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Polite Shakespeare Only: Teaching Chican@ Texts and *The Tempest* in Texas after the Attempts to Dismantle Mexican American Studies Programs

Britt Haraway

*This pedagogical essay confronts the efforts in Texas to dismantle or defund Mexican American Studies programs, and it argues against current political education platforms that call for a decreased emphasis of critical thinking. This article instead calls for an increased critical engagement with history using texts such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (recently removed from Arizona's MAS programs) in conjunction with Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Alurista's *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. Post-colonial and feminist readings of these texts, along with an analysis of the current efforts to dismantle MAS programs, provide a model for an increased critical discourse. The article makes the assumption that the predominantly Mexican American student body at the University of Texas–Pan American can not only benefit from a critical discourse with history, but can also benefit from reading literature that is culturally affirming. Even teachers (like the author of this essay) without a scholarly background in Chican@ studies should find creative ways to bring Mexican American history and literature into their classrooms.*

In William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* there is the image of a powerful man, Prospero, a wizard king of a newly 'discovered island,' who gains a great chunk of his power from his books.

Audiences can almost see his books in his cave home, all stacked together in the corner of his male library, gleaming with a kind of energy. We imagine him clutching them all at once, telling Caliban, his slave and an indigenous resident of the island, "These are MINE."

It makes sense to Prospero (and us) that one who possesses the record of knowledge can shape the course of knowledge to come. Near the end of the play, Caliban attempts to seize the books and Prospero's wizardly robes and hold them for himself. He seeks unfortunate allies in his attempt, which may speak to his desperation and the fog of living so long with racism. Caliban expects a magical transformation to happen with this unfettered access to the books (to history), and that perhaps, once he can see a thing directly, he will emerge from this cave and will not be a slave.

In an essay on colonialism and *The Tempest*, Moslem Zolfagharkhani discusses how a conquering force seeks the re-education of a conquered people as a central, important effort in cementing a long-term reign:

In *The Tempest*, Prospero's magical power and knowledge can be associated to Foucauldian reading of history. By accepting Prospero's connection of knowledge and power, we can recognize the way in which Prospero's book learned magic is necessary to his rule on the island. His island does become a cell, laboratory, and classroom, where the isolation and manipulation of characters allows authority to "carry out experiments," "alter behavior," "train" and "correct" individuals. (13)

It is the fear of many educators that heavy-handed policy makers in Arizona and Texas are attempting to manipulate and isolate student bodies through book removals and by dismantling ethnic studies programs. As such it is imperative teachers and colleges insist on a more critical, open engagement with history and literature, even as Texas politicians seek to close off questions and inquiry that will manipulate and overly 'correct' the thinking of our students.

On the Attempt by Texas Legislators of Defunding and Banning Ethnic Studies

We have legislators in Texas who are attempting to control the "gleaming" books and information that reaches our students. They appear afraid of students' critical engagement with history. While no one in Texas has successfully removed Shakespeare or other texts from classrooms, they continue to try. We have seen the affects effects of this top-down legislation in Tucson, Arizona where the school board, its financing threatened by the state government, has removed Chican@ literature, history books, *The Tempest*, and other elements of the Chican@ studies program from district classrooms.¹ In the face of this, I would like to discuss how *The Tempest* can be used to engage in this current policy debate and how it can be used for the positive development of critical thinking skills, introducing important inquiries about colonialism and its lasting effects. The community, including the academic community, must continue to fight for intellectual freedoms, which are a core part of our democratic process and

part of the duties our “forefathers” understood to be a part of an informed citizenry. Rather than ban these programs, educators of many disciplines, not just instructors of Mexican American studies, should work into their curriculum a sustained analysis of U.S. history and colonialism. The irony is that the attack on Mexican American Studies justifies the study itself as a necessary discipline.

I teach freshman composition, creative writing, and British literature, and in all these classes, I teach Chicana literature and the inquiries found in its pages. It’s my hope that more of my colleagues, even those who, like me, do not teach in our Mexican American Studies program at the University of Texas–Pan American (UTPA), will find creative ways to critically engage our students using Chicana literature and themes. Not only will this literature satisfy student learning outcomes that promote critical thinking, but it will also increase student proximity to the literature and may, ultimately, lead to cultural affirmation.

