen in the Virginia colony): thus,
Introduction

[w]ithin the story of the Sea-Venture and its people lies a larger story about the rise of capitalism and the beginning of a new epoch in human history’ (Linebaugh and Rediker 15). Silvia Federici builds on the analysis, seeing in this sequence of events a crystallization of both the violent processes of primitive accumulation in old and new worlds, and embryonic anti-capitalist resistance.

‘Between things ended and things begun’

The distinctive features of The Tempest condense characteristics that are prominent in those works produced in the latter part of Shakespeare’s life. While the periodization of a distinct ‘late Shakespeare’ is questioned by some, many have identified shared qualities in the later works. Russ McDonald notes their marked stylistic ‘doubleness’ and ‘unusual mixture of elements, the modish and the outmoded, and particularly the complex tone, with its combination of artlessness and sophistication.’ He attributes all these to ‘the divergent tastes of this double audience’ in the Globe and Blackfriars (‘Fashion’ 170). McDonald also observes a shift in Shakespeare’s language, the development of ‘a new dramatic mode’ and ‘a new style of poetry’ ‘like nothing he (or anybody else) had composed before: it is audacious, irregular, ostentatious, playful, and difficult’ (‘You speak’ 91). James Shapiro acknowledges the distinct quality of the Jacobean plays: ‘It was a period style as much as a personal one’ (Contested 253). In his analysis of genre and theatrical forms, John G. Demaray finds that ‘The Tempest emerges as a unique amalgam of Renaissance theatrical and literary forms in transition’ (43). Music is exceptionally important: The Tempest has a distinctive ‘sound track’ featuring ‘the orchestrated concord of music and the discordant confusion of mere “noise”’ (Neill 53–4).

While there is considerable difference of opinion regarding the categorization of Shakespeare’s oeuvre, many otherwise disparate critics agree that the works after 1607 share a heightened sense of looking backward and forward. Gordon McMullan, who rejects the category ‘late plays,’ argues that if we instead group by chronology, we have ten works with the important shared thematic concern with ‘return’: ‘their habit of looking back in order to look forward, of rehearsing, reshaping and reinventing past concerns in new contexts’ (McMullan ‘What Is?’ 16). This affirms McDonald’s judgment that ‘[t]he late plays feel almost obsessively reiterative. A conspicuous source of this impression is the reappearance of many of the stories, character types and ideas that had occupied Shakespeare’s imagination from the early 1590s’ (McDonald ‘You Speak’ 97). Charles Moseley remarks that ‘interest in metamorphosis, change, and the creative as well as destructive effects of time and nature … seem to lie at the heart of these late plays. Five of them look explicitly to the relation between past suffering and crime and future reconciliation and regeneration’ (49). And Michael Wood tellingly quotes from The Winter’s Tale to make a more general point about
Shakespeare's late drama: "[t]he world was poised between old and new, between no longer and not yet; or, as [Shakespeare] would put it, between “things dying and things newborn”" (13).

When looking at the period that produced the plays now celebrated as a high point of artistic achievement, one of the most arresting facts is the brevity of its duration. The public amphitheaters that grew with such rapidity and dizzying commercial success existed for around seventy years; the theaters were closed in 1642, and when they reopened were utterly changed. The player companies that proliferated in the 1570s declined rapidly. Following the plague outbreak that shut the theaters in 1594, only two companies survived: The Lord Admiral's Men, led by Philip Henslowe, housed in the Rose Theater, and Shakespeare's The Lord Chamberlain's Men. Others sprang up again during the recovery from this crisis, and Shakespeare's company was hurtled into preeminence by King James' patronage in 1603, making them the King's Men. But the overall existence of this model of the theatrical company was nonetheless ephemeral. The King's Men were struck a blow in 1613 when the Globe Theater burned down—a disaster that Greenblatt speculates led Shakespeare to sell his shares—and would have confirmed the 'sense of the insubstantiality of things' vocalized in The Tempest's 'our revels now are ended' speech (Will 381). Shakespeare was seemingly retiring from the life when he was only in his 40s, though it is unlikely he would have anticipated his death in 1616.22 The 'charmed moment' that produced the university wits was also brief: most of that group died young, and the golden age of Jacobean drama ended well before 1642. The King's Men faced increasingly difficult financial and social challenges in the 1620s. In her history of the theater business, Global Economics, Melissa D. Aaron argues that the system would not have survived long: 'If the theaters had not been closed in 1642, the companies, especially the King's Men, would not have been able to continue their current mode of doing business. Shakespeare's company essentially went out of business, taking their texts with them' (19).

This was thus a brief but intense and exceptional moment of dramatic production. It was produced by and bore the marks of a period of historical change that was both emancipatory and catastrophic. As Lunacharsky maintained, Shakespeare was 'the great mouthpiece' of the key social type at the heart of this transitioning world, and his plays capture the brutal disposessions of capitalism's primitive accumulation as much as the revolutionary energies of a world turning upside down. As we shall see, The Tempest, produced during a phase of reiterative preoccupation with doubleness, metamorphoses, and insubstantiality, is the epitome of these contradictions: its response to mutability is both melancholic and thankful. In crystallizing the paradoxes of emergent capitalism, the play retrospectively presents itself as a prologue for our own age. It can be seen, in the sense given by Benjamin, as a monad, the political significance of which has been fiercely contested by successive generations.
Notes

1 Christopher Hill used this as the title of his Marxist classic of 1972: *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution*. Leon Rosselson wrote lyrics based on the ballad in 1975 which were made famous by Billy Bragg in 1985, and have been covered also by Chumbawamba and Cold Play.

2 Christopher Morris in 1965 argued that *The Tempest* engages contemporary debates about ‘the responsibility of rulers ... an argument which, historically speaking, was not in fact concluded until 1649’ (301).

3 Marx is quoting that central *Tempest* source, Virgil's *Aeneid*: ‘Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem’: ‘So great was the effort required to found the Roman race.’

4 The categorization of people as ‘disabled’ does not emerge until the mid-eighteenth century. In the early modern period, ‘deformity’ was a more familiar concept (Lennard J. Davis 50–2). See Oliver and Barnes ‘The Rise of Disabling Capitalism’ for a materialist history of disability (*The New Politics of Disablement* 52–73).

5 Neil Davidson summarizes and quotes from Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*: ‘For Bacon ..., these ... changes ... had the potential for causing a social crisis, in the form of “the civil wars which seem to me about to spread through many countries—because of ways of life not long since introduced.” In the same passage Bacon identifies the two antipodal enemies of the Elizabethan compromise, external absolute rivals (“the Spanish Empire”) and internal puritan radicalism (“the malignity of sects”)’ (*How Revolutionary Were the Bourgeois Revolutions?* 19).

6 The global contexts and implications of English early modern culture have received increasing attention in recent decades. See Dobranski’s review 214–20 for an overview of some key works of twenty-first century scholarship.

7 See Dimmock and Hadfield, *The Religions of the Book*.

8 Leslie Fiedler’s landmark 1972 work, *The Stranger in Shakespeare*, similarly suggests that *The Tempest* is *prophetic* of modern racism and imperialism.

9 The Levellers, Diggers, and Ranters were all groupings within the English Revolution that emerged in the 1640s. In his *Milton and the English Revolution*, Christopher Hill explores the influence of these radicals on Milton’s work.

10 For milestone explorations of early modern culture through the lenses of race and gender oppression, see Hendricks and Parker, Kim Hall.

11 Andrew Gurr holds that ‘far fewer than one in ten of the total number of plays staged have come down to us in print or manuscript’ (14).

12 While the distinction is often made between ‘public’ and ‘private’ theaters, Andrew Gurr, among others, uses the more specific distinction between two kinds of public theaters: the ‘amphitheatres’ such as the Globe, and the indoor ‘hall theaters’ such as Blackfriars.

