MOTHER SYCORAX:

RECUPERATING A POSTCOLONIAL SHERO IN SHAKESPEARE'S AND CESAIRE'S *TEMPESTS*

Tiffany Weiss

Dr. Leila Pazargadi

Honors Thesis

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the colonial and patriarchal exploitation of people and land, along with the erasure of history and heritage, is depicted in the two intertextual works, *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (1611) and *A Tempest* by Aime Cesaire (1969), through the complex character of Sycorax. I argue that by using postcolonial and ecofeminist lenses to analyze and compare the allegorical character of Sycorax in these two texts, one is able to reexamine the way in which concepts of colonial violence, erasure of history, ecological exploitation, and appropriation of indigenous culture and heritage run through both *Tempests*. By comparing these texts, readers can gain an understanding of British colonial tactics to exploit the indigenous, as well as how it is challenged through postcolonial ecofeminist frameworks. Aime Cesaire, a major influencer in postcolonial discourse, critiques Shakespeare's *The Tempest* through revisions that boost Sycorax's character in his play, *A Tempest*. In so doing, Cesaire uses Sycorax to challenge Prospero, a character that represents the colonial perpetrator. In short, postcolonial ecofeminism aims to expose the operations of dualistic thinking that oppress and exploit humans and nature through binaries such as culture over nature, reason over emotion, white over non-white, man over woman, and ultimately domination over subordination. By analyzing the allegorical character, Sycorax, this article shows the way in which Cesaire challenges colonial and patriarchal tactics immortalized in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Key Words: Sycorax, Postcolonial, Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Aime Cesaire, *A Tempest*, Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Naturalizing Response, Indigenizing Response, Literary Criticism

MOTHER SYCORAX:

RECUPERATING A POSTCOLONIAL SHERO IN SHAKESPEARE'S AND CESAIRE'S *TEMPESTS*

There is no doubt that Shakespeare possesses an incredible ability to draw out meaningful themes within his plays that explore issues still deeply relevant today. In this way, his work can be interpreted in multiple ways that can either critique oppressive social and institutional systems or represent the thinking of the time, encapsulating commonly held beliefs and social systems. One such play that raises debate with its overt colonial themes is Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Themes such as colonial expansion, culture versus nature, and patriarchal rule are present through the protagonist of the play, Prospero, and one of his most maddening antagonists, Sycorax. However, Sycorax's story as antagonist is unusual in the way that she is dead with no lines or appearances. Still, even at the thought of her, Prospero is driven to anger.

The rage that Prospero feels over Sycorax in *The Tempest* underscores the need for further examination that tells as to whether this play is a critique of colonialism or a product of the time's commonly held beliefs within colonial and patriarchal rule. Firstly, the play was written in 1611 during the reign of King James I. During this time, the king was colonizing through his granted charter of the well-known Virginia Company of London who set up control on the coasts of America establishing Jamestown (JYF Museums). During Shakespeare's patronage under King James I, his acting company was known as the King's Men (Agecroft Hall). So, as a king's man, it can be argued that Shakespeare was writing the play in a way that supported the king's agenda. As the story goes, before Prospero's rule, Sycorax was banished from Algier to an unknown island and there, she established control through her magical powers. However, she dies before Prospero is shipwrecked there. Colonialism is reflected in the way that Prospero, as the protagonist, "establishes order" after the rule of the vilified Sycorax. He is able

to secure his role as the master of the island through his magic by enslaving the spirit, Ariel, and Sycorax's son, Caliban. Ultimately, all ends well for Prospero as any attempts at rebellion fail and he remains in control. In the end, Sycorax and her son also remain dehumanized as "savages." These prevailing colonial themes along with Shakespeare's patronage under King James I point in favor of the argument that this work reinforces colonial ideologies. This colonialist ideology takes a Eurocentric worldview that assumes that "European culture [is] the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted" and that colonizers embody "...what a human being should be, the proper 'self'" and that "native people [are] considered 'other,' different, and therefore inferior to the point of being less than fully human" (Tyson, 401).

Not only does this possible conflict of interest illustrate the prevailing ideologies of the time but, again, Prospero's treatment of the character Sycorax does as well. The key problem within Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, is that Sycorax's character is shaped by Prospero who establishes her as a villain and others her in order to set up his domination on the island. This arguably goes unchallenged throughout the play as he achieves his goals of control while Sycorax is considered by all to be either wicked or irrelevant. In addition, Shakespeare's work is often considered to be unparalleled as the most well-known English writer in the world. His work is canonical and considered by scholars, educators, and critics to be worthy of study, and can, therefore, get passed down through generations going unchallenged or uncriticized. Along with this, his plays have been used to promote British colonial propaganda and paradigms that present the British in a hierarchical position as superior to the colonized Other. Therefore, basic assumptions and attitudes around Sycorax as a non-white woman, witch, mother, and shero continue forward in time as his work goes uncontested. Sycorax is dualistically represented as

the female "other" while Prospero's character is set up as the colonial, male "self." In this way, Shakespeare's play was intended for a sixteenth and seventeenth century European audience who were intent on accomplishing expansion through colonization, so it is important to recognize the propaganda that vilifies, exploits, and silences the racialized and inferiorized characters like Sycorax. Ultimately, these colonizing assumptions and approaches need to be challenged in Shakespeare's work.

One way that postcolonial writers challenge the basic assumptions of canonical texts is to create intertextual works that bring to light the colonial ideologies hidden within. These works can then overturn colonial assumptions through the perspectives of those who have been othered. Many works of canonical counter-discourse have been written by multiple authors including Aime Cesaire, a Martinican poet, playwright, and politician who played a major role in the Negritude movement which celebrates black identity. Cesaire's play, *A Tempest*, was written in 1969 and is a direct adaptation of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, maintaining most of the original play's characters, themes, and narratives (Envoy). Cesaire's *A Tempest* critiques the original play's oppressor and oppressed dichotomy through the Negritude cultural movement which "forwarded a decolonial Black consciousness throughout the African diaspora" (Lara 86). His work is known for opposing the idea that colonized peoples are inferior to colonizers. In *A Tempest*, Cesaire changes the focus of the play from Prospero to the marginalized characters who oppose him. In Cesaire's work, Sycorax is brought to life through natural symbols and imagery, cultural and historical allusions, tonal shifts in language, and the motif of motherhood as she allegorically bridges important concepts that object colonial and patriarchal domination.

Given that the character, Sycorax, is so multi-directional between both plays and so complexly interconnected within dominant Western ideologies and dualisms, a framework that

supports an analysis of her character must be multi-directional as well. Postcolonial ecofeminism makes these connections visible because of its multi-directional concepts. Author, Greta Gaard, emphasizes that this lens entails the "[intersectional] linkage of racism, speciesism, sexism, colonialism, capitalism, and the mechanistic model of science-nature via the historical co-occurrence of the racist and colonialist 'voyages of discovery' that resulted in appropriating indigenous peoples, animals, and land" (28). Drawing on the work of several key theorists in postcolonial ecofeminism, including Plumwood, Uddin, Huggan, Tiffin, Gaard, Gruber, and Bartosch, the framework is understood as an emergent field that contests and also provides viable alternatives to Western ideologies of development (Huggan, Tiffan 29). They agree that much of oppression is caused through the exclusion and devaluation of those people and areas of life "...which have been constructed as nature" (Plumwood 28) and that the postcolonial ecofeminist framework "...[aims] to break away from the colonisation approach which treats the earth as a human empire" (164). This framework rejects the disconnections made through hierarchical dualistic patterns, such as culture over nature, male over female, white over non-white, and self over other which marginalize and oppress. The interconnected nature of this framework links the commonalities across these boundaries of postcolonial, ecocritical, and feminist frameworks, just as the character Sycorax will demonstrate in this postcolonial ecofeminist intertextual rereading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Cesaire's *A Tempest*. Therefore, by using postcolonial and ecofeminist lenses to analyze and compare the natural symbolism and imagery, motherhood motif, and allegorical nature of Sycorax in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Cesaire's *A Tempest*, this article brings to light the celebratory responses of naturalization and indigenization through Cesaire's boosted Sycorax that oppose and contrast the machinations of the colonizer in Shakespeare's work. By doing this, this article foregrounds