A Review of the Schemes to Ban Ethnic Studies in Texas

Texas legislators like Dan Patrick attempted to import Arizona’s banning of ethnic studies programs in Texas with his bill SB 1128² (Planas). As happened in Arizona, the bill threatened academic freedom and critical inquiry and may have led to similar book removals or revisionist histories. Fortunately, it appears that that Dan Patrick’s bill has been defeated³ (Lopez). SB 1128 was not the first attempt of the Texas legislatures to change curriculum, as many know. In an earlier attempt, the Texas Board almost succeeded in their plan to remove a great deal of the contributions to U.S. society made by César Chávez⁴ (Stutz).

This attempt to banish ethnic studies or to separate them from “legitimate” inquiries is a community problem, a political problem that comes down to voters in local battles that are significant nationally. Valerie Strauss reported on the platform of the Texas Republican Party, which made their vision of history and education clear:

Knowledge-Based Education – We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (values clarification), critical thinking skills and similar programs that are simply a relabeling of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (mastery learning) which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student’s fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.⁵

This thinking runs counter to nearly every pedagogical discussion we have had at UTPA in both composition and literature committees. In fact, what we see is the opposite: faculty members trying to come up with innovative ways to further develop critical thinking and writing skills, a top priority of the Student Learning Outcomes required on syllabi in UTPA’s English department. At a time when many educators are seeking *more* critical discourse, the approach championed by Texas Republicans, who currently hold all branches of state government, specifically “opposes” critical thinking.

At UTPA, a group of faculty went even further in the pursuit of a critical engagement with history. Some were in favor of a new core requirement which had students take one course exploring diverse histories, experiences and texts. This requirement would have required one course in Mexican American studies or gender and women studies or environmental studies, or Latin American studies, or African American studies. The list was long, giving students many options. One requirement of the courses is that they have a high-level critical engagement with the dominant discourses in the U.S., and no doubt explore fixed beliefs and the fixed systems. The intent of such courses is not the “behavior modification” feared in the platform above, but rather to present students with alternative histories and discourses and create discussions and visions of American history that are more full and democratic.

As a general body, the faculty did not implement this requirement. Faculty had many different reasons for supporting or voting down the requirement, and without getting into the

particulars, I do want to discuss one attitude that was brought up in a department meeting. A colleague in English said that UTPA students may not need the courses, because our student body, being predominantly Mexican American, already knew about Mexican American history and culture.

This comment assumes that, by virtue of their ethnicity and place of birth, the students would automatically have access to Mexican American literature and culture, and have already covered some post-colonial perspectives in their high school work. I have not found this to be true. When I teach Tino Villanueva poems about *Giant*, a 1956 film by George Stevens in Composition and Creative Writing, I rarely find that students have read Villanueva's poetry, and many appear quite shocked as they witness Texas segregation through Villanueva's eyes. I use the textbook *Hecho en Tejas: An Anthology of Texas-Mexican Literature*, which has a couple of his poems. In "Scene from the Movie GIANT", the speaker talks of feeling "local looking" and being a "flickering light" "locked in the backseat row" after witnessing Sarge's racism (196). Turner Classic Movies has posted a clip from *Giant* of the fight between Sarge and Benedict that destabilizes Villanueva's identity.⁶ It's easy to closely read the film as well as the poem and examine how their languages interact. The class usually deals first with the movie's critique of 1950s segregation, getting a full experience of Jim Crow Laws as we see an example play out. On the screen, Bick Benedict finally adjusts his fixed beliefs of racial superiority and his fear of miscegenation. Sarge asks rudely if little Jordy, whom Sarge calls "that little papoose" because of his brown skin, is his grandson. Benedict, Rock Hudson's character, says, "Yeah . . . come to think of it. He is."

This critique might seem commonplace to some scholars, but many students have not dealt with a sustained critique in a classroom environment of the civil rights era and its manifestations in Mexican American communities in Texas, and the class, aided by Villanueva's

human, vulnerable experience of it, usually has an important exploration of racism using the film and the poem. Although, once a student did not agree that the movie was in fact *against* Sarge's segregation (and the larger Texas Anglo community that Benedict's unstated fears represent). My colleague may be right that some students are aware of this history, but there are many who seem a bit stunned and read this particular text and see this vulnerable reaction to it. Moreover, some students (and this may have happened to the student referenced above) fall into a trap of being so proud of America that they lose their critical distance, producing a stubbornness of thought that will not serve them well. This one-track thinking seems to be the goal of the Texas Republican Party's platform on education; it should not, however, be a guiding principle for our teachers.