13 In ‘Performing boys in Renaissance England,’ an analysis of the boy theaters, Shehzana Mamujee includes a useful overview of previous scholarship on the ‘transvestite theater.’ The article foregrounds exploitation of child labor, emphasizing ‘the economic and social capital generated by children in this period’ (730).

14 Some research has challenged the long-held assumption that women were entirely absent from the stage during this period. See, for example, Clare McManus, ‘Women and English Renaissance Drama: Making and Unmaking the “All-Male” Stage.’

15 In his critical exploration of the authorship debates, *Contested Will*, James Shapiro convincingly shows the perils of efforts to know Shakespeare, the individual. The attempt to produce a coherent biography is prone to projection and presentism given the extremely different world he inhabited, where ‘[E]ven the
meaning of key concepts, such as what constitutes an “individual,” weren’t the same’ (Shapiro 272). But as Shapiro demonstrates, it is possible to reach a better understanding of the historical conditions that produced the playwright, and, in turn, of why the plays exert such a fascination for our age.

Some hold that the family suffered from the campaign against Catholicism in the same period, though others reject this theory. See Michael Wood.

Stephen Orgel makes this point in his introduction to the Oxford edition, and elaborates in *The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage*. Drawing on seminal works by Honigmann and Bentley, he argues that ‘the creation of a play was a collaborative process, with the author by no means at the center of the collaboration’ (1).

Strachey’s account (along with Silvester Jourdain’s) is available in Louis B. Wright, ed. *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609*.

Florio’s translation of the Essays was a much-used source for Shakespeare. However, Hendrick surmises that the force of the original is blunted by the colonial assumptions of Florio. Gonzalo’s ‘commonwealth’ speech, which glosses Montaigne, is often read as ironic, but Gonzalo is the moral center of the play, and his vocal critics in this scene are the villains Antonio and Sebastian.

The phrase comes from Walt Whitman via Daniel Singer: ‘We are at the moment, to borrow Whitman’s words, when society “is for a while between things ended and things begun,” not because of some symbolic date on the calendar marking the turn of the millennium, but because the old order is a-dying, in so far as it can no longer provide answers corresponding to the social needs of our point of development, though it clings successfully to power, because there is no class, no social force ready to push it off the historical stage.’ (Daniel Singer *Whose Millennium: Theirs or Ours?* 279).


Stephen Orgel persuasively challenges the idea that Shakespeare would have been considered old at forty-seven, his age when composing the play (Introduction 79–80).
Let me supply some examples from the many possible cases of ‘either/or’ readings. More than a few correctives to the ‘colonial’ reading argued that the play is primarily concerned with class rather than with colonialism. In a 1996 essay, Andrew Gurr held that ‘what we now prefer to read as colonialist power is verbalized as a pair of master-servant relationships’ (‘Industrious’ 198), and ‘[t]o see Prospero’s book and his magic as a representation of the power that came to the colonialists from superior technology ... is to read a lot of today into a text of yesterday’ (205). Jeremy Brotton in a 1998 collection argued that ‘colonial readings have offered an historically anachronistic and geographically restrictive view of the play, which have overemphasized the scale and significance of English involvement in the colonization of the Americas in the early decades of the seventeenth century’ (Brotton in Loomba 24). In an essay in another 1998 collection, David Kastan held that old world dynastic conflicts are far more central to the play than the more peripheral new world contexts (91–106). Kastan makes it clear that the colonial dimensions are nonetheless important, but also concludes that when seeking to locate the play in its moment of production, ‘we should look more closely at the Old World than the New’ (101). More recently there has been a tendency to eschew dichotomous approaches, recognizing, as Brinda Charry puts it in her summary of recent critical perspectives, ‘that colonial and race relations are perhaps fundamentally struggles for economic power and resources’ (Charry 84).

Mark Netzloff explores the intimate connection between the dispossession of the laboring classes in England and the expansion of permanent colonies in the new world. He finds that _The Tempest_ euphemizes class exploitation and social control and advocates a mode of colonial labor that precipitates a ‘declining status’ for the laborers (93): the play is ‘actively involved in a process that reconstituted the role of colonial labor’ (110); and, like Strachey’s _True Report_ and the documents of the Virginia Company, ‘advocates a model of colonial labor that depends upon an elision of the narratives of the Bermuda mutineers’ (131). Barbara Ann Sebek acknowledges the perils of attempting to find capitalist antagonisms in characters and plot, even as she proceeds to do this: ‘Though it risks mapping later structures back onto an earlier period, we can read Caliban as a prototype of exploited labor-power, and Prospero as a capitalist. Miranda becomes a figure for the ambiguous status of goods and persons in capitalism...’ (465). For Sebek, the play serves to ‘intensify cultural questions about relations of exchange’ (474).

This is not the same as a retreat to the subjective relativism of the assertion that ‘all interpretations are equal.’ While inevitably critics and dramatists alike have to make choices about which elements of the play to highlight, the most successful readings and performances are those that recognize the coexistence of contradictory influences and impulses.

Conventionally glossed as ‘Algiers,’ the name of the current capital of Algeria.

James I issued a 1609 proclamation against pirates which named one particular Captain who was ‘harbored in Tunis and Argiers’ (Potter ‘Pirates’ 130). In this period, ‘the English already had a reputation as the fiercest pirates in the Mediterranean and Atlantic oceans’ (Potter 125–6).

Brian Gibbons captures the contradictory qualities of the location in his essay ‘The wrong end of the telescope’: ‘The island itself is a palimpsest’ (153).

Chapter 6 contains further discussion of these: Rupert Goold’s 2006 production for RSC; Janice Honeyman’s 2009 _Tempest_ with RSC and Baxter Theater; Lemi Ponifasio’s performance event _Tempest Without a Body_ which premiered in New Zealand in 2007; Jonathan Holmes’ 2011 tour of the occupied territories for Jericho House Company; and Elizabeth Nunez’ 2006 novel _Prospero’s Daughter_.

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8 See Chapter 6 for accounts of these performances. Shenandoah Shakespeare, formerly known as Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, the touring wing of the American Shakespeare Center, performed frequently at the University of Vermont in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The ASC is home to the reproduced Blackfriars and Globe Theaters in Staunton Virginia. www.americanshakespearecenter.com/pages/238/0/history.

9 In ‘The Blue-Eyed Witch,’ a fascinating study of changing editorial practices surrounding successive publications of The Tempest, Leah Marcus reveals the extent to which modern racist assumptions have been projected back onto the play. Notions of racial categorization and expectations about blackness and femininity that did not exist in 1611 are introduced through editorial gloss and subsequently assumed to be part of Shakespeare’s play.

10 Dympna Callaghan includes this perspective in her Shakespeare Without Women. Sometimes it is played up in performances, including one by the Vermont Shakespeare Company in 2012 that made marked use of Celtic imagery and music. The Director’s Note from John Nagle explained the choice: ‘Many scholars … believe [Shakespeare] wrote this play as a response to England’s colonization of the New World, and of Ireland. While we did not necessarily follow this point of view as we approached the play, we did use Ireland as a launching point. It led us to explore Celtic philosophy and tradition, which strongly influenced our creative process’ (Vermont Shakespeare Company).


12 Barker and Hulme characterize Prospero’s response as paradigmatic: ‘Prospero’s disavowal is itself performative of the discourse of colonialism, since this particular reticulation of denial of dispossession with retrospective justification for it, is the characteristic trope by which European colonial regimes articulated their authority over land to which they could have no conceivable legitimate claim’ (200).

13 This response is sometimes cultivated in performance. For example, of the 2015 Classical Theater of Harlem’s production, set on Hispaniola, one reviewer noted: ‘When Caliban, enslaved by Prospero, teams up with Trinculo and his drunken comrade, Stephano … hoping they’ll help him gain his “liberté,” it’s hard not to root for them a little’ (Collins-Hughes C5).