Cesaire's boosted Sycorax as representation of motherhood, pre-colonial history, indigenous culture, and nature in addition to her subversion of colonial and patriarchal dualisms. In so doing, her character becomes impactful along with her male counterparts, which allows her to stand as representation of not only the subaltern woman but of the powerful anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal shero as well. In this way, this study also recognizes Aime Cesaire's impact as an artist, while holding accountable the power imbalance within the literary centre/periphery[1] model that weaponizes Shakespeare's work to continue canonical traditions of domination.

SYCORAX AS SUBALTERN REPRESENTATION AND ANTI-COLONIAL & ANTI-PATRIARCHAL RESISTANCE

In discussions around Sycorax, many scholars have elucidated on what she stands for today in terms of her absence and presence. Scholars whose works focus on feminist postcolonial literature, such as Brittney Blystone, Irene Lara, Joseph Khoury, Abena Busia, Xiana Vazquez Bouzo, Ania Loomba, and May Joseph agree that Sycorax's absence throughout *The Tempest* and differing versions represents the subaltern state of non-European, indigenous females. While many of these scholars speak of Sycorax as a figure of the subaltern, they also agree that she simultaneously symbolizes anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal resistance. Her ability to have an impact as an absent character is what cultural theorist Stuart Hall calls "absence/presence" and defines as "the active impact of something or someone in spite of its socially marginalized, erased, or hybrid status" (qtd. in Lara 81). Sycorax's representation of both the subaltern and the anti-colonial resistance is pertinent to this article as it will attempt to illustrate how she is

[1] The centre/periphery model refers to the way in which the capitol seat of empire controls the epistemology of both the colonizer and the colonized. This touches on Pascale Casanova's concept of literary production in the *Republic of Letters*, and pertains to this article by showing how Shakespeare's *Tempest* is canonical, while identifying how Cesaire's *Tempest* is revolutionary, produced from the margins and in reaction to empire.

marginalized in Shakespeare's work and a revolutionist in Cesaire's. However, in the discussions on Sycorax, less attention has been paid specifically to Cesaire's Sycorax, and many who have focused on her in his work consider her to be absent. For example, according to May Joseph (209, 218) Tanya Shields (122), Irene Lara (86), and Xiana Bouzo (189-190), Sycorax is underused as an afterthought in Cesaire's *A Tempest* and they believe that the play is a masculinist interpretation which focuses on the masculine inheritors of the island. On the other hand, there are also discussions on Cesaire's work as a whole and not specifically on Sycorax. These scholars, namely, Philip Crispin, Cecilia Evoy, Joseph Khoury, and Joan Dayan, find Cesaire's *A Tempest* effective at recuperating history and dismantling the false illusions that are spread about history and "the state of the world" (Crispin). Again, their works are not specifically focused on Sycorax but on Cesaire's play as a whole or oftentimes, just Caliban as a revolutionary. Amongst both sets of scholars, there seems to be an almost either/or situation concerning Cesaire's work: either Cesaire has done an excellent job fully foregrounding black voices or he has poorly used Sycorax's character as an afterthought. This article will fill in gaps by focusing specifically on a comparative analysis between Shakespeare's Sycorax and Cesaire's Sycorax, thereby, demonstrating that instead of an either/or situation between characters as representation of anti-colonialism, Cesaire's depiction is actually rooted in the network of resistance, among her male counterparts, standing as an oppositional representation of colonial and patriarchal domination. Thus, I focus on how Sycorax is highlighted in this network of resistance as an indigenizing and naturalizing response in opposition to colonial and patriarchal machinations and hierarchical dualisms present in Shakespeare's version.

Since Sycorax provides alternatives to dominant Western ideologies of development (Huggan, Tiffan 29), Cesaire's version of her is presented as representation of motherhood,

history, and nature. Some critics see her in these roles either positively or negatively. Firstly, on the motherly motifs concerning Sycorax, some critics within feminist postcolonial frameworks find this analysis to be a reductive interpretation that is damaging to women. Shields (126-127) and May Joseph (212) agree that as a representation of motherhood, Sycorax is reduced to reproduction in a network of capitalism that produces free labor. While there is loaded language that demonstrates this reduction in Shakespeare's version, I argue that it is not the case in Sycorax's portrayal of motherhood in Cesaire's version. Instead, I amplify concepts from Michelle Cliff (36-37), Chantal Zabus (qtd. in Lara 84), May Joseph (209, 217), and Brinda Mehta (162) that celebrate her in the role of mother as they believe that she portrays power through her maternal spirit. Secondly, on the allusions to history, culture, and heritage that are portrayed through Sycorax, scholars, Melanie Otto and Xiana Bouzo, believe that the emphasis on Sycorax as a mother figure and therefore Caliban's African past places the female body as a symbol of nation. They consider this to be a risky traditional representation that has caused sexual violence against women and leaves out their contributions in anti-colonial struggles (Otto 101; Bouzo 194). However, like Brenda Mehta, this article sees Sycorax's alignment with history as positive, because it provides an alternative feminist positionality and historiography that reclaims indigenous identity through an indigenizing response that opposes the colonizer's usurpation of history, culture, and heritage through homogenization (158). Lastly, concerning her conflation with nature, critics Jyotsna Singh (209) and Irene Lara (87-88) believe that as a Mother Earth figure, Sycorax's sexual and maternal identity as the "native" woman is displaced. On the other hand, May Joseph views Sycorax as significant in her representation of "Mother Earth and virgin nature" (209). Similarly, postcolonial ecofeminists, Val Plumwood, Karen Warren, Mohammad Jashim Uddin, Muztaba Rafid, and Mohammad Rahmatullah, although not

speaking of Sycorax specifically in their work, see a female alliance with nature as positive not only because of human's dependence on it but also to oppose the master model which denigrates both the feminine sphere and the natural sphere, as they are both associated with subsistence, in order to background them against the "achievement" of the "reasoning" and "rational" male. (Plumwood 22-23). These scholars, along with Roman Bartosch, Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, Greta Gaard, and Elizabeth Gruber view this alliance with nature as an alternative approach to colonial and patriarchal hierarchical dualisms that view culture above nature. Through the concepts shared by these authors, this study determines her conflation with nature in Cesaire's work as positive, representing a naturalizing response that opposes colonial and patriarchal powers that commodify people and nature through the building of empires. Thus, we can begin to view Sycorax as not only a representation of the subaltern woman but of powerful anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal resistance as well.