The other layer opened up by Villanueva's poetic expression is the effect of representation. We do not merely review history in the course, but witness how texts influence identity, and how, in post-colonial terms, a subject experiences their image and definition by a dominant discourse that posits them as "the other." At this point in the course it is helpful to introduce Edward Said and discuss how a dominant culture (Benedict's Texas or the larger U.S. culture as filtered through a major Hollywood film) might find it culturally expedient to represent the Mexican American as weak, quiet, and meek. In her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa discusses this convenient narrative arc in American experience and its profound effect: "[i]n the Gringo World, the Chicano suffers from excessive humility and self-effacement, shame of self and self-deprecation," which, she suggests could be the cause of machismo and "a deep sense of racial shame" (105). The effect on Villanueva is different than the one Anzaldúa describes here, but it is important to see and recognize how a dominant discourse can influence identity.

Even when critiquing racism in 1950s America, *Giant* maintains a kind paternalistic stance. Villanueva is keenly aware that Juana and the Mexican American patrons have a feeble kind of body language as they are discussed and ultimately need to be saved by the Big White Guy. In other poems from *Scenes from the Movie GIANT* not in *Hecho en Tejas*, Villanueva looks at himself as seen by the film and reports, “I carry nothing to the fight” (36). Rafael Pérez-Torres sees this kind of reflection as key to Villanueva’s book, exploring “the voicelessness imposed on the mestizo by the film” which serves ultimately to “subordinate mestiza/o figures” by representing them with a “lack of agency” (53).

I find this examination important for my students. I know that I need to learn more and am by no means an expert in Chican@ studies, but I have an assumption that must be shared by the teachers in Tucson’s La Raza Studies program that increasing the students’ proximity to the places, cultures, languages, and themes in a literature or writing class will increase the students’ involvement in their own learning.⁷ The high graduation rates coming out of these Arizona programs validate these educators’ choices and planning. A study by the University of Arizona about the Tucson Program reports the following: “Students who took MAS courses were between 51 percent more likely to graduate from high school than non-MAS students (2009) and 108 percent more likely to graduate (2008)” (Cabrera et al. 6). By this measure, the program is (was) an amazing success.

Likewise, at UTPA we also need to boost our retention rates for sophomores and freshmen, the students I teach as a lecturer. It is my hope that teaching Chican@ literature in all my writing classes, and even including some Gloria Anzaldúa into the Introduction to British Literature course is a way to increase student retention.

Polite Shakespeare Only!

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was on the list of those texts removed from Arizona curriculum when Tucson dismantled the MAS programs. My sense of the media coverage of Arizona's policy makes me believe the removal of Shakespeare got more national and global attention and reaction than the removal of Sandra Cisneros or contemporary Chicana poets like Lorna Dee Cervantes, which is a bit strange. ⁸

Perhaps the interesting thing about Shakespeare is that he traditionally has had a secure place in the canon, and one would think that even those who believe in maintaining "fixed beliefs" and "parental authority" would argue to keep Shakespeare in the classroom. Therefore, maybe it got more attention because its removal provided the media with the most immediate irony of professing democratic principles while creating policies that enforce a heavily state-controlled discourse. Incredibly, taking *The Tempest* out of the class increases its immediacy and reminds us how literature can be powerful (even scary), complex (the opposite of fixed), and that Prospero's island is not simply imaginary, or a once-upon-a-time place, but somewhere tangible.

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* takes as one of its fundamental questions the idea of "country founding" and of colonialism. After all, Prospero lost his dukedom in a corrupt coup. Obviously there is an interesting mirror and relationship developing when Prospero talks about how difficult it is to lose one's country while simultaneously taking Caliban's. Caliban, the indigenous resident of the island, asserts, "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,/ Which thou takest from me" (I.ii.332-33). In the simplicity of its terms, his argument is effective in the Occam's razor sense; he doesn't need to get complicated to stake his claim. Whereas Prospero has to invoke God's plan, and the "well this pain and slavery is really for his own spiritual and intellectual good" kind of logic. And, it is likely that Shakespeare himself may have shared some

of the prevailing assumptions of his time and place. Obviously, though, Shakespeare is doing ‘dangerous’ critical thinking as well, challenging some of the fixed beliefs of his time. Deborah Willis, discussing how much of Prospero is Shakespeare, writes