14 Derek Walcott frequently made this point: ‘The best poetry in The Tempest, apart from Prospero’s speech at the end, is spoken by Caliban. And this is where the greatness of Shakespeare is. … He doesn’t make Caliban talk like Tarzan or some ape, or he doesn’t make him grunt. He gives him the greatest language, the most musical language...’ (interview with Moyer).

15 Critics have pursued the significance of alchemy for the play and the historical moment. Muñoz Simonds argues that ‘Prospero is an alchemist as well as a magician, that his goal in The Tempest is to restore the Golden Age or, in terms of the future, to create a “brave new world” by perfecting the people, including himself, who will live in it, and that the art or science of alchemy thus provides a major shaping pattern for the tragicomedy as a whole’ (542). Barbara Mowat’s investigation of the ‘complicated early modern interconnections’ between old and new notions of magic concludes that ‘Prospero evokes simultaneous images of the humanist scholar, the early modern sorcerer, and the lettered European who uses the book as a weapon against those perceived as “Brutish, Savage, Barbarous”’ (Mowat 31).

16 Muñoz Simonds holds that ‘the science of alchemy was by Shakespeare’s time already a recognized metonym for reform and change that would soon be taken up with considerable enthusiasm by Puritans, Quakers, Levellers, and others,
but was then employed later in the century with equal fervor against the Cromwellian revolutionaries by Charles II and his royalist supporters as validation for the restoration of the monarchy’ (540).

17 The figure of twenty percent is often given for the portion of the total witches who were male. Some historians have found that in certain regions in England a majority of those killed were men. See E.J. Kent *Cases of Male Witchcraft*.

18 The connection to *Faustus* evokes other intriguing associations: the Faust legend ‘focused attention on the interesting question of whether male magicians were just as culpable as their female counterparts’ and ‘Marlowe’s play appealed both to true believers and to freethinking skeptics’ (Riggs 234, 247).

19 In his historically grounded critique of allegorical readings, Frank Davidson argues that Prospero’s disregard for the duties of governance can be seen as ‘in itself a perversion of nature’ (216).

20 The Riverside Shakespeare, my primary source for direct quotations here, includes no footnote for these lines. The misogyny was invisible, or at least apparently needed no explanation, to the esteemed editors of this work, published in 1974. The influence of mass movements for liberation and institutional recognition of women and gender studies had a broad and lasting impact on Shakespeare criticism, leading, among other things, to explanatory footnotes such as the one cited here.

21 Attempts to change Prospero’s gender, while they can be thought-provoking, are seldom coherent (unless they otherwise overhaul the play) because they lose the central motivating factor of securing the patriarchal line. Julie Taymor’s 2010 film starring Helen Mirren as Prospera is a case in point.

22 Leah Marcus shows how ideological assumptions have shaped the way this line has been understood in the play’s print history. With the consolidation of modern racism, the idea that Sycorax had blue eyes became a problem that needed to be explained away. A false assumption, that it had to have been a reference to bruising—associated with pregnancy—rather than eye color, was repeated without question by generations of editors.

23 Orgel explains Prospero’s obsessive behavior in terms of Renaissance politics. He writes of the betrothal masque: ‘This is Prospero’s vision, symbolically expressing how deeply the fears for Miranda’s chastity are implicated with his sense of his own power … she is valuable to him, and an extension of his authority, only so long as she remains a virgin, a potential bride for the husband of his choice’ (49). Sokol argues that ‘a more or less shadowy incest motif … appears in each of Shakespeare’s four Romance plays … incestuous wishes may be powerfully represented in *The Tempest*, in a negative form, when Prospero expresses his absolute disgust at the sexual attempt on Miranda by her foster-brother Caliban’ (183). In the novel *Prospero’s Daughter* by Elizabeth Nunez, Prospero sexually abuses his servant, Ariana (the Ariel figure) and daughter, Virginia (Miranda). See also Mark Taylor, *Shakespeare’s Darker Purpose*.

24 In the first scene of the third act Ferdinand is forced into manual labor as part of Prospero’s scheme to encourage the romantic attachment between Ferdinand and Miranda by seeming to oppose it. Miranda offers to carry the logs on his behalf. While Ferdinand refuses, I have seen productions where Miranda deftly picks up and tosses a log that Ferdinand has been struggling to drag a small distance across the stage. Such interpretive possibilities underscore Miranda’s gender nonconformity.

25 ...ye Elves of Hilles, of Brookes, of Woods alone,
Of standing Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everychone
Through helpe of whom (the crooked bankes much wondring at the thing)
I have compelled streames to run cleane backward to their spring.
By charmes I make the calme Seas rough, and make the rough Seas plaine,
And cover all the Skie with Cloudes and chase them thence againe. ...
[VII.270]
By charmes I raise and lay the windes, and burst the Vipers jaw.
And from the bowels of the Earth both stones and trees doe draw.
Whole woods and Forestes I remove. I make the Mountaines shake,
And even the Earth it selfe to grone and fearfully to quake.
I call up dead men from their graves: and thee O lightsome Moone
I darken oft, though beaten brasshe abate thy perill soone.
Our Sorcerie dimmes the Morning faire, and darkes the Sun at Noone.
The flaming breath of fire Bulles ye quenched for my sake
And caused their unwieldie neckes the bended yoke to take.
Among the Earthbred brothers you a mortall war did set ... [VII.280]

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimmed
The noonrude sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. (The Tempest 5.1.33–50)

26 ‘Scamel’ has confounded many critics. Woodward argues that the word is
the result of a transcription error, and should have read ‘seamel,’ which is, in
turn, a variant of Strachey’s word for the cahow, or Bermuda petrel, an earth-
burrowing nocturnal bird once common in Bermuda: ‘sea-mew.’

27 While Brower concluded that The Tempest adds up to a ‘metaphysical poem
of metamorphosis’ (‘Mirror’ 202), many after him have moored the play’s
structural interest in change and contradiction to the transitional moment:
Northrop Frye placed these thematic and figurative patterns in the context of
a ‘dissolving society’ and ‘a new kind of social order’ (1992: 19). Paul Delaney
observed that ‘psychological conflict must ... be endemic in a dynamic society’
with its ‘resultant instability and uncertainty’ (429), and Colin Manlove argued
that the age of transition gave rise to a divided, dual consciousness (The Gap in
Shakespeare).

1 Much scholarship has questioned conventional assumptions about the total ab-
sence of theater from 1642 to 1660. See for example Susan Wiseman, Drama
and Politics in the English Civil War; Dale B.J. Randall, Winter Fruit: English
Drama 1642–1660. The topic is given particular attention in the special issue,

2 English poet and playwright William Davenant (1606–68), a long-standing
royalist, was rewarded with the royal patent in 1660 and became poet laureate
thereafter. Poet and playwright John Dryden (1631–1700) came from a family
who sympathized with the republicans, and himself contributed a poem to a
memorial for Cromwell. He became a vocal supporter of Charles II after the
restoration, writing many poetic tributes to the king, and succeeded Davenant
as poet laureate in 1668.
A non-Eurocentric Marxist history of capitalism rejects the notion of an autonomous and essential English origin. As Henry Heller writes: ‘Instead it recognizes the relative backwardness of Europe and the existence of proto-capitalist elements in non-European societies. It analyzes the objective social, economic and political conditions which favored capitalism in some places and blocked its path in others. It acknowledges the critical role of state-backed colonialism and imperialism in fostering the success of western capitalism and blocking its development elsewhere’ (238).

But certainly for the duration of the Restoration authorship did not have the meaning it later acquired: playwrights’ names were neither included on playbills nor definitively associated with performances. Thus, Samuel Pepys famously referred to *The Tempest* as ‘an old play of Shakespeare’s’ even though it was the Davenant/Dryden version he attended.

Michael Dobson sees *The Tempest* as the best example of the broader pattern: ‘The more extensively Shakespeare’s plays were thus conscripted to address the issues of the 1660s, the more thoroughly they were wrested away from their original author and across the cultural gap separating the reigns of Elizabeth and James from the Restoration. This process is nowhere more self-consciously apparent than in Davenant’s equally timely last play, *The Tempest; or the Enchanted Island*’ (Making 38).