While the findings in this research will build on existing work, it will also attempt to broaden the reach of postcolonial ecofeminist literary studies by extending the critical discourse through the findings in this intertextual rereading that focuses on the underexplored character Sycorax. While there are studies that focus on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in this framework there is a missing focus on Sycorax's significance within the field. For example, in their impressive work "Ecofeminist Critique of Patriarchal Power: A Warrenian Exploration of Ecological and Social Domination in Shakespeare's The Tempest," authors Mohammad Jashim Uddin, Muztaba Rafid, and Mohammad Rahmatullah adeptly argue that the dynamics between Prospero, Miranda, Caliban, and Ariel demonstrate Warren's "Logic of Domination," but Sycorax is not prominent in their writing. However, they do implore that "future scholarship continues to explore ecofeminist themes within canonical works, [so] the field can broaden its

reach to include other cultural and historical contexts, thereby enriching interdisciplinary discussion on justice and sustainability" (69-70). Among their calls for future scholarship within these frameworks are those of Lara and Bouzo, who have stated that "engagement with Sycorax is hardly sustained" (Lara 91) and that "there are hardly any scholarly articles that focus on the character of Sycorax" (Bouzo 189). Thus, I aim to fill in these gaps by exploring the meanings of Sycorax through a postcolonial ecofeminist framework that firstly, foregrounds Sycorax who has been wrongfully excluded and exiled to the background, and secondly, affirms her resistance through her naturalizing and indigenizing responses that opposes the domination of colonial and patriarchal rule. This also highlights Cesaire's critique of colonialism by championing Black voices through not only the male revolutionaries, but through Sycorax, the only non-white female in both plays. Although underexplored, Sycorax is an allegorical figure that functions as both an important character and representation of subversion to the multi-directional hierarchical dualisms that perpetuate and falsely legitimize the domination of colonial and patriarchal rule. An intertextual rereading allows for an interpretation that reveals the gravity of her allegorical nature through these meanings that are figuratively unveiled by extended metaphors, imagery, and symbolism of motherhood, history, culture, heritage, and nature that permeate these works.

THE ABSENT AND PRESENT SYCORAX

To begin, conversations concerning Sycorax's death confirm her absence in Shakespeare's *A Tempest*, which represents her subaltern state. In a scene depicting Prospero berating Ariel for his ingratitude for him as a master, Prospero says, "within which space she died/ And left thee there" (Shakespeare I.ii.331-332). Prospero declares Sycorax dead, positioning himself as the master narrator and historian on the island. Caliban, her son, also

considers her dead in Shakespeare's version saying, "As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed" (Shakespeare I.ii.386). Caliban adopts this belief from Prospero, using the past tense verb "brushed" referring to his mother. This highlights Sycorax's absence from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It also leaves her character in a role that is often underexplored and backgrounded as well as voiceless to defend Prospero's attacks on her reputation and integrity. Shakespeare's choice to exclude her character, while also making her the protagonist's antithetical other, reflects the colonizer's systemic denial to hear the words of those they have suppressed. This allows colonizers to become the master narrators and historians and to propagate and continue systems of colonization through dualisms. In the article "Extremes of Gender and Power: Sycorax's Absence in Shakespeare's The Tempest," scholar Brittney Blystone observes that, "Sycorax is not present to represent herself; therefore, Sycorax exists purely through secondhand accounts that Prospero edits into slander" (76). This points out that Sycorax constitutes the whole quality of subalternity as she is a woman that is both marginalized through her absence which postcolonial ecofeminism views as being pushed to the periphery. This interpretation extends Blystone, Lara, Khoury, Busia, Bouzo, Loomba, and May Joseph's notion that Sycorax is representative of the subaltern, non-white woman. This choice for her character is what allows Prospero to go unchecked as he proceeds to inculcate all within his power with the hierarchical dualisms that allow him to rule and consume on the island. Thus, Shakespeare's *Tempest* fails to critique the tactics of silencing and backgrounding; both are strategies used in colonial and patriarchal rule that perpetuate ideologies and domination in Western culture.

On the other hand, Cesaire's Sycorax lives on and is present through the use of tone and changed perspective in her son, Caliban. In a scene of resistance, her son Caliban stands up to Prospero saying, "...I know that Sycorax is alive" (Cesaire 18). Caliban is the one who makes a

declaration about his mother's presence this time instead of Prospero. In this passage, Cesaire establishes the commanding tone that Prospero is not the master narrator and that Sycorax and her powers live on. She no longer represents "radical subalternity" alone (Joseph 213). Her presence is meaningful to her son, Caliban. This creates opportunities to challenge Prospero and therefore, colonial and patriarchal tactics and dualisms. As mentioned before, Stuart Hall has coined the term "absence/presence" or in other words, "the active impact of something or someone in spite of its socially marginalized, erased, or hybrid status" (qtd. in Lara 81). Through the changed tone and perspective of characters, Sycorax lives on. This allows Sycorax the opportunity to make the sort of impact that Stuart Hall speaks of. Drawing from Crispin, Evoy, Khoury, and Dayan, who find Cesaire's work effective at dismantling false illusions, this analysis amplifies their insights by revealing its pertinence to Sycorax specifically as her presence proves to break down Prospero's binaries. Cesaire's choice for her character to live on allows her to challenge the narration and history provided solely by Prospero. This reflects an important element of postcolonial ecofeminism that foregrounds those who have been backgrounded and excluded (Plumwood 60). In this way, Cesaire is critiquing the colonial and patriarchal practice of silencing and vilifying women and indigenous people in order to write a history that suits colonial and patriarchal domination.

In Shakespeare's version, Sycorax is also racialized as her North African, Algerian origins are verified. These origins are made in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* when Prospero, in his rage, asks, "Where was she born? Speak. Tell me" (Shakespeare I.ii.311). Ariel replies, "Sir, in Argier" and Shakespeare repeats her origins "This damned witch Sycorax,/…from Argier/… (Shakespeare I.ii.315, 317). The fact that Prospero asks where she is from in the middle of his vilifying rant illustrates that, to him, being from somewhere different than himself somehow

contributes to her badness or wickedness. It also racializes her because Sycorax is from Northern Africa, implying darker skin than Prospero, who is from Europe. This sets up a hierarchical dualism of white over non-white under Prospero's reign on the island. This represents the same tactic that is employed in colonialism where white is perceived as superior to non-white, thereby "justifying" domination in a binary of master over slave. To Prospero, this same logic applies as he makes Sycorax's son his slave on the island. According to literary critic, Irene Lara, "Shakespeare integrates knowledge about Sycorax's origins in North Africa into this dialogue, associating her evil doing with her racialized cultural alterity" (83). This points to the way that Prospero divides them according to race, setting Sycorax up as "other" and therefore, a commodity in his eyes. This is important to consider as it mirrors the colonial systems of consumerism that views people of color as free labor which is exactly how Prospero views Sycorax and her child (Shields 126-127, Joseph 212). Therefore, Prospero continues this colonial power structure of white over non-white as Shakespeare fails to critique the racism inherent within the play.