[t]hough Prospero dominates this play in a way few Shakespearean characters do in others, the play cannot be said to endorse fully Prospero’s most blatant expressions of colonial ideology. It invites us to look at Prospero from other angles, Caliban’s especially, and draws our attention to questionable aspects of Prospero’s conduct and beliefs in ways that seem to be a function of the play’s design. (279)

Despite a happy ending, when Prospero forgives and frees his slave, we must have a critique of Prospero—his choices and demeanor must be weighed, his use of power, questioned. Even this freeing at the end has the feeling of Washington ‘freeing’ his slaves in his will but only after his wife’s death, when the generosity was much more economically convenient. By removing the play from classrooms, some Tucson board administrators stripped the students of the opportunity to make this necessary inquiry. In his essay on *The Tempest*, James Fleming believes Prospero is guilty of being “monologic” (455) and, likewise, it feels as if legislators prefer this kind of one-sided account rather than dealing head-on with both claims upon the island.

Looking back at my class, I wish I had gone to the University of Michigan’s website and read Alurista’s *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, which in part reads,

[w]e are free and sovereign to determine those tasks which are justly called for by our house, the sweat of our brows and by our hearts. Aztlán belongs to those that plant the seeds, water the land and gather the crops, and not to foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent.

The lived experience with and of the land is a clear argument. It must be assumed that the instructors in Arizona could bring these two perspectives to students, allowing a couple of things to happen. Arizona students, whose government attempted to increase the powers of the police to determine citizenship with SB 1070, will be able to question the authenticity and intention of this policy. It stands to reason that one's lived experience in a country, which dates back in history, is at least on par with this new legislation or divine plans and interventions in the Manifest Destiny philosophy that helped determine many of the U.S. government policies regarding citizenship. Secondly, Alurista's labeling of the continent as "Bronze" uses a language that runs counter to representations of Mexican Americans as inferior or weak. It has the snap of Marcus Garvey's "Black is Beautiful," speech — an entire reconfiguration of history by reconstituting the negative representation of the other. Had Villanueva encountered "Bronze" representations of his community in big Hollywood, there may have never been *Scenes from the Movie GIANT*. Villanueva could have written about Washington's cherry tree and there would not be a need for Chican@ studies in my British Literature class and American history would be polite⁹.

In *The Tempest*, Caliban's demand for ownership is inspired partly by his reaction against Prospero's threats of violent repression enforcing his discourse. We hear these threats from Prospero's own mouth:

For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps,
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up; urchins
Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,
All exercise on thee; thou shalt be pinch'd
As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging
Than bees that made 'em. (I.ii.325-330)

There is a kind of Quentin Tarantino violence to this poetry. Modern readers can't (and shouldn't) read these threats without thinking of the violence and slavery that accompanied colonial expansion in the Americas.

In *Prospero*, Shakespeare wrote a bully, a man out to establish hegemony in this "New World." Consider his treatment of Ariel, the other indigenous resident, a magical sprite. With a weary voice, Ariel asks, "Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,/ Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,/ Which is not yet perform'd me" (I.ii.242-44). Prospero responds to Ariel's legitimate desire to be properly rewarded for labor with the following threats: "If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till/ Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters" (I.ii.294-46). The abusive language Prospero uses is intentionally intense and Shakespeare acknowledges that Prospero's source of power is his ability to exact violence and to further cement a master/slave relationship through his use of language. Again this demeanor is part of the fabric of the play. To teach the play is to deal with this language. The only way to avoid confronting the abusive demeanor of "masters" in the master-slave relationship so common to colonial experience is to remove the play.

Some Arizona legislators defended the book removals with the suggestion that students could still access these books in the library. However, to do the kind of sustained analysis of the texts and connect them to each other, students need the formal structures of class, group discussions, and experienced instructors (and even tests and quizzes). As a student, I needed these things, never once checking out a Shakespeare play during my free time. Likewise, I was never assigned a work of Chicana literature in my high school classes, undergraduate classes at the University of Tennessee or my graduate classes at the University of Southern Mississippi.