As is often noted, the play includes ‘less than a third’ of the original (Orgel ‘Introduction’ 64; Daniell 31). An even smaller portion remained in two further popular adaptations, Thomas Shadwell’s opera *Enchanted Island* and Thomas Duffet’s travesty *The Mock-Tempest*, both of 1674.

David Taylor holds that the authors of the Restoration rewrite ‘took up Shakespeare’s play as performative laboratory for their post-Restoration exploration of patriarchal power, casting Prospero as a father-king ... and Caliban and company as parodic, stridently plebeian figurations of 1640s parliamentarians’ (487).

Gail Marshall and Philip Shaw identify the shift that occurred in the late eighteenth century: ‘the Romantics conceived of Shakespeare as a Prospero rather than as a Caliban, as a magus...’ (113).


Han writes, ‘Scholars, actors, and publishers brought Shakespeare onto the market in various kinds of editorial forms’ (42). Only a handful of print editions existed in the seventeenth century; there were dozens by the eighteenth century and hundreds by the nineteenth century.

See Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre’s *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity* for an insightful exploration of the myriad political dimensions of the Romantic opposition to capitalist modernity.

Orgel writes, ‘no producer until Garrick ever thought of that authentic text as the one that should or could be *The Tempest* of the repertory’ (Orgel ‘Introduction’ 69). Han reminds us that modern ideas of textual authenticity remained utterly foreign well into the nineteenth century: ‘The Romantics did not make it clear which editions of Shakespeare they encountered or used for their lectures or writings. They probably read several different editions of Shakespeare available in their time’ (Han 74).

David Daniell, editor of a 1989 collection of *Tempest* criticism, writes that ‘the very understanding of Imagination itself, in the new full Romantic sense, was pretty well defined by reference to Shakespeare—and particularly in relation to *The Tempest*, which now suddenly came into its own. It is the play most commented on, after the “imaginative Tragedies”, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*’ (33).

References from Stephen Gill’s edition of Wordsworth.

For a discussion of the statue’s significance and the inscription of this misquotation, see Dobson 134–6 and 146. David Francis Taylor notes ‘such was the cultural impact of the monument’s apotheosis that the early 1770s acting texts of The Tempest used the adapted version of Prospero’s monologue included on the Abbey memorial’ (509).

All references here taken from the annotated John Keats edited by Susan Wolfson.

A century after Keats’ premature death, Wilfred Owen worked his own transformation on Keats’ ode. In ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’ Keats’ line ‘Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn’ was mutated into a description of shells exploding in the battle trenches: ‘Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, _ / The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells.’ The poem was published in 1792, thought to be initially composed in 1787–89, and revised throughout the poet’s life. All quotations here are from the 1793 version in Averill’s edition.

References from Stephen Gill’s edition of Wordsworth.

Bate notes that ‘In the 1850 text the echo is made stronger by the introduction of the phrases “the unsubstantial structure melts” and “Mist into air dissolving”’ (i. 225–7). (Bate Shakespeare and the English Imagination 108).

All quotations from R.A. Foakes, ed. Lectures 1808–1819 On Literature, the fifth volume of The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The lectures were not published in print form, but Foakes draws on Coleridge’s notes, audience transcripts, and contemporary news reports to reconstruct them. In the case of Lecture 9, Coleridge’s notes were not found, so the text is derived from John Payne Collier’s transcripts.

The review notes that ‘Frankenstein stands as much alone as Caliban’ New York Mirror Vol X (June 8 1833) 200.

Bate comments: ‘To Trelawny, Shelley “seemed as gentle a spirit as Ariel!”’ in response to his portrayal in the press as “a monster more hideous than Caliban” and then adds: ‘Ironically, Shelley in fact had as much sympathy with Caliban: his idealization of the noble savage in part eight of Queen Mab suggests not only Rousseau’esque primitivism, but also a political interpretation of The Tempest that reads Caliban as dispossessed native’ (Bate Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination 204).


All References to Shelley from Hutchinson, ed. Shelley Poetical Works.

Joseph Noel Paton’s 1845 engravings for The Tempest; Daniel Wilson’s 1873 Caliban: The Missing Link; and William Black’s 1884 Judith Shakespeare.

See Philip Mason’s Prospero and Caliban. The influence of social Darwinism on the construction of Caliban as ‘missing link’—i.e., a connection between beast and human—was most infamously registered by Daniel Wilson’s 1873 Caliban: The Missing Link.

Tebbetts 367; Vaughan and Vaughan Shakespeare’s Caliban 108.

For classic discussions of these developments, see Clive Barker’s ‘Peoples’ Theatre in Nineteenth Century Britain’ and Raphael Samuel’s Theatres of the Left 1880–1935. Other engagements with working-class Shakespeare include Andrew Murphy, Shakespeare for the People; Paul Thomas Murphy, Towards a Working Class Canon.

Gauri Viswanathan’s postcolonial classic Masks of Conquest explores the broader imperial uses of English literature in the context of India.

See Retamar’s ‘Caliban’; Vaughans’ Shakespeare’s Caliban 147–53.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the uses of The Tempest in Doyle’s opening ceremony for the London Olympics of 2012 arguably gesture toward this tradition of plebeian nationalism, though in the context of massive commercial appropriation that would have been anathema to Samuel. See Catherine Baker.
English critic Lytton Strachey (1880–1932) was one of the founders of the Bloomsbury Group, conscientious objector during World War One, and famed author of *Eminent Victorians*.

Strachey here is marking the distinction specifically between the Mechanics in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Caliban’s conspiracy in *The Tempest*.

The minority current coalesced in the internationalist revolutionary ‘Zimmerwald Left’ named after the first assembly of anti-war socialists at Zimmerwald in Switzerland in September 1915. The organizing principle of this movement was that imperialist war could be ended through international working-class revolution. See Nation’s *War on War* for a full history of these developments. For recent Marxist commentary on the war and its impact on our own era, see Anievas, ed. *Cataclysm 1914*.


My argument here has much in common with that of Richard Halpern in his ‘Shakespeare in the Tropics’: he argues that modernism recognized the Renaissance as a time of transition ‘not gradual and evolutionary but catastrophically rapid’ and ‘constructed the English Renaissance as an allegory for the colonial encounter itself; the period’s catastrophic experience of modernity, the disintegration of its organic and ritualized culture, offered an historically displaced and geographically internalized image of the effects of contemporary imperialist penetration into indigenous Third World societies’ (Halpern 8).

The cultural impacts of social revolution were visible in American periodicals like *Comrade* and anthologies such as Upton Sinclair’s 1915 *The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest*. (The anthology was updated and reissued in 1963, in another era of mass struggle for social change domestically and globally.) In Britain, the left-wing press showcased literature of protest, while literary publications such as *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* took up radical causes. In both contexts, anti-colonial and anti-racist writers globally were foregrounded, and understood to be part of the same worldwide struggle against capitalist war and inequality.

The collection is available online at www.gutenberg.org/files/34001/34001-h/34001-h.htm. ‘Caliban in the Coal Mines’ was anthologized in Sinclair’s 1915 *Cry for Justice* and also in the 1927 *Poems for Workers* collection edited by Manuel Gomez (a pseudonym for Charles Francis Phillips). See Wald *Exiles* 19–23.

The Marxism evident in Untermeyer’s work from this period was used against him during the McCarthy anti-communist trials, when he was blacklisted for his anti-war articles in *The Masses*. As a result of the hounding, he dropped out of a position on the TV show ‘What’s My Line’ and left public life for many years.