Also, in Shakespeare's version, through contrasting language, Sycorax is paradoxically vilified for her complex role as an alleged colonial stand-in who makes use of servitude and imprisonment much like Prospero. In the scene depicting Prospero's retelling of Sycorax's history to Ariel, he states, "Thou, my slave,/…wast then her servant/And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate/ To act her earthy and abhorred commands …Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,/…Into a cloven pine" (Shakespeare I.ii.322-326, 329). In this passage, Shakespeare employs the use of contrast between Sycorax and Ariel to establish Ariel as too fragile for the loathsome treatment of Sycorax. Shakespeare juxtaposes Ariel and Sycorax in this way to emphasize that Ariel is weak and Sycorax is a monster. This allows Prospero to assert himself as

Ariel's paternal protector or white savior even though he himself has enslaved Ariel as well. This mirrors patriarchal and colonial domination that uses many dualisms including the protector over the protected dichotomy, ultimately leading to the hierarchical binary of the dominant over the subordinate. In their article, "Critique of Patriarchal Power," authors Uddin, Rafid, and Rahmatullah point out that according to the teachings of Ecofeminist critic, Karen Warren, Prospero's control over Ariel "...[exemplifies] a paternalistic authority that enforces obedience through constructed dependency" (61). This points to the way in which manipulative and contrasting language is used by Prospero to portray Ariel as weak and Sycorax as a tyrannical malefactor in order for him to control Ariel. By constructing himself as Ariel's savior, an unspoken agreement ensues between them that allows Prospero to control and enslave him. Further analysis shows that as colonizers mirror this tactic, many colonized people and lands may initially be under the impression that they are being protected when they are in fact being exploited. The textual evidence in this passage aligns with Plumwood, Uddin, Huggan, Tiffin, Gaard, Gruber, and Bartosch's conceptualization of the postcolonial ecofeminist framework that observes the disconnections made through comparisons that set up differences as opposed to interconnections. Hence, as Shakespeare neglects to signify the issues within Ariel and Prospero's relationship as the white savior over the other, and allows Prospero to contradict himself by vilifying Sycorax, he neglects to critique the patriarchal and colonial issues in a dualism of strong over weak or protector over protected that enforce domination and subordination.

While Shakespeare's version of Sycorax is a vilified colonial fill-in, Cesaire moves away from any colonial ties and instead uses nature metaphors and imagery along with culture allusions to Africa in order to create an interconnected metaphorical family unit between

Sycorax, Caliban, and Ariel through the motif of motherhood. By doing this, Cesaire attempts to oppose the detached nature of colonial rule. In multiple scenes, the metaphor of this family unit is brought to pass. For instance, not only do Caliban and Ariel acknowledge one another as brothers (Cesaire 26) but Cesaire makes these family ties clearer by changing the character, Caliban, to a black man and Ariel from a spirit to a "mulatto man" (3). Along with this, Ariel can be viewed as Sycorax's metaphorical child through the nature imagery that represents her metaphorically with trees. For example, after telling Ariel that it was him, Prospero, that saved Ariel from the pine tree, Ariel replies saying,

> Sometimes I almost regret it…After all, I might have turned into a real tree in the end…Tree: that's a word that really gives me a thrill! It often springs to mind: palm tree–springing into the sky, like a fountain ending in nonchalant, squid-like elegance. The baobab–twisted like the soft entrails of some monster…the ceiba tree–spread out beneath the proud sun. (Cesaire 16)

Many of these words trace back to the motherly motif that represents Sycorax as a dignified and nurturing mother. A closer look at the importance of the verbs "springs" and "springing" allows the reader to understand that among its definitions is to "originate or arise from," similar to one's family, heritage, or home. In addition to springs, a fountain can be symbolic of sustaining renewal. Words like "soft" and "elegance" contrast to the "monster" that Prospero makes Sycorax out to be. Sycorax is metaphorically the tree that Ariel speaks of, and these motherly and familial metaphors change the concept of imprisonment inside of the tree to a metaphorical gestation within the tree like that of an unborn child inside of a womb. In so doing, Sycorax is maternally connected through metaphor to both Ariel and Caliban, placing her in opposition to Prospero's domination over them as master. Cesaire also uses this motif of motherhood to

oppose the cold detached nature of Prospero as the colonizer. Simultaneously, Ariel connects them to their African roots through cultural allusions as all three trees, the "palm," "baobab," the "ceiba" are found in and across that continent. Cesaire's metaphorical changes to the relationships between Sycorax, Caliban, and Ariel through nature imagery, allusions to African, and the mother motif around trees highlights the idea that Sycorax, Caliban, and Ariel are a metaphorical family. In Shakespeare's version they are separated through Prospero's denigration as the sole narrator. As a metaphorical family unit in *A Tempest*, they are able to create a network of resistance that can, in differing ways, recuperate history, culture, heritage, and origins. While some critics feel that Caliban is the only representation of colonial resistance in Cesaire's work, a perspective in which all three are a metaphorical family unit increases their strength, especially as her metaphorical son and biological son look to Sycorax for strength in their differing endeavors towards revolution. May Joseph says of Sycorax in general that she "...embodies a radical revisioning of gendered power within nationalist struggles" (209). Cesaire's Sycorax especially brings the "radical revisions" to light when viewed as the strength within these metaphorical family bonds. Just as she represents radical subalternity in Shakespeare's version, she is revised in Cesaire's version to symbolize radical leadership and strength on the island. This mirrors postcolonial ecofeminism's aim to affirm resistance and positive identities outside of colonial rule (Plumwood 60). Through her, Ariel is able to reject the white savior over the weak dualism that is offered by Prospero in order to keep him in subordination. Sycorax also critiques the colonizer's cold detachment, as Cesaire celebrates her in the role of mother to counteract colonial power. Additionally, the metaphorical family connection as a network of resistance also critiques the either/or binary in which scholars have viewed Cesaire's work as either focused solely on Caliban or as using Sycorax only as an afterthought. By examining the

nuances of natural imagery and symbolism along with the motifs around motherhood, this analysis illuminates aspects of the passage that have been previously overlooked, thereby filling in a gap in the discourse around Cesaire's Sycorax.

Cesaire also boosts Sycorax's character by establishing her as a symbol of African history through cultural allusions. Like Ariel's metaphorical references to Sycorax through motherhood and African trees, Caliban does the same in a scene where Prospero attempts to shame Caliban for having Sycorax as a mother while rejoicing over her death. After pointing out that Sycorax still lives on, Caliban says, "Sycorax. Mother./ Serpent, rain, lightning." (Cesaire 18). Cesaire's use of natural symbolism and cultural allusions here represents Caliban's living mother while associating her with the African deities, Serpent, Rain, and Lightening. By doing this, Caliban verifies his own origins through Sycorax with pride and respect for his mother and their culture. In this way, they are recuperating their history and heritage. This parallels an Indigenizing response that centers around knowledge and culture that has been passed down for centuries long before colonial rule. It aims to decolonize and return to the wisdom and knowledge found in indigenous cultures and history. Scholar, Cecilia Evoy, states that "Césaire's efforts to Indigenize the play function to assert the cultural agency and validity of Négritude literature and resist assimilation to colonial cultures" (par. 10). This points to the way that the cultural allusions in Caliban's statement asserts his cultural agency and validity through his mother Sycorax and her connection to African cosmology. In this vein, postcolonial ecocriticism dismantles patriarchal and colonial domination by rediscovering the other's story through value and respect (Plumwood 60). The natural symbolism and cultural allusions in the narrative align with concepts from authors Crispin, Evoy, Khoury, and Dayan, who agree that Cesaire's *A Tempest* recuperates history. Further analysis shows that Caliban's response reflects the way that their

recuperation of history dismantles Prospero's racializing of Sycorax in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by countering the hierarchical dualisms between white over non-white. Therefore, Cesaire is critical of this binary and critiques the racism inherent in Shakespeare's version by allowing culture and history to be represented through Sycorax to oppose the colonizer's suppression of culture and history through an Indigenizing response.