As a teacher in South Texas, I find it important to highlight the language issues brought out by *The Tempest*. Arizona teachers may feel similarly. Prospero and his daughter Miranda brag about teaching Caliban their language and theology. But Caliban finds this brag flat, and the reader engages this debate. Caliban says the following: “You taught me language; and my profit on’t/ Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/ For learning me your language!” (I.ii.363-365).

Certainly the loss of one’s native language is a part of colonialism in the Americas and elsewhere, and these language issues have an important contemporary history that South Texas students can explore and deconstruct. In this way, *The Tempest* is about Texas, participating in the experience of post-colonial writers and communities to identify with this play. In class, after a Wikipedia search, I showed my students how more contemporary writers such as Aimee Cesaire and Roberto Fernández Retamer placed *The Tempest* plot in Haiti and Cuba respectively.

Why could the acquisition of a new language be dangerous to Caliban? Consider the following quote from Prospero: “Abhorred slave, / Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/ Being capable of all ill!” (I.ii.352-54). At other moments, he labels Caliban “savage” (I.ii.355) and all of his ancestors “thy vile race” (I.ii.358). The strongest example of this language comes after Prospero recalls how Caliban tried to “Violate the honor of my child” (I.ii.345). Because of this rape attempt and Caliban’s unwanted attention, Prospero believes Caliban has earned his slavery (Fleming 454).

First, it’s important to discuss in class that, in Caliban, Shakespeare creates a complex character who has volition and makes choices. Our class critiqued his behavior, because he seems to believe that as a man he has some claim to ownership of Miranda’s body, despite her wishes. Still, many of Caliban’s poorest judgments come amidst a culture that has always

labeled him inferior, and the corruption that racism brings to his sense of identity may create a kind of fog where pride and self-assurance is, at best, tenuous. If Caliban asks, ‘could the dominant culture (that of Miranda and Prospero) ever find me to be a legitimate suitor for Miranda?’ If his answer is no, and it must have been, he has no legitimate channel for his desire to have a family.

Additionally, there is something of fear and sensationalism in Prospero’s reaction to Caliban, who says that if he had not been stopped Caliban would have, “peopled else/ this isle with Calibans” (I.ii.350). While it is clear Caliban did not pursue Miranda in a way that gave her agency, the shock and disgust at his desire seems coated with fear of miscegenation. Faced with the man from a “vile race,” Prospero is horrified and wants to protect his daughter’s “honour.” By contrast, with Ferdinand, Miranda’s white suitor and fellow aristocrat, Prospero practically arranges their marriage. We hear his fear clearly at a moment when he is not in a rage but talking more casually with Ariel about Caliban’s birth: “Then was this island—/ Save for the son that she did litter here,/ A freckled whelp hag-born—not honour’d with/ A human shape” (I.ii.279-82). Caliban’s gender will be discussed later, but among the other word choices, “litter” is problematic because it strips Caliban of his humanity, equating him with other lower animals, a key representation throughout American slavery. Certainly this attitude, which is expressed about a moment (that of his very birth) outside Caliban’s attempted crime, makes the possibility of Caliban and Miranda’s children abhorrent to Prospero.

The other problem my class discussed is that Prospero labels a whole people “thy vile race” based on the one action of one individual. He calls Caliban’s mother a “hag” (I.ii.268). The cramps, physical violence and demarcation of land are all part of the colonial process, but equally important (and perhaps more lasting) are the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) of the English (Italian?) language and the re-education/re-spiritualization of Caliban.

From Caliban we can see how the new language could be a plague, a disease that could corrupt his very identity. In fact, in *The Tempest* Prospero justifies and seems to maintain the enslavement of Caliban with his command of language:

Though thou didst learn, had that in't which
good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison. (I.ii.359-62)

It is important for students to learn how language can affect identity and pride. There is an important dialogue to have about contemporary attitudes towards the Spanish language and other languages that were or could be lost in colonial processes.

Again, bringing in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, we connect Caliban's situation to Anzaldúa, who labels the taking of language "Linguistic Terrorism," and says that for her "linguistic identity is twin skin to ethnic identity" (81). She worries further that those living with the effects of colonialism will suffer a cycle of shame, "pena," internalized by a subject from the dominant culture delivered through Ideological State Apparatuses like language. In class we looked at the experience that she reported of being at grammar school in the Rio Grande Valley and being told by a teacher "If you want to be American, speak American. If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong" (76). These moments of language are keenly felt by both Anzaldúa and Caliban, and carry with it the risk of permanently harming their identities, unless they can find a way to resist this prevailing mentality.