Alden and Virginia Vaughan note this tendency in their discussion of ‘Modern poetic invocations’: ‘in the earliest poems in this genre, Caliban represents the down-trodden laborer, doomed to meaningless, arduous, repetitive tasks’ (*Shakespeare’s Caliban* 254). They position Markham as the earliest exemplar with his 1926 poem; they date Untermeyer’s ‘Caliban in the Coal Mines’ at 1935, when it appeared in his *Selected Poems*. But the poem was actually written and anthologized earlier.

Edwin Markham was a teacher and poet whose work appeared in socialist journals such as the *Comrade*.

Elsewhere Luxemburg refers to the toil of trade unions as ‘a sort of labor of Sisyphus’ constantly pushing for improvements in the conditions of workers, only to see them rolled back by the capitalist system (‘Mass Strike’ 83). Picking up on the pervasive use of the tempest as metaphor for social crisis, Luxemburg wrote an essay in 1904 originally published in French as ‘Dans la Tempête’ and translated into English as ‘Amid the Storm’ (Hudis et al. 23).
10 A 1928 film called Tempest directed by Sam Taylor has been misleadingly described as a silent version of The Tempest offering a 'Romantic drama of the Russian Revolution' (Ball, Shakespeare on Silent Film 370). In fact, this counterrevolutionary film, a romantic vehicle for John Barrymore, has nothing to do with the play, other than its title. But the opening is accompanied by a description of 'Imperial Russia' during 'the last long calm before the red tempest of terror,' which certainly captures the sense of revolution as storm, in this case from a conservative perspective.

11 The rise of Stalin represented a counterrevolution, rather than the continuation of the achievements of 1917. This is perhaps most clearly indicated by the fate of the Zimmerwald left: ‘Almost all of Lenin’s closest associates during the war were annihilated physically, and often morally as well, during the terror of the 1930s’ (Nation 230). As historian R. Craig Nation argues, the political legacy of those defeated nonetheless survived: ‘Their efforts are no less significant for that reason. The cloud-storming enthusiasm born with the international communist movement, the confidence in people’s ability to make their own history, has left its traces despite failures and betrayals’ (230).

12 Aldous Huxley (1894 to 1963) escaped the fate of so many of his British contemporaries due to his poor eyesight, which kept him out of the war; he endured to become a lifelong pacifist and social critic.

13 In his essay ‘Shakespeare’s Revolution—The Tempest as Scientific Romance,’ Scott Maisano writes: ‘The ultimate irony of Huxley’s novel, then, is that Shakespeare has been excluded from the very future he originally invented and engineered’ (166).

14 The poem was published posthumously in the Collected Poems of 1965, but is thought to be from the 1930s. See also Vaughan and Vaughan Caliban (256–7).

15 Muir was born in the Orkney Islands, off the coast of Scotland, where he spent his early childhood, but his family lost their farm in 1901 and moved to Glasgow, a relocation that Muir experienced as a traumatic fall from Eden, especially his tenure working in a grim factory.

16 Hilda Doolittle was born in 1886 in Pennsylvania. She worked with Marianne Moore at Bryn Mawr and both Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams at the University of Pennsylvania and was known for some time as a leading imagist poet. She moved to Europe in 1911 and died there in 1961. On Avon River was written during and immediately after the war and was published in 1949. It was the most popular of her poetry, which did not receive broad acclaim during her lifetime.


18 Auden’s life span, from 1907 to 1973, encompassed the profound and unprecedented economic and military convulsions that shook capitalism to its core during the ‘century of war.’ A child during the Russian Revolution, the young Auden shared with the other ‘poets of the thirties’ both passionate opposition to the spread of fascism and great hope for the renewal and global expansion of socialism. His vision of Britain in the interwar period was of a system diseased, decaying, spinning out of control, and unable to deliver on its promise of increased democracy and economic opportunities; he saw that the tremendous productive potential of capitalism was fettered by its inequitable and exploitative social relations.

19 In one of his famous lectures on Auden (delivered during 1951–52), Randall Jarrell characterized this as a shift to ‘sentimental idealism ... the attempt, inside any system, to pray away, exhort away, legislate away evils that are not incidental but essential to the system’ (40).
20 Auden also evokes the Marxist reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, as elaborated by Engels in *Anti-Dühring*: ‘Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the appreciation of necessity [die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit]. “Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood” [begriffen]. Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends’ (*Anti-Dühring* Part 1: XI Morality and Law. Freedom and Necessity 125).

21 See Mona Z. Smith's moving biography, *Becoming Something*, and also the Canada Lee Heritage Foundation website, based on the work of Frances Lee Pearson, his widow. www.canadalee.org/heritage.htm.

22 Jerome was born in 1896 in poverty in Poland, moved to London and then to New York City where he spent most of his life. He helped found the USCP in 1919. He was chair of the Communist Party’s Cultural Commission and editor of *The Communist* (later *Political Affairs*). He was arrested in 1951 under the Smith Act, and spent three years in prison. He became an apostle for Stalinism against its critics on the American Left. He died in 1965.

23 Willie McGee was a working-class African American man from Laurel Mississippi who was charged with raping a white woman in November 1945. He was convicted by all white juries and executed by the infamous traveling electric chair on May 8, 1951. The Martinsville Seven were a group of young black working-class men from Martinsville Virginia accused of raping a white woman in 1949. Despite a mass campaign in their defense, they were found guilty by all white juries, and executed in February 1951. Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner were the respective leaders of three anti-slavery rebellions in the early 1800s that are often understood as representing the origins of the anti-slavery movement. In a pivotal moment during the Cold War, the United States entered into the Korean War in June 1950. Possessing vastly superior military power and technology, the United States was stalemated by May 1952, though the war continued for another year. Civilian deaths are estimated at over a million in both the South and North of Korea, and millions became refugees (Lens *Forging* 399–411). The River Yalu, bordering Korea and China, became a key battleground for American and Chinese air wars.

24 Armattoe’s biography is not only representative of broader social patterns but also exceptional in many ways. Born in the Gold Coast, Armattoe studied in Europe—he was fluent in German, French, and English as well as Ewe—and lived for some years in Ireland where he was a celebrated doctor and researcher during World War Two. He returned to Africa in 1948, where he was active in politics and vocally opposed Nkrumah. The epigraph of his collection *Deep Down the Blackman’s Mind* accuses Nkrumah’s supporters of trying to kill him, and he did in fact die in uncertain circumstances at the age of 40. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1949, and led an Ewe delegation to the United Nations in 1953.

25 The centrality of *The Tempest* to Plath’s life is recognized in the title of Paul Alexander’s 1991 biography *Rough Magic*.

26 Renee Curry’s 2000 book *White Women Writing White* explores the racial implications of Plath’s work. See also Cystal Contreras’ interrogation of the racist stereotypes in *The Bell Jar*, and the following blog discussion of the anti-Semitism and racism of the journals in particular: http://maximillusscriptor.blogspot.com/2010/03/sylvia-plath-and-racism.html.

27 *The Magus* was published in 1965 but written in the previous decade.

28 The normative notion of a ‘benign’ Prospero has led many critics to read Conchis in a positive light despite his patently despicable characteristics. A 1980 article, for example, sees him as an ‘older, wise advisor who cajoles, prompts and pushes the foolish, blind and selfish young person into an adulthood that is “worthy” of responsibility—and of love’ (Poirier 269–70).
1 Apartheid was the official policy and practice of racial segregation and discrimination that was in effect across South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s.

2 The revolutionary upheavals of half a century earlier gave rise to the Marxist theory of ‘permanent revolution,’ stemming from Marx and Engels and developed by Leon Trotsky. This described the process in which anti-colonial struggles in the less-developed world could foster revolutionary struggles for international socialism. The 1960s generated the term ‘deflected permanent revolution,’ which described the pattern of anti-colonial revolutions that led not to working class self-emancipation but rather to new national regimes that were part of the capitalist world system, whether explicitly identified with Washington or Moscow. The term ‘deflected permanent revolution’ was coined by British Trotskyist Tony Cliff in 1963. See Neil Davidson How Bourgeoisie? 144–8; 458–65.