Alternatively, as a woman that holds power, the character of Sycorax is vilified through loaded language that is demonizing and witchy in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in order to assert patriarchal domination. Much of what is known about Sycorax in Shakespeare's version is described through Prospero's rant to Ariel concerning his ingratitude for Prospero as his savior. In this same scene Prospero demands, "Hast thou forgot/ The foul witch Sycorax" (I.ii.307-308), "This damned witch Sycorax,/ For mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible" (I.ii.315-316). The language is loaded as she is not just a "witch" which is bad enough, but a "foul witch" a "damned witch" whose magic or "sorceries" are "terrible." Even Shakespeare's choice for the name Sycorax has witchy ties as it is "derived from the Latin 'corax,' which means raven" (Lara 83). This bird is often associated with symbolism in relation to "witch's assistants, bad omens, and portents of death" (Lara 83). Negative and demonizing language around female power as witchy and Shakespeare's choice to give her the name of Sycorax which evokes connections with ravens and witches, characterize Sycorax as a villain who uses her power for evil. Therefore, it can be argued that because Prospero similarly holds magical powers, he is differentiating them as male power versus female power in order to justify and hegemonize in his use of magic. Through this slander, he is actually distancing himself from her and defining her in a lesser role as a woman in order to sustain his control on the island. This mirrors male-gendered bias that foregrounds masculine attributes over those of feminine. In the article, "Silencing

Sycorax: On African Colonial Discourse and the Unvoiced Female," author Abena Busia asserts that Shakespeare's play, foregrounds the colonial and therefore patriarchal dynamics of "power and sexuality inextricably linked in the landscape of the colonial encounter" (Busia 91). Similarly, Uddin, Rafid, and Rahmatullah teach in their article "Ecofeminist Critique of Patriarchal Power," that "patriarchal structures frequently shape women's roles to maintain control and legitimize authority" (62). This points to the way in which Shakespeare's demonizing language and her chosen name characterize Sycorax for the purpose of contradicting her feminine magic as bad with Prospero's masculine magic as good. Patriarchal rule allows men to define roles for women stating what they are allowed to do, accomplish, and participate in. It also allows men to define what the limits are within female roles and what it means if women do not adhere to these conventions. In Sycorax's case, she is painted as a hideous hag witch and monster for being a powerful woman whose magic rivals Prospero's. Thus, in this way, Shakespeare perpetuates male-gendered power dynamics by demonizing Sycorax's power as a female and neglects to critique the colonial and patriarchal dualism of male over female.

On the other hand, through the characterization of Prospero as a man that holds power through magic, he is commended as a benevolent rational protagonist. For example, when explaining to his daughter how his kingdom was lost, he says, "I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated/ To closeness and the bettering of my mind…" (I.ii.107-108). He also explains to her how grateful he is that he could bring his own books to the island, saying, "...I loved my books…" and that they are prized "above my dukedom" (I.ii.195, 197). Here the language used to represent Prospero, along with the name given to him by Shakespeare in which the word "prosper" is plain to see, illustrates the supposed goodness in him. The allusion to intellectual and moral growth through books, studying, and the transcendence of worldliness paint this male

character as morally superior, intelligent, and successful. He is viewed as the reasoning and rational male, thus creating a dualism between himself and Sycorax, which further legitimates his rule on the island. Postcolonial feminist, Brittney Blystone states that, "at one end of the spectrum is Sycorax, the disempowered, demonized woman; at the other, Prospero, the ruling patriarch" (75). Additionally, Plumwood points out that "much of the stress on affirming women's difference has resulted from an effort to problematize the character of a culture whose central protagonist, the apparently neutral rational subject, is defined in opposition not only to women but to many other oppressed groups and even to nature itself" (68). This illustrates that the emotive language used to characterize Prospero as morally superior, intelligent, and successful along with his prosperous name are representations of a patriarchal society where Prospero's identity and characteristics permit him to control the previous society he finds on the island. Further analysis shows that in this state of patriarchal hierarchical dualism he must vilify Sycorax in order to disempower her so that he can obtain an identity as the master. By stressing their differences instead of their similarities as holders of magic, Prospero participates in the "Logic of Domination" that justifies subordination of others (Karen Warren qtd. in Uddin et al). This parallels dominant Western culture that defines roles for women and denigrates and excludes them when they attempt to participate outside of traditional female roles. This interpretation of the loaded language in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* that portrays Sycorax's power as evil and Prospero's as benevolent aligns with concepts from authors Plumwood, Warren, Uddin, Rafid, and Rahmatullah who agree that women are denigrated in order to exalt the master model of the enlightened and reasoning male along with his supposedly superior achievements. Therefore, as a result of these magical themes and the hierarchical dualisms they represent going unchallenged in Shakespeare's work, *The Tempest*, the bard fails to critique the

patriarchal control that demonizes women and commends men in positions of power while simultaneously "legitimizing" the oppression of those they have marginalized.

However, in Cesaire's work, Prospero's manipulation to identify as the master through his bookish allusions to intellectual and moral growth is laid bare as the knowledge of the colonizer. For example, when Prospero is explaining to his daughter how they were banished to the island, he says, "...when they learned that through my studies and experiments I had managed to discover the exact location of these lands for which many had sought for centuries and that I was making preparations to set forth to take possession of them, they hatched a scheme to steal my as-yet-unborn empire from me" (Cesaire 13). Prospero's articulation of colonial language summons images of colonial exploration and empire-building. Cesaire characterizes Prospero for what he is, a colonizer. Western philosophy is straightforwardly represented here as opposed to the underhanded methods that Shakespeare's Prospero uses to establish domination. Prospero still sees himself as the rational male who has transcended nature and emotion. However, Sycorax, Caliban, and Ariel see his true nature. Prospero's values are the same as western colonial values: possession, development, consumption, and power. Plumwood proposes that, "To shake the conceptual foundations of these systems of domination we must unmask more fully the identity of the master hidden behind the neutral guise of the human and of the ideals of rationality" (68). Unmasking Prospero is exactly what Cesaire does by exposing his colonial and patriarchal knowledge. Instead of mystical magic obtained through benevolent study that justifies Prospero's rule, his magic is actually his relentless will for power. This interpretation confirms the concepts from postcolonial ecofeminists Plumwood, Warren, Uddin, Rafid, and Rahmatullah that aim to expose the identity of the master model that poses as the "ideal," rational male. Revealing Prospero's magic as purely colonial knowledge drives Cesaire's story forward as the

metaphorical family of Sycorax, Caliban, and Ariel create a network of resistance to these colonial and patriarchal tactics and dualisms.

While Shakespeare's Sycorax is vilified for her powers through the characterization supplied by Prospero, the master historian, Cesaire's Sycorax has magic that is intentionally positioned with nature and is honored and revered by her metaphorical family in order to oppose the materialistic consumerism of the avaricious colonizer. For example, after Prospero attempts to attack the character of Sycorax, Caliban declares, "Sycorax. Mother./ Serpent, rain, lightning./ And I see thee everywhere!...through the rushes,/ in the gesture made by twisted root and its awaiting thrust…Often, in my dreams, she speaks to me… (Cesaire 18). Caliban refers immediately to his mother amongst the formidable gods "Serpent, rain, and lightning," establishing her magic as important and powerful. Cesaire's use of concrete and abstract imagery through Caliban's words expresses her intentional conflation with the nature that exists all around them. Additionally, Caliban alludes back to Ariel's very specific metaphorical reference to Sycorax as tree and mother through the "twisted root" (Cesaire 18). To add to this, her revolutionary nature is symbolically referenced in the twisted root's "awaiting thrust" or in other words, her rebel power in nature (Cesaire 18). Caliban also states concerning the earth, "Dead, you can walk on it, pollute it, you can tread upon it with the steps of a conqueror. I respect the earth, because I know that Sycorax is alive" (Cesaire 18). Caliban's language shows that Cesaire is intentional about Sycorax's representation as a Mother Earth figure whose powers are so strong that she overcomes the limitations of death. The choice to value and ally Sycorax with nature challenges Prospero's exploitation of the land and all who inhabit it. Postcolonial ecofeminist studies teach that, historically, to be conflated with nature meant to be devalued and excluded through the dichotomy of culture and reason over nature (Plumwood, Uddin, Huggan,

