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THE TEMPEST AND THE BRITISH IMPERIUM IN 1611*

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ABSTRACT. *Recent moves by New Historicists to evaluate theatrical material from the early modern period have been at the expense of what historians would recognize as acceptable use of historical context. One of the most glaring examples of the dangers of taking a play out of such a proper context has been* The Tempest. *The play has had a great deal of literary criticism devoted to it, attempting to fit it into comfortable twentieth-century clothing in regard to its commentary on empire, at the expense of what the play's depiction of imperialism meant for the year 1611 when it was written. The purpose of this paper will therefore be to suggest that the play does not actually call into question the Jacobean process of colonization across the Atlantic at all, and suggests that of more importance for its audience would have been the depiction of the hegemony of the island nation of Great Britain as recreated in 1603. Such a historical reconstruction is helped through contrasting Shakespeare's play with the Jonson, Chapman, and Marston collaboration,* Eastward Ho, *as well as with the anonymous* Masque of Flowers *and Chapman's* Memorable Masque. *These works will be used to illustrate just what colonialism might mean for the Jacobean audience when the Virginia project was invoked and suggest that an American tale* The Tempest *is not.*

> *The Tempest* is in a great many respects a New World play, but it is not a colonial play. It portrays no interest whatsoever in the abiding passion of so many disciples of Hakluyt and Ralegh – the expansion of the empire to the New World and the maintenance of rule there.[1]

There has been much confusion over commentary within *The Tempest* relating to imperial expansion and though Philip Edwards should not be a scapegoat for it, he does make a fundamental error when he asks that we follow the 'New World' theme in the play, as opposed to that of the colonial. By looking at the

* This paper is an abridged version of chapter 5 of my doctoral thesis, 'The idea of the British empire in the Jacobean public theatre, 1603–*c.* 1614' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1995). Earlier versions of this paper were read to Patrick Collinson, John Morrill, and Mark Goldie's Tudor and Stuart Graduate Seminar at Cambridge in October 1993, and at the British Association of American Scholars Conference at Selwyn College, Cambridge, in Easter 1994. I am grateful to all those present for their comments.

[1] Philip Edwards, *Threshold of a nation: a study in English and Irish drama* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 109. All references to *The Tempest* in this paper will be to the Oxford Shakespeare edition, ed. Stephen Orgel, unless otherwise stated.

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dual concerns of the New World as well as colonialism we will, however, be able to re-evaluate just what the play actually tells us in terms of 'imperial' discourse.[2]

The Tempest indeed contains passing reference to the New World: Ariel remarks that he has been sent by Prospero in the past to the 'still vex'd Bermoothes', and some commentators have traced the origin of the name 'Setebos', in the play the witch Sycorax's god, to the name given to the god of some Patagonian natives.[3] Trinculo also refers to how, when the public 'will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian' (II.ii.31–2), yet aside from being topical echoes there is no sense that this makes the play specifically set in or indeed about the Americas. John Gillies compares *The Tempest* with Chapman's *Memorable Masque*, both of which were performed at court in 1613, as if to indicate similarities between the two, though the use of this comparison in fact illustrates just how wide a gulf there actually is between the use of themes 'American' in the masque and in Shakespeare's play.[4] Indeed Gillies goes on to claim that 'The topographical parallels between *The Tempest* and Virginia are more than simply random. The play is surprisingly insistent on certain specific features of landscape (such as fens) that transcend the commonplace and, especially when the moral significance is taken into account, suggest a unique parallel with Virginia.' Not only has Gillies evidently failed to visit East Anglia in his search for Fenland, but he takes Antonio's sarcasm in the play literally.[5]

The actual storm itself in *The Tempest* has been accepted by many as deriving from a letter written by William Strachey telling of the tempest which hit the *Sea Venture* on Monday 24 July 1609. The storm, he wrote,

> at length did beat all light from heaven; which like an hell of darkness turned black upon us, so much the more fuller of horror, as in such cases horror and fear use to overrun the troubled and overmastered senses of all, which, taken up with amazement, the ears lay so sensible to the terrible cries and murmurs of the winds, and distraction of our company, as who was most armed and best prepared was not a little shaken.[6]

[2] The play was first performed in 1611. Leeds Barroll, correlating performances with instances of the theatre being closed due to plague, has posited that it was first performed in the spring or autumn of that year. See Leeds Barroll, *Politics, plague, and Shakespeare's theater* (Cornell, 1991), p. 203.