3 An article in Business Week from 1974 acknowledged the recovery strategy: “It will be a hard pill for many Americans to swallow—the idea of doing with less so that business can have more ... Nothing that this nation, or any other nation, has done in modern economic history compares in difficulty with the selling job that must now be done to make people accept the new reality” (qtd. in Cockburn and Silverstein 8).


5 The Anglophone examples that are considered in this study were, of course, part of a far larger multilingual development. Many anti-colonial giants from this era made use of The Tempest: Frantz Fanon responded to the French psychologist Octave Mannoni, whose 1950 book Prospero et Caliban established the classic colonial allegory, in Peau Noire, Masques Blancs (White Skin, Black Masks 1952); Cuban Roberto Fernández Retamar embraced Caliban as a figure of colonial resistance in his poem ‘Caliban’ and essay ‘Cuba hasta Fidel’ (1969). In Quebec, Haitian-born Max Dorsinville expanded Caliban’s symbolic significance to a broader swathe of racially and culturally oppressed peoples in his Caliban without Prospero: Essay on Quebec and Black Literature (1974), while Pierre Seguin explored similar themes in his novel Caliban (1977).

6 Lamming was born in 1927 in Barbados, won a scholarship to one of the foremost secondary schools, and was mentored by his teacher, the writer Frank Collymore. He left Barbados as a young adult, first teaching in Trinidad before emigrating for England, where he worked in a factory before taking up a position with the British Broadcasting Company.

7 In 1959, a white street gang murdered Antiguan immigrant Kelso Cochrane. Despite evidence of widespread racist violence against the Afro-Caribbean community of London’s Notting Hill, the murder was categorized as a robbery and no one was charged. This, following organized racist activities in the neighborhood the previous year, generated a wave of anti-racist organizing.

8 These lines resonate with the Romantics, particularly Coleridge’s early account of Caliban as ‘a sort of creature of the earth’ (see Chapter 2).

9 Ñgũgĩ was born in 1938 and grew up in Kamirũthũ under British rule. His father was a peasant farmer who, like so many others, became a ‘squatter’ on his own land after the British Imperial Act of 1915 sanctified white settler control over the best lands. He was educated in Christian mission schools at a time when the British government made English instruction mandatory—in his ‘Farewell to English’ essay he writes movingly of the humiliating experience of being punished for speaking Gikuyu, his mother tongue.
Ngũgĩ protested the brutal regime that was to have him imprisoned in 1977 for his politically radical theater.

Césaire (1913–2008) was born in Martinique during French colonialism, studied in Paris and returned to Martinique to become a world-famous poet, dramatist, and politician. One of the founders of the Negritude movement, and a member of the Communist Party until 1956, he is one of the most influential Caribbean figures of the twentieth century. Even though *A Tempest* was originally in French, I am making an exception to the Anglophone policy in order to include it here, given its exceptional influence on Anglophone writers and the broad availability of the excellent translation by Richard Miller. It is also cited by several of the Anglophone authors considered here.

Born Lawson Edward Brathwaite in Barbados in 1930, the author published *Islands* under the name of Edward Brathwaite but as his publications increased and his fame spread, he became known as Edward Kamau or more often Kamau Brathwaite. *Islands* is anthologized in *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*, with *Rights of Passage* (1967) and *Masks* (1968).

Born in Britain in 1916, Arnold Kettle fought in World War Two and from 1948 was an English lecturer at the University of Leeds. He also taught at the University of Dar es Salaam and for the Open University. He published many works of literary criticism, most famously his *Introduction to the English Novel*. He was an active and prominent member of the Communist Party from the 1930s to the 1960s. He died in 1986.

For an interesting discussion of Marx’s commentary on *Timon of Athens*, see Ledwith’s 2016 essay, ‘Marx’s Shakespeare.’

Kott (1914–2001), born in Warsaw, for a time was a Communist but left the Communist Party in 1957. He was granted political asylum in the United States in 1967 where he became an influential director and critic whose influence on Shakespeare performance is legendary. British theatre critic Michael Billington, for example, says ‘I can’t think of anyone today who influences production in quite the same ways as Kott’ (‘K is for Jan Kott’).

Finkelstein (1909–74) was an American journalist who served as a major arts critic for the Communist Party USA. He was called to testify by HUAC in 1957.

Jonathan Miller (born in London 1934) is one of Britain’s foremost opera and theatre directors. His early career was in the 1960s world of *Beyond the Fringe*.

Taban Lo Liyong was born in Uganda in 1939, and traveled widely during his lifetime; he is often identified as the first African to complete the MFA at the University of Iowa in 1968. He coauthored with Ngũgĩ and Henry Owuor Anyumba the famous declaration ‘On the Abolition of the English Department’ in 1968 at the University of Nairobi.

Born in London in 1937, the English expatriate David Wallace was a teacher in Zambia from 1967, and chairman of the state-sponsored Theatre Association of Zambia in 1972; he also set up the Mukuba Theatre Workshop and ‘founded the Theatre Circle which often used Zambian folklore, dance, music, and ethnic fables and parables’ (Epksamp 162, citing S.J. Chifunyišé).

See Timothy M. Shaw ‘Zambia: Dependence and Underdevelopment’ for an analysis of these dynamics.

Johnson was born in Northern Nigeria to Sierra Leonean parents in 1941, grew up and was educated in Sierra Leone and then the United States, and pursued a successful academic career at the University of Michigan.

Walcott’s interest in *The Tempest* was lasting. The poem ‘A Sea-Change’ appears in his elegiac 2010 collection, *White Egrets*.

The essay also appears in Walcott’s 1998 collection, *What the Twilight Says*.

See for example his 1988 interview with Bill Moyers. He elaborated this point in a reading at St. Michael’s College in Vermont in the early 2000s.

German born, Hamburger (1924–97) was educated and settled in England having escaped Nazi Germany with his family in 1934. In addition to his original poetry, he was acclaimed for his translations from Italian and German.
Edward Bond was born in 1934 in London to a working-class family. Not formally educated, he started writing plays when young, and joined a writers’ group at Royal Court. He described art as a crucial part of the struggle for socialism, and went on to became one of the most important British playwrights of the twentieth century.

The clearest expression of the political radicalization in British theater can be seen in these agitprop companies that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, including Red Ladder (founded 1968), The General Will (1971), Belt and Braces (1973), Hesitate and Demonstrate (1975), Gay Sweatshop (1975), the Black Theater Co-op (1978), and Theater of Black Women (1982). The online research project Unfinished Histories has documented this history: www.unfinishedhistories.com.

The Sea was an assigned text for my A Level Theater course at Gordano School and we also staged a production in the early 1980s. The play fell out of fashion for a period of time but was restored to the public eye with a successful revival directed by Jonathan Kent and starring Eileen Atkins at the Theater Royal Haymarket in 2008.

Brathwaite notes ‘certain (well known) symbols from Shakespeare’s The Tempest already used by several Third World writers and representative here of certain throats or throttles (forces) within slave society’ (43); ‘This literature includes the work of José Rodó, Mannoni, George Lamming, Aimé Césaire, and Roberto Retamar. The work of Frantz Fanon should also be included in this category’ (Brathwaite 44). The Uruguayan writer José Rodó’s tremendously influential 1900 work Ariel counterposed a model of Latin American culture (symbolized by the idealized Ariel) to the crass materialism of the United States.

For a global account of the political and economic consequences of neoliberalism, see Eric Toussaint’s Your Money or Your Life, first published in 1998.