Tiffin, Gaard, Gruber, and Bartosch). This is the dominant Western thinking that Prospero represents, however, Cesaire's Sycorax opposes the dualism of culture over nature as "nature and culture are inseparable" (Bartosch 13). The inseparability of nature and culture is an important point to consider because, according to Ecofeminist theory, the core of colonialism and patriarchy is the dualism between nature and the transcendence of nature, or in other words reason, rationality, and culture (Plumwood, Uddin et al). This dualism imagines that the dominant Western culture has risen above or disconnected from nature and that, as Caliban draws attention to, it is just a commodity for personal gain. Sycorax's magic is an indigenous naturalizing response to colonial and patriarchal dualisms that negatively conflate women and indigenous people to nature in this hierarchical binary. Plumwood states that, "... there is a way of relating to the other that is especially associated with women, which contains the seeds of a different human relationship to the earth and perhaps too of human survival on it and with it" (7). This points to the way that the character, Sycorax, represents a call for reassessment of hierarchical relationships through her interconnectedness with nature and interconnectedness within her metaphorical family unit. By establishing her power as a woman, and intentionally emphasizing her magic as a naturalizing response, Sycorax interconnects dualisms, cutting out the hierarchical elements. Instead of domination, she represents a mutuality that allies with all who are othered from the "master story of western culture" (Plumwood 196). Therefore, by both unmasking Prospero and his colonial knowledge and patriarchal systems and changing Sycorax's magic from a witchy nature to an interconnected naturalizing response, Cesaire is critical of the unfair manipulation and deceit that is used within hierarchical dualisms to exclude and denigrate those conflated with nature. Also, in boosting Sycorax's character to critique the colonial

devaluation of indigenous lands and cultures, he provides, through her, a viable alternative of coexistence that is interconnected.

As mentioned, in Prospero's point of view, which is also the point of view of Western culture, conflation with nature has had negative connotations, and through the use of dehumanizing language and imagery that equates Sycorax to an animal, she is reviled as a bad mother in Shakespeare's version. Prospero speaks of her saying, "Save for the son that she did litter here,/ A freckled whelp hag-born—not honored with/ A human shape." (Shakespeare I.ii.334-336). Later, when he is commanding Caliban to come forward, he says, "Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!" (Shakespeare I.ii.385). The use of the word "litter" to describe the birth of her son, along with the dehumanizing language calling him a "whelp," which is a reference to baby animals, and her a "dam," also an animal reference for female animals, utilizes exclusionary tactics for domination. Sycorax and her child are excluded from the human sphere and are instead seen as a part of nature that he sees as a commodity. Prospero extends this dehumanization through the imagery of her son's body, saying that it cannot be esteemed as human. Viewing Sycorax as deprived of human qualities allows Prospero to see her the way that he sees nature, as dispensable. This dispensability in nature along with racializing her as a non-white woman and mother allows him to see her and her child as slaves providing free labor. This interpretation extends Shield's and May Joseph's notion that Sycorax's ability to reproduce is reduced to a network of capitalism that produces free labor. May Joseph emphasizes that "She is the expendable commodity of an unmarked island in the outer peripheries of Europe's imagination" (212). This points to the way that Prospero's dehumanizing language around her motherhood is a tool to other Sycorax by creating a dualism of human over nature, culture over

nature, male over female, and white skin over dark skin in order to exploit her ability to produce children and therefore his free labor.

In this way, Shakespeare's Prospero also taints Caliban's view of his mother Sycorax through his dehumanizing language. In Caliban's dread over Prospero's power, he states in an aside, "I must obey, His art is of such power,/ It would control my dam's god, Setebos,/ And make a vassal of him." (I.ii.444-446). Here, Caliban takes on the same dehumanizing language as Prospero concerning his mother calling her "dam" (I.ii.444-446). He also uses the word "vassal" to hierarchically structure Prospero's power as greater than that of the god Setebos from his mother's culture. This language from Caliban points out that he has to some degree disconnected from the strengths and power of his mother, culture, and heritage. He hears the belittling and dehumanizing language around his mother enough from Prospero that he begins to believe in Prospero's constructed hierarchical dualisms that support his domination. This parallels the damage of toxic masculinity that rejects anything depicted as feminine. Caliban's devaluing language and comparison of Sycorax to Prospero also mirrors the way that women's roles both inside and outside of motherhood have been backgrounded, much like nature, in a patriarchal society. In the matter of the son and mother relationship within Western ideologies and colonial and patriarchal societies, Ecofeminist Val Plumwood asserts that "[sons resist] the recognition of dependence but [continue] to conceptually order his world in terms of a male (and truly human) sphere of free activity taking place against a female (and natural) background of necessity" (22). This points out the dualistic space that Caliban, as a racialized man, in a colonial and therefore patriarchal setting is caught between. Although as her son he was born by Sycorax and presumably raised by her, in Shakespeare's version he is not impervious to the colonial and patriarchal atmosphere created by Prospero. Caliban's dehumanizing language and disconnection

to Sycorax, and therefore his history and culture, detach him from any sort of network of resistance. Hence, Shakespeare fails to critique the colonial and patriarchal dualism of man over women, culture over nature, and white over non-white by letting the dehumanizing language of the absent Sycorax go unchallenged in her role as a non-European mother.

Alternatively, in Cesaire's version, celebratory language and natural symbolism are used to portray Sycorax positively in her role as a mother. In the scene of Ariel referring to Sycorax as his metaphorical mother in conjunction with trees, he says, "Ask the Calao bird that lives a cloistered season in its branches…O bird, O green mansions set in the living earth!" (Cesaire 16). A Calao bird is located on the African continent (Evoy) and the word "cloistered" demonstrates the quality of a protector. Here, Ariel also refers to these green mansions or trees set in the "living earth" reiterating that Sycorax lives on. These connections in language and symbolism demonstrate that his metaphorical mother Sycorax lives on as his protector. Similarly, when Prospero berates Sycorax saying, "There are some family trees it's better not to climb!" (Cesaire 18) Caliban retorts saying, "...she was my mother and I won't deny her! I know that Sycorax is alive...Often, in my dreams, she speaks to me and warns me…" (Cesaire 18). Cesaire makes Caliban's connection with his mother undeniable through his word choice which sets a mood of reverence for Sycorax. Caliban does not shy away from his belief that Sycorax lives on as his protector. As a mother and protector, Sycorax's power in this "life-giving and life-maintaining role" (Zabus qtd. in Lara 84) is celebrated. This challenges patriarchal ideology that backgrounds nature, women, mothers, and anyone in a position that provides the essentials of nurture and sustenance. Brenda Mehta asserts that,

> Instead of representing an eternal source of shame for future generations, the maternal genealogy becomes a source of pride through the healing power of

> strong-willed mothers, independent grandmothers, and resourceful homemakers who engage in curative transformation of reality. (162)

This points to the way in which the celebratory language used by her son, Caliban, and metaphorical son Ariel which characterizes Sycorax as a protective and nurturing mother and the source of their African heritage is something that they are proud of. In Cesaire's *A Tempest*, Sycorax is no longer a basis for maternal shame but a source of cultural heritage, power, strength, and protection. This aligns conceptually with the scholarship of Cliff, Zabus, Joseph, and Mehta that celebrates Sycorax in the role of mother and shero. It also parallels postcolonial ecofeminist theory that aims to foreground and recognize the contributions of those who have been backgrounded, excluded, and exploited by reclaiming respect and identity as well as affirming resistance (Plumwood 60). In this way, Cesaire critiques colonialism by opposing the master identity through her portrayal as a powerful revolutionary and mother, a source of strength, history, and interconnection of whom her metaphorical family respects.