[3] Among them are Bruce Chatwin, in his *In Patagonia* (London, 1979), pp. 93–4. He cites how two Patagonian giants captured by Magellan according to Richard Eden's translation roared 'lyke bulls and cryed uppon their great devill Setebos to help them' (p. 93). On the subject of Ariel's abilities to fly around the world at Prospero's command, Jacqueline Latham has noted how, in James Stuart's *Daemonologie* (1597), Epistemon avows (p. 21) that spirits can carry news 'From anie parte of the worlde' and refers to the 'Faire banquet and daintie dishes, carryed in short space fra the farthest part of the worlde' (p. 22). In view of the banquet scene at III.iii the idea that Shakespeare was aware of the king's text bears some weight. See Jacqueline E. M. Latham, '*The Tempest* and King James's *Daemonologie*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 28 (1975), pp. 117–23.

[4] John Gillies, 'Shakespeare's Virginian masque', *ELH*, 53 (1986), p. 673. For a fuller examination of the masque in relation to *The Tempest* see Marshall, 'The idea of the British empire in the Jacobean public theatre, 1603–*c.* 1614', pp. 209–12.

[5] Gillies, 'Shakespeare's Virginian masque', p. 686. I am grateful to Professor Anne Barton for the latter point.

[6] Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus or Purchas his pilgrimes*, IV (London, 1625), p. 1735.

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This letter, however, was not published until 1625, when Purchas printed it in his *Hakluytus posthumus or Purchas his pilgrimes*.[7] This letter, according to two commentators, was written by Strachey 'to a certain "noble lady" and it was this letter, presumably known to Shakespeare, which is believed to have provided background which the dramatist used in *The Tempest*'.[8]

In making his film *Prospero's books* Peter Greenaway has made the issue not so much what Prospero would have regarded as his finest books, but what Shakespeare might have owned and read, an intriguing and pressing question. The dramatist might also have had recourse to the libraries of men like Southampton and Pembroke, as well as that of Ben Jonson, but if here we are being asked to accept that Shakespeare may have had access to private letters, I believe that some greater evidence, as yet unrevealed, must be offered as proof. Strachey's account seems to have been made to fill the source gap from a position of hindsight. It is simply not acceptable to claim of Strachey that, 'as a prominent scholar and sudden celebrity, he very likely talked with Shakespeare before *The Tempest*'s performance on the first of November [1611]', or that 'because kidnapped Indians were London showpieces in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Shakespeare may have seen, conceivably have talked with, real Indians'.[9]

Yet to return to the opening quotation, perhaps the greatest difficulty lies in the fact that Edwards's assumption that the play deals with the New World is tantamount to asking whether it deals with 'the expansion of the empire'. When Walter Cohen similarly claims that 'the play consists of more than a meditation on America, a dramatization of the Virginia pamphlets, or even a response to the whole body of travel literature available in early Jacobean England', his statement that Shakespeare 'ignored the major justification offered for the [Jamestown] settlement: religious conversion of the natives, economic gain and relief of England's overpopulation' fails to make the easier conclusion, that Shakespeare was not truly concerned with America at all.[10] Indeed, Professor Kermode notes that the play does not *need* America, and that, 'it is as well to be clear that there is nothing in *The Tempest* fundamental to its structure of ideas which could not have existed had America remained undiscovered'.[11]

[7] Under the title 'A true reportory of the wracke, and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Knight; upon, and from the Ilands of the Bermudas: his comming to Virginia, and the estate of that Colonie then, and after, under the government of the Lord La Warre, July 15. 1610. written by William Strachey, Esquire.' Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus*, IV, pp. 1734–58.

[8] William Strachey, *The historie of travell into Virginia Britania. By William Strachey, gent.*, ed. Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund (London, 1953), p. xxi.

[9] Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: a cultural history* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 40 and p. 44. *The Tempest* is not alone in the Shakespeare canon in referring to themes American: in *Henry VIII* the porter asks 'Or have we some strange Indian with the great tool come to Court, the women so besiege us?' (v.iii.32–4). Indian sun worship is referred to in *Alls Well That Ends Well* (1.iii.204–7) and in the First Quarto of *Othello* there is the reference to the 'base Indian [who] threw a pearl away Richer than his tribe' (v.ii.347).