Said writes: ‘By the time “theory” advanced intellectually into departments of English, French, and German in the United States, the notion of “text” had been transformed into something almost metaphysically isolated from experience.
The sway of semiology, deconstruction, and even the archaeological descriptions of Foucault, as they have commonly been received, reduced and in many instances eliminated the messier precincts of “life” and historical experience... (Introduction Reflections on Exile xviii–xix). Significant Marxist analyses of these trends globally include Ellen Meiksins Wood’s The Retreat from Class (1986), Paul Bové’s In the Wake of Theory (1991), and Aijaz Ahmad’s In Theory (1995). Mark Netzloff in 2003 registered the absence of sustained consideration of class and capitalism in early modern literary studies, which he argues ‘have largely overlooked issues of class or economics’ (6).

5 Harold Bloom was a leading figure in the attack on ‘politicized’ Shakespeare at this time. His 1994 book The Western Canon coined the term ‘School of Resentment’ to characterize Marxists, feminists, postcolonialists, postmodernists, and others who challenged the idea of Shakespeare’s universality and greatness. It may reasonably be pointed out that Bloom’s own position itself, in refusing to see the ‘barbarism’ behind the cultural treasure, represents a specific political worldview.

6 Helen C. Scott, Caribbean Women Writers: Fictions of Independence.

7 Derek Jarman was a British film director recognized as a fellow of the British Film Institute. Born in 1942, Jarman studied at the famous Slade School of Fine Art in London in the 1960s and became a vocal advocate for gay rights, participating in the campaign against Clause 28 in the 1980s (see footnote 15 below). He was diagnosed with AIDS in 1986 and died of related conditions in 1994. His most celebrated film was the 1986 Caravaggio.

8 Liviu Ciulei (1923–2011) was a significant Romanian theater and film director whose work achieved international acclaim. He became Director of the Tyrone Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis in 1980.

9 Dollimore and Sinfield’s 1985 edited anthology, Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism, which included Paul Brown’s essay on The Tempest, was a seminal text for this movement, also referred to as the ‘new radical Shakespeare.’ The censorious response is exemplified in a 1987 essay by American Shakespeare scholar Edward Pechter that charges Marxists of addressing ‘colonial discourse’ at the expense of specificities of ‘circumstances—author, audience, chronology’ (298).

10 In the Wake of Theory by Paul Bové and What’s Wrong with Postmodernism? by Christopher Norris both elaborate Marxist analyses of the shift to discourse and the linguistic turn. Paul Brown’s trend-setting analysis “This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine:” The Tempest and the Discourse of Colonialism appeared in the anthology Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism in 1985. Brown presented the play as an intervention into colonialist discourse: ‘a radically ambivalent text which exemplifies not some timeless contradiction internal to the discourse by which it inexorably undermines or deconstructs its “official” pronouncements, but a moment of historical crisis’ (48). Historical crisis is simultaneously evoked and de-materialized: the object of critique is the ‘euphemization’ of power, not power itself, which now seems beyond analysis.


12 For more information about the company, see Kershaw and Coul, eds., Engineers of the Imagination. Live footage of the performance can be seen on Vimeo, posted by Jon Michaelson.
13 The character was described as “a handbag-clutching Margaret Thatcher dop-
pelganger in navy and pearls” (qtd. Dymkowski 134).
14 ‘This Island’s Mine’ was published with three other works in 1989 in the antho-
logy Gay Sweatshop: Four Plays and a Company, edited by Osment and other
members of the company. Gay Sweatshop visited Gordano Comprehensive
School when I was doing A Level Theater Studies there, and a fellow student
and I went to London to research the group and interview playwright Noël
Greig.
15 Clause 28, also known as Section 28, was an amendment to the Local Gov-
ernment Act of 1988 specifying that local governments ‘shall not intentionally
promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting
homosexuality’ or ‘promote the teaching in any maintained school of the ac-
ceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.’ While the
measure provoked widespread political opposition, it passed in to law and was
not repealed until 2003 (Scotland repealed it in 2000).
16 Two important films marked the 30th anniversary of the miners’ strike: the
drama Pride and the documentary Still the Enemy Within. Both films acknowl-
edge the scale of the defeat, which set in motion decades of setbacks for labor.
They also demonstrate that this monumental working-class struggle, which
involved deep and wide solidarity efforts, had some lasting positive political
consequences. The efforts of the groups Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners,
and Lesbians Against Pit Closures, significantly challenged homophobic ideas
and advanced the cause of LGBTQ rights in the labor movement and beyond. In
recognition of the support shown by the group, the National Union of Miners
subsequently had an organized presence at Gay Pride parades. See http://lgsm.
org/about-lgsm.
17 Susan Faludi’s landmark 1991 book Backlash: The Undeclared War Against
American Women documented the systemic attacks on the gains of the wom-
en’s liberation movements that characterized this era. For global perspectives
on the impact of neoliberalism on women’s rights, see Afshar, ed. Women and
Adjustment Policies in the Third World.
18 One strand of identity politics that has been particularly influential in academia
posits separate competing identities—understood in isolation from capitalism—
and emphasizes incommensurable difference and separatism over commonality
and solidarity. The 1988 essay ‘White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knap-
sack’ by Peggy McIntosh exemplifies this type of class-blind ‘privilege’ politics.
A contrasting tradition can be seen in the anti-capitalist Black Feminism of the
Combahee Collective. Their landmark 1974 statement analyzed racism, sexism,
and heterosexism as interconnected oppressions deeply embedded in the
capitalist system and inflected by class, and projected a revolutionary politics of
solidarity as a means to global emancipation (Taylor, How We Get Free). This
approach anticipated and informed theories of intersectionality that would re-
ceive more prominence in coming decades, pioneered by Kimberlé Crenshaw
19 See Crenshaw’s 1991 ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics,
and Violence Against Women of Color.’
20 Foundational moments in this tradition include Angela Davis, Women, Race,
and Class and the work of the Combahee River Collective. How We Get Free:
Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective, edited by Keeanga-
Yamahtta Taylor, offers illuminating interviews with some of its founders and
an insightful introduction by Taylor providing an analytical overview of the
group.
21 Irene Lara’s essay ‘Beyond Caliban’s Curses: The Decolonial Feminist Literacy
of Sycorax’ (2007) presents a different take. Her reading of Césaire’s approach
to Sycorax is in sharp contrast with that of Cliff: ‘In representing Sycorax as
“Mother. Serpent, rain, lightning” as Earth that never dies, Césaire is also
participating in the nationalist discourse that idealizes women as only spiritual mothers and the source of their sons' (or lovers') strength and legitimacy, at the cost of not recognizing their complex materiality, sexuality, and subjectivity' (Lara 87–8).

22 Elaine Savory's ‘Returning to Sycorax/Prospero’s Response: Kamau Brathwaite’s Word Journey’ offers a detailed exploration of this work.

23 See also Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*.

24 Connections can be made between Marina Warner, who counts among her ancestry the first colonial governor of St Kitts, and the character Miranda Everhope, descendant of the first English governor of the fictional island, Enfant-Béate (Li 85). Warner has discussed these parallels: ‘Because our family was involved in an enterprise that so resembles Prospero’s theft, that foundation act of Empire, I felt compelled to examine the case, and imagine, in fiction, the life and culture of Sycorax, and of Ariel, and Caliban’ (Warner ‘Between’ 203).

25 Episode 5 of the third season of the original *Star Trek*, ‘Is There in Truth No Beauty,’ takes names and themes from *The Tempest*. With an obvious debt to *The Forbidden Planet*, the USS Enterprise comes under threat when the crew attempt a mind-link with the dangerous Medusan, Kollos, in order to improve their technological capacity. *Deep Space Nine* alludes to the play in the title of its first episode, ‘Past Prologue,’ which is repeated in the title of a story written by a character in another episode, ‘The Ascent.’