Given that the characters of Caliban and Ariel respect Sycorax in Cesaire's version, they too are intentionally positioned as allies with nature through the symbols and extended metaphors around birds. For example, when Ariel is set free, he imparts his joyous agenda for freeing others saying, "…There where the intoxicating berry ripens at the visit of the wild ring-dove/ through the throat of that musical bird/ I shall let fall…four notes so sweet…I shall be the thrush that launches… (Cesaire 58). Thrushes and doves are literary symbols of hope and peace which represent Ariel's approach to freedom from colonialism. Similarly, when waging war on Prospero Caliban sings:

> Black pecking creature of the savannas/ the quetzal measures out the new day/ solid and lively/ in its haughty armor. Zing! The determined hummingbird revels

in the flower's depths…a lyrebird gathers up our ravings. Freedom hi-day!

Freedom hi-day! (Cesaire 45)

The symbolism in the "Black pecking creature" refers to Sycorax and is a reclamation of her name in relation to a black raven. He then refers to the quetzal, a bird that symbolizes freedom in Mayan culture because it "would let itself die of hunger, rather than live in captivity" (The Resplendent Quetzal). He also chooses hummingbirds, small but respected birds, known in some indigenous cultures to be fierce fighters and defenders of their territory (The Hummingbird Symbol). Lastly, he uses the lyrebird which stands as a symbol for living in harmony with the natural world (Wildspeak). These are all birds that symbolize the approaches that Caliban takes in his goal towards freedom from colonialism. This affirms their refusal to comply with Prospero's domination through their network of resistance in this interconnected metaphorical family unit. Cesaire arms each member with differing strategies for rebellion, and although each tactic varies in method, they are still a united front of opposition. Sycorax's indigenous female nature is interconnecting as she unites their alliance of resistance and draws attention to the interwoven dualisms of colonialism and patriarchy. Also, her magic and strategy for resistance are her connections with nature itself. This represents an indigenous naturalizing response that opposes the homogenization and machinations of the colonizer. Thus, the symbolism used in this extended metaphor around nature, Sycorax, and birds contains Ariel and Caliban's intentional positioning with nature alongside her. Val Plumwood insists that, "In this alternative, women are not seen as purely part of nature any more than men are; both men and women are part of both nature and culture…Both men and women can stand with nature and work for breaking down the dualistic construction of culture…" (37). This points to the ways in which Caliban and Ariel's approaches to freedom, although demonstrated symbolically as different, interconnect through

the extended metaphor around birds as an alliance with Sycorax– and by extension–nature. In this way, they are all breaking down the dualistic constructions of culture and nature as they cannot be separated. This aligns with the postcolonial ecofeminist concept of intentionally allying with nature as an alternative approach to colonial and patriarchal hierarchical dualisms that view culture above nature in order to commodify people and nature through the building of empires (Plumwood, Warren, Uddin, Rafid, Rahmatullah, Bartosch, Huggan, Tiffin, Gaard, Gruber). Just as Sycorax and her metaphorical family critique the dualism of culture over nature, they critique the either/or situation between these characters that resist Prospero. Instead of Caliban being considered the only character who portrays resistance, the partnership between these three characters is brought forth as Sycorax, Caliban, and Ariel look to one another for strength. Clearly then, as Cesaire employs language, symbols and extended metaphors that portray Sycorax's presence and protection as a mother, he challenges the backgrounding of those who nurture and sustain life. Through these literary elements he also affirms a united front of resistance, interconnected strength, and an intentional alliance with nature. These choices challenge and critique colonial and patriarchal dualisms that place male over female, culture over nature, self over other, and ultimately the dominant colonizer over subordinate colonized.

To reiterate, this evidence suggests that strategies of colonial and patriarchal exploitation of humans and nature are brought forth through her absence in Shakespeare's work while these tactics and dualisms are challenged and therefore critiqued through her presence in Cesaire's work. After analyzing and comparing the allegorical nature of the character, Sycorax, from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Cesaire's *A Tempest* through a postcolonial ecofeminist lens, the examination indicates that Cesaire's Sycorax is boosted, representing powerful anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal resistance as well as motherhood, history, culture, and nature. Shakespeare's

Sycorax is absent and backgrounded representing a state of radical subalternity. She is racialized and negatively conflated with nature in order to be commodified. Through Prospero's master narration along with the constant devaluation and exclusion of Sycorax, her character is tainted in the views of Caliban and Ariel, allowing for an environment of toxic masculinity and a hierarchical dualism of strong over the weak or protector over the protected. Prospero paints a picture of Sycorax as a bad mother whose magic is witchcraft used for evil purposes, while Prospero's is an enlightened magic that represents reason, benevolence, and intellectual growth mirroring patriarchal male-gender bias and male-defined roles for women. In these ways, Shakespeare neglects to critique the hierarchical dualisms constructed in colonial and patriarchal rule in order to dominate others, and these dualisms are highlighted through the character Sycorax. Cesaire's Sycorax, on the other hand, lives on as she is present through the impact that she continues to make. Here she is foregrounded and recognized for her contributions as a revolutionary. Cesaire's radical revision of Sycorax allows for the reclamation of Caliban and Ariel's shared culture, history, and heritage. Her intentional positioning with nature challenges Prospero's exploitation of people and nature, representing the indigenizing and naturalizing response to the consumerism of colonialism. Prospero's colonial knowledge is unmasked, and she is positively portrayed as a powerful woman and protective mother. Her interconnected nature allows for a metaphorical family unit between herself, Caliban, and Ariel that presents as a united front for resistance. In these ways, through Sycorax, Cesaire critiques, the hierarchical systems that prioritize culture over nature, male over female, white over non-white, and self over other.

Simultaneously, Cesaire's Sycorax represents viable solutions for breaking down dualistic constructs through the deliberate alliance with nature and interconnection among

revolutionaries. This mirrors the postcolonial ecofeminist framework that makes connections visible through the commonalities and connections across differing fields that examine oppression. In so doing, Cesaire's Sycorax parallels the framework in the way that it aims to foreground and recognize the contributions of those who have been backgrounded, excluded, and exploited by reclaiming respect and identity as well as affirming resistance (Plumwood 60). Much of this critique reevaluates Shakespeare's works through a postcolonial ecofeminist lens that questions systems of power. In fact, this study's critical reevaluation of Shakespeare touches on real world debates and approaches to reexamining hegemonic power in Shakespeare's work. In March 2025, Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust announced its intention to "create a more inclusive museum experience" (Simpson par. 3). The recommendations for this project are to recognize that Shakespeare is not the greatest writer of all time but a "part of a community of equal and different writers and artists from around the world" (Simpson par. 13). By doing this, the Trust is attempting to draw attention to missed critiques and opportunities to reevaluate Shakespeare's plays in relation to British colonial propaganda. What this study also aims to do, through a postcolonial ecofeminist rereading of Sycorax, is fulfill the very intention and motivation of this project's pivot from the propagation of colonialism to the contestation of it. Drawing attention to the colonial and patriarchal dualisms regarding the character, Sycorax, reifies the way in which Shakespeare's work has been weaponized in order to control the power imbalance between the literary centre/periphery model (Bartosch 12). This study aims to reclaim the ghost of Sycorax and her significance as representation of the naturalizing and indigenizing response to the machinations of the colonizer through a postcolonial ecofeminist rereading of *A Tempest.* Thus, these reclamations recognize the impact of Aime Cesaire in literary studies and

his artistic resistance to colonialism, while also acknowledging the importance of Shakespeare but also demanding accountability for the systemic inequality in his work.