[10] Walter Cohen, *Drama of a nation: public theatre in renaissance England and Spain* (Cornell, 1985), p. 399. The Charter of the Virginia Company, technically a Letter Patent, was issued on 10 April 1606.

[11] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode (London, 1954), p. xxv.

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Indeed lest we think ourselves concerned merely with a discussion which deals only with Britain and America it would be well to point out at this stage that the 'other' Jacobean imperial concern, Ireland, has also been connected with Prospero's island. Paul Brown has made the strongest claim for a point of reference, suggesting what he terms a 'general analogy between text and context' in the case of Ireland and Prospero's island. He goes on to claim that

> they are both marginally situated in semiperipheral areas (Ireland is geographically semiperipheral, its subjects both truant civilians and savages, as Prospero's island is ambiguously placed between American and European discourse). Both places are described as 'uninhabited' (that is, connoting the absence of civility) and yet are peopled with a strange admixture of the savage and masterless other, powerfully controlling and malcontently lapsed civil subjects.[12]

Donna Hamilton indicates that the Ulster project was included in Stow's *Abridgement* (1611) immediately after an update of the Virginia venture; this suggests the close nature of the imperial projects at play in the two regions, but the implication for *The Tempest* stops there. She goes on to make an analogy so complex it is best to replicate it in full:

> Ariel's contract with Prospero, whereby Ariel will work for him in return for freedom, is as analogous to the situation of the Irish undertaker seeking a fair schedule of rent payments as to the English parliament promising James supply in exchange for a proper settlement of their grievances. Caliban's compulsion to raise a rebellion is likewise as analogous to the native Irish inclined to call again for Tyrone as to the English Parliament refusing to grant supply when so few of their grievances had been addressed.[13]

For all his literary mastery, even Shakespeare could not have managed this level of structuring in his play.

Theatrical events located or concentrating on Ireland were in fact extremely rare in the early Jacobean period, with the most obvious, Jonson's *Irish Masque at Court* (1613) being notable only for the fact that it was performed twice, and that it unsurprisingly deals with the idea of the Irish giving way to English civility thanks to the presence of King James.[14]

Meredith Anne Skura notes further problems endemic to any discussion of *The Tempest* as a colonialist discourse: 'Any attempt to cast Prospero and Caliban as actors in the typical colonial narrative (in which a European exploits a previously free – indeed reigning – native of an unspoiled world) is

[12] Paul Brown, '"This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine": *The Tempest* and the discourse of colonialism', in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: new essays in cultural materialism* (Manchester, 1985), p. 57.

[13] Donna Hamilton, *Virgil and The Tempest* (Ohio, 1990), pp. 62–4. She earlier (p. 53) claims that 'Caliban images the displanted native of Virginia or Ireland, but also the English fear of being made "slaves" in their own land.'

[14] Ben Jonson, *The Irish Masque at Court*, in C. H. Herford and P. and E. Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson* (11 vols., Oxford, 1925–52), VII, pp. 397–405 and Commentary, X, pp. 541–4. The play was performed on 29 December 1613 and 3 January 1614. See also David Lindley, 'Embarrassing Ben: the masques for Frances Howard', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986), pp. 343–59.

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complicated by two other characters, Sycorax and Ariel.'[15] At this stage it would be apposite briefly to interject Mannoni's introduction to his discussion of the colonial theme in *The Tempest*: 'The dependence relationship requires at least two members, and where a colonial situation exists, if one of them is the native of the colony, the other is likely to be the colonizer, or rather the colonial, for he it is who offers us the more interesting subject of study.'[16] Mannoni's discussion falls apart before the end of his opening sentence: the 'native' Caliban he will go on to discuss is not a full native of the island. Skura continues 'she [Sycorax] is a reminder that Caliban is only half-native, that his claim to the island is less like the claim of the native American than the claim of the second generation Spaniard in the New World'. She then goes on to note that Ariel was on the island before the arrival of Sycorax, 'its true reigning lord, when Sycorax arrived and promptly enslaved him, thus herself becoming the first colonialist, the one who established the habits of dominance and erasure before Prospero ever set foot on the island'.[17]