It wasn't difficult in class to connect these language issues to contemporary government policies such as SB 1070 in Arizona, where police might have been trained to hear the Spanish language as an indicator of crime. A colleague in the MAS program at UTPA also pointed me

to CBS News video of the 1968 Edcouch/Elsa Walkout, where students protested that they were not allowed to speak Spanish on school grounds and were punished if they ‘got caught.’¹⁰ Only ten miles away from the campus, these towns ground Caliban’s and Anzaldúa’s resistance in UTPA’s local history. In the next conversation in class we compare the 1968 realities to their own experiences. Most of our students went to high school in the Valley, and they have relevant experiences. Some tell stories about their parents, who encountered a similar punishment for using the Spanish language. Conversely, there are students who grew up attending the many bilingual programs here, programs that seemed to be called for in Anzaldúa’s essay and the more open attitude from administrators demanded by the Edcouch/Elsa students. Rather than intense desires for a bloody revolution (the stated concern out of several legislators like John Huppenthal and Michael Hicks¹¹), my students observe how Anzaldúa and the Elsa/Edcouch students participated in the democratic process and were able to positively affect their communities and American history.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa analyzes another problem with the language of the dominant culture that sets up binary hierarchies that dictate the culture’s understanding of gender. In Prospero’s quote above, you may have recognized the use of patriarchy to justify his superiority and ownership of the island over Sycorax, Caliban’s mother, who gets the brunt of his language. In class, we asked questions about the representation of women in these texts and feminism. Norma Alarcón discusses feminism in the anthology *This Bridge Called my Back*: “Feminism is a way of saying that nothing in patriarchy truly reflects women unless we accept distortions – mythic and historical” (qtd. in Nelson 3). We wonder, of course, if Prospero’s historical account of Sycorax can possibly be fair. Prospero’s western thinking tends toward binary thought, which sets up a system that privileges the white (male) magic and denigrates the female (black) magic. My class asks: “what is the truth . . . can we really trust the reports

from Prospero? Can men, especially of an old school, Eurocentric bent, ever be trusted to fairly represent powerful women?” That Sycorax is not European is a second reason to question Prospero’s representation, causing the class to consider how the indigenous modes of spirituality were typically represented and understood by western art. It’s important at this point to bring in some of the image reclamation projects that exist in Anzaldúa and other places. George Hartley reads this impulse even in Anzaldúa’s children’s book *La Prieta*:

A Christianized synthesis of indigenous healing practices from Arab Africa, Europe, and the Americas, curanderismo made possible a mode of practical consciousness that offered indigenous peoples (including mestizos) a concrete yet discreet means of resisting the colonizing impact of the Spanish Conquest and with it the initial moment of modernity-coloniality. (137)

One wonders whether Caliban might have one day been able to reconstitute the images and practices of his mother and understand this as a power outside of Prospero’s control. Such thinking may provide him a more productive form for expressing his resistance. There must be a way to read Sycorax’s magic outside of Prospero’s western discourse. Of course, we never really meet Sycorax in the play, but we do see several moments of Caliban having a particular spiritual connection to and knowledge of the island. This could be labeled “pagan” by Prospero, Caliban’s knowing where to eat, get water and how to read the land, but the reader can and should feel plenty of distance in order to read Prospero’s label critically. Prospero is intensely motivated to establish a hierarchy in which his magic is good, hers evil, a convenient binary.

James Fleming puts Prospero’s labels of convenience this way: “Prospero constructs his interlocutors in accordance to his own interests: Ariel is a ‘brave spirit’ when cooperative (1.2.206), a ‘malignant thing’ when not” (454). After all, we could have had the image of nice magic, the Oz blonde lady descending in a pink bubble, but, not surprisingly, we get the

WITCH/HAG comments from Prospero, because the representation is also affected by Sycorax's ethnicity. Possibly a white witch might get a different treatment. Anzaldúa reminds us in "Speaking in Tongues" that white feminism and feminism by people of color can have their differences. In a collective voice 'we' that speaks for women of color, she tries to understand "why we are dangerous beasts" subject to representations such as the one Prospero offers, writing

[w]e revoke, we erase your white male imprint. When you come knocking on our doors with your rubber stamps to brand our faces with DUMB, HYSTERICAL, PASSIVE PUTA, PERVERT, when you come with your branding irons to burn MY PROPERTY on our buttocks, we will vomit the guilt, self-denial and race-hatred you have force-fed into us right back into your mouth. We are done being cushions for your projected fears. We are tired of being your sacrificial lambs and scapegoats. (185)

Her reaction to Prospero-like characterizations of women of color provides students with a way to read the play outside Prospero's demonized representation, apart from the rubber-stamp HAG he puts on Sycorax.