Works Cited

Agecroft Hall. "Acting Companies and Their Patrons." *Agecroft Hall & Gardens*, 19 May 2021, https://www.agecrofthall.org/single-post/acting-companies-and-their-patrons.

Bartosch, Roman. *EnvironMentality: Ecocriticism and the Event of Postcolonial Fiction*. Editions Rodopi, 2013.

Blystone, Brittney. "Extremes of Gender and Power: Sycorax's Absence in Shakespeare's The Tempest." *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference*, vol. 5, no. 6, 2012, pp. 73-83. *IdeaExchange@UAkron*, http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/spovsc/vol5/iss2012/6.

Bouzo, Xiana Vazquez. "Vindicating Sycorax's Anti-colonial Voice. An Overview of Some Postcolonial Re-Writings from The Tempest to Indigo." *Lectora*, vol. 22, 2016, pp. 185-198. *ResearchGate*, DOI:10.1344/Lectora2016.22.15.

Busia, Abena P.A. "Silencing Sycorax: On African Colonial Discourse and the Unvoiced Female." *Cultural Critique*, vol. 14, 1990, pp. 81-104. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1354293.

Césaire, Aimé. *A Tempest: Based on Shakespeare's The Tempest, Adaptation for a Black Theatre*. Translated by Richard Miller, TCG Translations, 2002.

Cliff, Michelle. "Caliban's Daughter: The Tempest and the Teapot." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1991, pp. 36-51. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3346845.

Crispin, Philip. "A Tempestuous Translation: Aime Cesaire's Une Tempete." *Itineraires*, vol. 2010, no. 4, 2010, pp. 137-161. *Open Edition Journals*, https://doi.org/10.4000/itineraires.1746.

Dayan, Joan. “Playing Caliban: Cesaire's Tempest.” *Arizona Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 4, 1992, pp. 125-145. *Project Muse*, 10.1353/arq.1992.0020.

Evoy, Cecilia. “A Tempest by Aime Cesaire.” *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Global Shakespeare*, 2022. *Springer Nature Link*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99378-2_154-1.

Gaard, Greta. “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism.” *Feminist Formation*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2011. *Project Muse*, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/448630.

Gruber, Elizabeth. “Back to the Future: Ecological Crisis and Recalcitrant Memory in The Tempest and Tar Baby.” *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2010, pp. 223-241. *Taylor & Francis Online*, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10436928.2010.523657.

Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, 2015.

Joseph, May. “Sycorax Mythology.” *Black Theatre: Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora*, Temple University Press, 2002, pp. 209-226. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bs6rh.16.

JYFMuseums. “History of Jamestown.” *Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation*, https://www.jyfmuseums.org/visit/jamestown-settlement/history-of-jamestown.

Khoury, Joseph. “The Tempest Revisited in Martinique: Aime Cesaire's Shakespeare.” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2006, pp. 22-37. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40339571.

Lara, Irene. “Beyond Caliban's Curses: The Decolonial Feminist Literacy of Sycorax.” *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2007, pp. 79-98. *BridgeWater State University*, https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1289&context=jiws.

Mehta, Brinda. “The Voice of Sycorax: Diasporic Maternal Thought.” *Notions of Identity, Diaspora, and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. *Springer Nature Link*, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230100503_6.

Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Taylor & Francis, 2002.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

Shields, Tanya L. “Signs of Sycorax.” *Bodies and Bones: Feminist Rehearsal and Imagining Caribbean Belonging*, University of Virginia Press, 2014, pp. 114-144. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wrq2b.8.

Simpson, Craig. “Shakespeare's birthplace to be decolonised after 'white supremacy' fears.” *The Telegraph*, 16 March 2025, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/03/16/william-shakespeare-birthplace-trust-white-supremacy-empire/.

Singh, Jyotsna G. *Caliban Versus Miranda: Race and Gender Conflicts in Postcolonial Rewritings of The Tempest*. PDF of Chapter. *Academia*, https://www.academia.edu/38062486/Caliban_versus_Miranda_Race_and_Gender_Conflicts_in_Postcolonial_Rewritings_of_The_Tempest.

“The Guatemalan Symbol of Freedom.” *Trama Textiles*, 08 April 2021, https://tramatextiles.org/blogs/trama-blog/symbol_of_guatemala_the_resplendent_quetzal#:~:text=The%20Quetzal%20or%2C%20as%20also,birds%20as%20a%20spiritual%20guide.

"The Hummingbird Symbol--Native Art Symbols and Meanings." *Cedar Hill Long House Native Art Prints*, https://cedarhilllonghouse.ca/the-hummingbird-symbol-native-art-symbols-and-meanings/#:~:text=To%20the%20Indigenous%20cultures%20of,mid%20flight%20with%20flowers%20nearby.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-friendly Guide*. Routledge, 2015.

Uddin, Mohammad Jashim, et al. "Ecofeminist Critique of Patriarchal Power: A Warrenian Exploration of Ecological and Social Domination in Shakespeare's The Tempest." *International Journal of Scientific Research in Multidisciplinary Studies*, vol. 10, no. 11, 2024, pp. 57-74.

Wildspeak. "Lyrebird." *Wildspeak*, https://www.wildspeak.com/animalenergies/lyrebird.html.

Works Consulted

Afzal, Alia. “Ecocritical Post-Colonial Studies on Humans, Lands, and Animals.” *University of Northern Iowa*, 2017, pp. 1-96. *Uni ScholarWorks*, https://scholarworks.uni.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1406&context=etd.

Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Routledge, 2001.

Casanova, Pascale. *Republic of Letters*. Harvard University Press, 2004.

Currell, Matthew J., and Brian G. Katz. “The Importance of Springs and Why Humanity Needs to Protect Them.” *Eos.org*, 30 November 2022, https://eos.org/editors-vox/the-importance-of-springs-and-why-humanity-needs-to-protect-them. Accessed 6 December 2024.

Merriam-Webster: America's Most Trusted Dictionary, http://merriam-webster.com.

Mowat, Barbara A. “Prospero's Book.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1-33. *Project Muse*, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/31620.

Sanchez, Melissa E. “Seduction and Service in "The Tempest."” *Studies in Philology*, vol. 105, no. 1, 2008, pp. 50-82. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20464307.

Shapiro, Felix. *Race, Gender and the French Caribbean Allegory: Aime Cesaire's A Tempest and Maryse Conde's I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. A thesis presented for the B.A. degree With Honors in The Department of English. 19 March 2012, University of Michigan, Michigan. *deepblue.lib.umich.edu*, https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/91831/felixs.pdf;sequence=1.

Taylor, David Francis. “The Disenchanted Island: A Political History of "The Tempest", 1760-1830.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 4, 2012, pp. 487-517. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41819766.

"The Caribbean." *The Routledge Companion To Postcolonial Studies*, edited by Melanie Otto, Taylor & Francis, 2007.