Hers is an interesting challenge to scholarship all too happy to enslave Caliban as the epitome of the repressed native American or African in a discourse which does not seem to have been Shakespeare's intent. Indeed, the type of literary criticism which makes these claims is anachronistic in the extreme. Leslie Fiedler talks of Caliban's drunken song (II.ii.179–82) as 'the first American poem', of Caliban as 'the first drunken Indian in Western literature', and goes on to write that 'the whole history of imperialist America has been prophetically revealed to us in brief parable: from the initial act of expropriation through the Indian wars to the setting up of reservations, and from the beginnings of black slavery to the first revolts and evasions'.[18] Ronald Takaki also fundamentally reorientates the play away from Jacobean Britain: 'As Englishmen made their "errand into the wilderness of America," they took lands from red Calibans and made black Calibans work for them', and then adds that Caliban 'could be African, American Indian, or even Asian'.[19]

This historical piracy takes *The Tempest* completely out of context, yet these are not isolated examples. Walter Cohen claims that '*The Tempest* uncovers, perhaps despite itself, the racist and imperialist bases of English nationalism', while failing to see the play from the only historical perspective available to its writer, that of the Jacobean age itself.[20] Shakespeare was certainly not writing about black slavery; the first African slaves did not arrive in North America until 'the latter end of August' 1619.[21]

[15] Meredith Anne Skura, 'Discourse and the individual: the case of colonialism in *The Tempest*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40 (1989), p. 50.

[16] O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: the psychology of colonization* (London, 1956), p. 97.

[17] Skura, 'Discourse and the individual', p. 50.

[18] Leslie A. Fiedler, *The stranger in Shakespeare* (London, 1973), pp. 236–8. I am aware that the book is outdated, but my point remains nevertheless that scholarship has had a field-day with the play in the past.

[19] Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron cages: race and culture in nineteenth century America* (New York, 1979), pp. 11–13.

[20] Cohen, *Drama of a nation*, p. 401.

[21] See H. C. Porter, *The inconstant savage: England and the North American Indian, 1500–1660* (London, 1979), p. 416.

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Yet even recent essays on the play have continued to insist that the *The Tempest* is *definitely* about Virginia, and that Caliban is *definitely* a depiction of the American native. Ronald Takaki maintains that 'for the first time in the English theater, an Indian Character was being presented' when introducing the subject of Caliban, as well as offhandedly assuring his reader that the play 'is a more important window for understanding American history, for its story is set in the New World'. So passionate is his concern to railroad the play through a highly selective use of historical fact, that his argument at times becomes totally blinkered. Equally offhand is his remark that '*The Tempest*, the London audience knew, was not about Ireland but about the New World, for the reference to the "Bermoothes" (Bermuda) revealed the location of the island'. Here he fails even to consider the more likely possibility that the reference to Bermuda, indeed topical, may not be a claim to the play's being set there, as much as a contemporarily vivid point of reference to the Jacobean audience of the *distance* Ariel has travelled in the service of his master.[22] In his attempt to make this an American play he also conveniently fails to explain a plethora of other problems arising – how, for example, does the voyage of the duke of Naples from Tunis back to Naples in the Mediterranean end up several thousand miles off course? Thinking back, if we are to assume that Prospero and Miranda made an Atlantic crossing then the means of this transportation, described by Prospero as a 'rotten carcasse of a butt, not rigged, Nor tackle, sail nor mast' (I.ii.146–7) into which Gonzalo had put 'some food' and 'some fresh water' (I.ii.160) is scarcely credible. This was, after all, a journey for the Jacobeans of several months. Takaki offers no explanations, and ends up drifting into the 1630s and beyond, leaving the time of the writing of the play far behind in the process.[23]

[22] Ronald Takaki, '*The Tempest* in the wilderness: the racialization of savagery', *Journal of American History*, 79 (1992), pp. 892–5. Jacobean interest in Bermuda and the subsequent argument that the island was the location of Shakespeare's play derives from reports such as that in *A true declaration of the estate of the colonie in Virginia* (November 1610) which noted that: 'These islands of the Bermudos have ever been accounted as an enchanted pile of rocks and a desert habitation for Devils; but all fairies of the rocks were but flocks of birds, and all the Devils that haunted the woods were but herds of swine' (cited in Porter, *The inconstant savage*, p. 307).