Furthermore, women in the play are either praised for their innocence (Miranda) or discredited and punished with language for their power (Sycorax). A dichotomy of feminine representation is maintained throughout Shakespeare's play and never really challenged. It is not unlike the Virgen/Putta dichotomy Anzaldúa discusses in Chapter 2 of *Borderlands/La Frontera* (53). Many of the students said that they had also observed this dual representation of women, and Anzaldúa's analysis along with *The Tempest* provided a way to see and critique how gender is perceived in U.S. culture.

Not all college instructors believe that a student's ability to relate to the issues is an important factor in building a class, but the instructors in Tucson's MAS program seemed to feel it important in designing their courses, trying to find a way to pull in students who may have struggled in their previous schooling in their literature or history classes. School settings that do not consider the audience expectations and experiences are in danger of keeping the students away from the material, or at least not providing enough of an invitation into it. The "I'm going to teach them Dante's *Inferno* whether they like it or not" attitude from teachers may reinforce misguided beliefs in students that literature is not of them or for them.

No matter where the students stand politically at the end of our discussion of *The Tempest*, I find them knee-deep in a discussion of literature and history, which is a personal student-learning outcome of mine and most teachers I work with. There were even two students in my British literature class who wrote about how they approved of Arizona's management of history, an opinion they arrived at and argued for using the text. After all, it is not my goal to have behavior modification in my class, except to the extent it means they are encouraged to closely examine reality.

A second goal for me teaching predominantly Mexican American students is that reading these texts and these kinds of critiques may help combat the stigma that has built up in the course of U.S. history that Mexican American literature is not really literature. I believe this is a stigma that Anzaldúa encountered when she "had to 'argue' with one advisor after the other, semester after semester, before I was allowed to make Chicano literature an area of focus" at UT-Austin (*Borderlands* 82). Indeed, Anzaldúa says she felt "pure joy" at reading "poetry written in Tex-Mex" (82). Even this month, a MAS faculty member at UTPA was contacted by a graduate who is now an English teacher in a high school in the Valley. This former student referenced this affirmation process she felt after reading Sandra Cisneros' *The*

House on Mango Street in her letter. She is trying to find ninety copies of *The House on Mango Street* so she can teach the book to her freshmen. A Mexican American herself, she wrote that until she read this book early in college she did not know her people's stories could be literature.

If you listen to the teachers in Ari Palos' 2011 documentary *Precious Knowledge* about the ethnic studies programs in Arizona, you hear something similar: *not* a tone of bloody revolution, but one that emphasizes individual pride and self-respect. When I watched this film I felt humbled to see these instructors' practices were so much more innovative than some of the techniques I learned in graduate school. It certainly inspired me to try harder.

As such, it is important that Alurista labeled his community a bronze people and that the students read this identification. Similarly, Anzaldúa redefines and embraces *la mestiza* in ways that resist the traditional western binary arrangements that labeled her race, gender, and sexuality as inferior and/or with disgust. *The Tempest* highlights the stakes in this identification process. Not long after Prospero refreshes Caliban's status of slavery through his language and threats of violence, we see Caliban trade Prospero's slavery for Trinculo's and Stephano's, two working class whites who were also shipwrecked. All three, Caliban and Trinculo and Stephano, fall quite 'naturally' into a pattern that posits Stephano as the superior master and Caliban as the inferior servant. We may wonder whether at this point in Caliban's slavery, if he would be able to redefine or reconceive himself outside of the terms set for him by the dominant discourse. Access to Sycorax's knowledge and vocabulary may be what he needs, but all he is getting is disgust and hate from Miranda, Prospero, Stephano, and Trinculo.