26 Gabriel Egan’s 2004 *Shakespeare and Marx*, which explores the influence of Marxism on Shakespeare studies (*The Tempest* is not one of the works he considers), addresses the impact of both the fall of the Soviet Union and the global justice movement. His conclusion speaks to the ‘broad coalition of eco-warriors, anarchists, animal rights protesters and anti-capitalists that has become visible in the past few years’ (151). In contrast to my account, Egan sees the period after ‘the fall’ as empty space when it comes to Marxist theory: ‘The aim here is … to trace the progression of ideas that originate with Marx, and for that reason there is little to say about the period after the mid-1980s. In political practice everything changed with the collapse of the communist states in 1989–90, and Marxist theory has yet to produce any coherent response to this that might illuminate Shakespeare studies’ (Egan, 2004, 70). Egan thus equates Stalinism with communism with Marxism. An alternative schema is offered by Isaac Deutscher, who distinguished the ‘Classical Marxist’ tradition from ‘vulgar Marxism,’ which he described as ‘the pseudo-Marxism of the different varieties of European social–democrats, reformists, Stalinists, Krushchevites, and their like’ (‘Marxism in Our Time’ 18). Perry Anderson’s ‘Western Marxism’ further separates the classical tradition from late twentieth-century academic varieties.

1 See, for example, Bradmeier’s *Global Health Report* from 2015.

2 The Economic Policy Institute's *State of Working America* provides detailed data on the impacts of the recession on various sectors of the U.S. American population. http://stateofworkingamerica.org/great-recession/. Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* brought this term to a much broader global audience in 2012. While Black men are disproportionately the targets of this ‘criminal injustice system,’ the culture of incarceration also negatively impacts Black women and working-class white men and women swept up in the frenzy.

3 Levy and Sidel document the devastating impact of the Iraq war on both civilians and combatants. For the impact of neoliberalism on disability, see Slorach 236–59.

5 Diverse television shows including *Colony*, *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Heroes*, *Riverdale*, *Sea Quest*, and *The Wire* have featured episodes with ‘Brave New World’ in the title.

6 The Marxist presence in postcolonial studies has seen something of a resurgence in the last decade, leading some to ask if there has been a ‘materialist turn’ in the field. See Pranav Jani’s review of Vivek Chibber’s *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital: Marxism and the future of postcolonial theory* in *International Socialist Review* 92.

7 Commissioned by the Brighton Arts Council and first performed in a school in 2003, this was one of a series of creative monologues by Crouch responding to Shakespeare plays. They were later brought together and published as *I, Shakespeare* in 2011.

8 See Kumar, *Islamophobia*; Bayoumi, *How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?*; Alexander, *New Jim Crow*.

9 The connection between Shakespeare’s play and contemporary cases of torture is particularly pointed given the widespread supposition that the verb form of ‘torture’ was one of Shakespeare’s many coinages. For an accessible and thought-provoking discussion of Shakespeare’s changing fortunes over time, contemporary resonance, and the words and phrases that he did and did not invent, see Jonathan Bate ‘A man for all ages.’

10 The comedy routine ‘From Caliban to the Taliban’ ran in Soho Theatre in London for a season in 2002/03 and toured elsewhere in subsequent years. It appeared as a DVD in 2007.

11 Acclaimed contemporary novelists have been assigned particular plays to retell in novel form: http://hogarthshakespeare.com/.

12 In February 2006, Trinidad’s neoliberal Government signed a deal with Alcoa permitting a new $1.5 billion aluminum smelter in Cap-de-Ville in the rural South East of the island as the anchor for a new mega industrial site. The deal not only promised Alcoa one hundred percent possession of the plant, and rights to natural gas, but also required the forced removal of hundreds of Trinidadians from their land. A popular protest at least temporarily halted the plan.

13 John Bellamy Foster’s 2000 book *Marx’s Ecology* develops a materialist approach to environmental crisis, arguing that the relationship between social forces and the natural world is at the heart of Marx’s theory of capitalism. Bellamy Foster has elaborated the Marxist theory of ‘metabolic rift’ addressing capitalism’s systemic inability to maintain a healthy metabolism between social activities and the land.


15 Thanks to my colleague Lokangaka Losambe for bringing Quayson’s book to my attention at a timely moment.

16 Richard Knowles, for example, who saw the production when the RSC was in residence at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, called it ‘an appalling misappropriation, decontextualization, commodification, and eroticization of Native legends and images, many of them sacred’ (‘Death of a Chief’ 53).

17 Plate five from ‘For Children: The Gates of Paradise’ 1793.

18 The African National Congress, illegal during the apartheid era, came to power with the fall of the regime in 1990. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established under the presidency of Nelson Mandela and presided over by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. While praised for exposing the abuses of apartheid, it was also widely criticized, especially by Black South Africans, for its failure to provide real accountability for those who presided over apartheid, or justice for its victims.
In contrast with Bosman, Virginia Mason Vaughan makes a distinction between English and North American postcolonial versions of the play, which she argues have ‘reached a dead end’ and those from ‘other parts of the world,’ such as Honeyman’s, which continue to have relevance (Vaughan *The Tempest: Shakespeare in Performance* 122).

The British Council is a charity based in the UK with international branches. It was originally established by the government and supports international cultural and educational initiatives: www.britishcouncil.org/. The Qattan Foundation is a nonprofit operation focused on education and culture: http://qattanfoundation.org/en/qattan/about/about.

The performance was filmed and is now available as a DVD. https://store.stratfordfestival.ca/products/dvd-tempest-ssf-production.

See Tim Donaghy; Clayton Thomas-Müller. The website for the Indigenous Environmental Network provides a useful overview: www.ienearth.org/what-we-do/tar-sands/.

1 Wiker, *Ten Books*. For a discussion of the attack on ethnic studies in Tucson, Arizona, see Biggers, ‘Who’s Afraid of *The Tempest*?’

2 Gullick, ‘Unoccupied Territory: The rage of Caliban.’


4 The BBC boasted a British audience of 27.3 million, and the IOC gave the figure of 900 million viewers globally. See Catherine Baker, ‘Beyond the Island Story?’ (412).

5 Abrams and Parker-Starbuck explain the concept behind London’s winning bid to host the games: ‘not merely the Olympics, but the Cultural Olympiad, a four-year cultural celebration allowing people from all over the UK to participate in a range of diverse events: performance, film, art, music, and more’ (19).


7 Peterson et al. explore the ‘old’ and ‘new’ left elements involved in the international anti-austerity movement. Eleanor Kilroy and Estelle du Boulay review the Duggan case and present broad evidence of discriminatory policing especially of Afro-Caribbean Britons.

8 http://graeae.org/about/our-artistic-vision/. While I do not know of a Graeae performance of *The Tempest*, members of the ensemble training program for the company spent time studying the play with RADA in 2018.

9 See Richard Williams’ account of the Paralympics ceremony for *The Guardian*.  

10 *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Palestinian dramatist Amir Nizar Zuabi, who has made the case for understanding Shakespeare as a Palestinian, was singled out for its depiction of Ephesus as a brutally repressive state replete with waterboarding and persecution of ‘illegal’ immigrants. See Zuabi, and Michael Billington’s ‘Battered immigrants and magic visions in a shipwreck triple bill.’

11 For more information about the protest, see the websites https://bp-or-not-bp.org/2012/04/23/protesters-take-to-the-stage-at-rsc-over-bp-sponsorship/ and http://bloggingshakespeare.com/shakespeares-shipwreck-trilogy.

12 See the review by Killian Fox. More information about the Ovalhouse can be seen at this site: www.ovalhouse.com/about.

13 This is illustrated, for example, in two new books that came across my desk while working on this Afterword, and a recent TV show: William Robinson’s *Into the Tempest: Essays on Global Capitalism* takes the storm as metaphor for the system; Ed Morales’ *Latinx* uses a quote from Caliban (taken from Césaire’s *A Tempest*, though attributed to Shakespeare) as epigram for a chapter exploring ‘Neoliberal Multiculturalism’ in the age of Trump. In the dystopic HBO show *Westworld*, a grim exploration of capitalist technology and the spectacle of violence, one of the synthetic hosts designed to service wealthy human tourists in the eponymous theme park revisits that favorite line: ‘Hell is empty, and all the devils are here!’.


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