It feels like several governing bodies in Texas and Arizona are trying to control important re-examinations, such as perhaps ones that could benefit Caliban. It's nice to know that they may have failed in Texas with SB 1128, although the future of these kinds of efforts is

not yet clear. Groups like NACCS, the Librotraficantes and others will no doubt continue the fight for academic freedom and a quality, open education system, but action and thoughtful pedagogy are also required of all instructors, especially in Hispanic-serving institutions, even us who are not Chican@ scholars.

The defensive and apologetic posture of those banning books makes it clear that many politicians haven't yet come to terms with our past. It was only February 19, 2013 that Mississippi, where I'm from, officially outlawed slavery. That's reflection at glacial speeds. We should all be praying that our teachers, like the ones in Arizona, can help speed up the reflection process in our students and communities. Perhaps, the politicians who are eliminating programs or advocating the elimination can enroll in a few ethnic studies courses where they might benefit from some badly needed critical thinking skills. As a nation, we should all be ready to add new faces onto Mount Rushmore of our "founding fathers": Alurista, Gloria Anzaldúa, and César Chávez among them. Because, we will never truly change as a country until we give our students access to their stories and their books and observe with the students how they shine.

Notes

1. Marci McMahon, a Chican@ literature scholar at UTPA, clarified this for me in an email.
2. "Latino activists are protesting a bill filed by Conservative state Sen. Dan Patrick that would disqualify ethnic studies courses from counting toward core history requirements. SB 1128 would instead require students to take general surveys of U.S. and Texas history in order to graduate." *huffingtonpost.com. The Huffington Post*, 18 Mar. 2013. Web.
3. Jose Antonio Lopéz of the *The Rio Grande Guardian* reports: "In formulating his Senate Bill 1128 to enact Arizona-style, anti-Mexican culture legislation on this side of the border, the Senator wants students to learn only post-1836 Texas (Anglo) history and not early Texas (Spanish Mexican) history. Because of opposition by groups of concerned Texas citizens, he has decided to temporarily halt the processing of his bill; at least for now." 9 March 2013.
4. As the *Dallas Morning News* reported on May 22, 2010, the Texas State Board of Education proposed an initial plan when it revised the history curriculum and text book choices. One plan was to follow the suggestion of a history "expert" who recommended Texas rewrite history books to include less César Chávez. It has to be assumed that the backlash against this revisionist curriculum change halted their intended wish, which I suppose is more "American" history that did not highlight Chávez's contributions to U.S. society.
5. A more humorous take on this ridiculous approach to education can be seen on the *Colbert Report* on Comedy Central during a segment called "On the Straight and Narrow-Minded." *colbertreport.com. Comedy Central*, 17 Jul. 2012. Web.
6. Turner Classic Movies has offered the public a clip which includes the fight scene referenced by Tino Villanueva in several poems. <<http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/240954/Giant-Movie-Clip-Sarge-s-Place.html>>
7. Their pedagogical choices are better explained in their own voices in *Precious Knowledge* from Dos Vatos films.
8. The full list of the expansive removals can be found at Cal State Northridge's website. <<http://library.csun.edu/Guides/arizonabannedbooks>>
9. Great line about the cherry tree in *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. NLCC Educational Media, 1996. Video.
10. Emmy Pérez, a poet and Mexican American Studies Faculty member at UTPA sent me this clip. CBS News, 29 Nov. 1968. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU-zQBvgn-k>
11. In removing the program, they also demonized the teachers who teach these very real themes and characterization. In fact, Jeff Biggers of the *Huffington Post* website makes the following report on the comments by a top Arizona Administrator: "As a state administrative judge deliberates on the fate of Tucson Unified School District's Ethnic Studies/Mexican American Studies Program (MAS), Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal compared the nationally acclaimed program to the Hitler Nazi Jugend paramilitary organization at a Pima County Republican luncheon last week, making the open comparison between the teaching of these texts and the teaching of Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler. This comparison is offensive and filled with hyperbole. Similar fear speech is made by board member Michael Hicks who suggested students will want 'bloodshed' after class is over." He made this comment on the April 2, 2012 episode of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. <<http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/mon-april-2-2012/tucson-s-mexican-american-studies-ban>>. Another of Huppenthal's claims that made its way into the Arizona dismantling of the MAS program and its literature is that they "promote overthrowing the U.S. government" (Herrerias).

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