[23] Takaki's aim in writing his article was to provide 'A study of the play in relationship to its historical setting' (892 n1). This he clearly fails to do, falling into an all too common historicist trap of selective use of historical and even ahistorical material so as to justify dramatic origins. His claim, that 'In that historical moment, [1611] the English were encountering "other" peoples and delineating the boundary between *civilization* and *savagery*' is used to justify some form of special topicality for the representation of Caliban as Indian, yet he fails to admit that such discourse had in fact been going on for hundreds of years since the first English settlement of Ireland. See Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley, eds., *Representing Ireland, 1534–1660: literature and the origins of conflict* (Cambridge, 1993); especially, for the purposes of this discussion, the essay by Lisa Jardine, 'Encountering Ireland: Gabriel Harvey, Edmund Spenser, and English colonial ventures', pp. 60–75. George Will has taken to task those who attempt to write about *The Tempest* as a reflection on what he describes as 'the imperialist rape on the third world'. See George Will, 'Literary politics: "The Tempest"? It's "really" about imperialism. Emily Dickinson's poetry? Masturbation', *Newsweek* (22 April 1991), p. 72. In response to Will, Stephen Greenblatt, noticeably applying a twentieth-century bent to the term 'imperialism', has argued that 'It is very

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The character of Caliban in the play, though termed a 'saluage and deformed slaue' in the Dramatis Personae of the play within the First Folio, *has* been maligned. This is in actual fact the first critical interpretation we have of the character and it should not lead us to believe that this was Shakespeare's intent. We have no evidence that his manuscript of the play as it was first transcribed from the prompt-book copy bears any such description of Caliban at all. That it was an addition made by Heminges and Condell is a possibility, however difficult such a theory might be to prove.[24] There is also the further confusion of Caliban over the following description:

> Then was this island –
> Save for the son that she did litter here,
> A freckled whelp, hag-born – not honoured with
> A human shape.
>
> (I.ii.281-4)

As Lorie Leininger indicates the removal of the parenthesis gives the fact that until the birth of Caliban, the *island* was without human shape, and not Caliban.[25] The character's identity as somehow a depiction of the bestial American Indian consequently loses ground. The type of literary criticism which provides assertions that 'if Shakespeare seems inclined, on the one hand, to deny all human status to the single aborigine of his isle, Caliban, making him the by-blow of a demon mother, on the other hand, he insists that, on his mother's side, he was an African', categorically side-steps by far the clearer channel through which we can identify him.[26]

Perhaps an even larger spanner which can be thrown into the works of the now 'traditional' perception of Caliban is the point actually made by Leslie Fiedler that, 'to say that Caliban was for Shakespeare an Indian means that he was a problem, since the age had not been able to decide what in fact Indians were'.[27] In point of fact, I believe that we can gain a pretty good idea of what Shakespeare's audience thought about the American natives. Suffice to say that, as Alden Vaughan has pointed out, 'histories of early English contact with America and its native inhabitants now almost invariably cite *The Tempest* as a play partly or wholly about colonization and Caliban as partly or wholly a Jacobean representation of the Indian'.[28]

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difficult to argue that *The Tempest* is *not* about imperialism.' See Stephen Greenblatt, 'The best way to kill our literary inheritance is to turn it into a decorous celebration of the new world order', *Chronicle of Higher Education* (12 June, 1991), B1, B3.

[24] The hand of the scrivener Ralph Crane is also a possibility.

[25] Lorie Jerrell Leininger, 'Cracking the code of *The Tempest*', *Bucknell Review*, 25 (1980), p. 124.

[26] Fiedler, *The stranger in Shakespeare*, p. 205.

[27] Cited in Alden T. Vaughan, 'Shakespeare's Indian: the Americanization of Caliban', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1991), p. 147.

[28] Ibid., 149. Porter, for example, begins his study of relations between England and the North American Indian with a short prelude on the play. In the Vaughans' joint work they note (p. 118) that the American association began with Richard Sill in 1797 when Sill contended that

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'No kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superiority; no use of service, of riches or of poverty; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle.'[29] Montaigne's essay 'Of cannibals' finds its way into *The Tempest* in a speech by Gonzalo to which I shall refer in turn, though here I wish to use Montaigne's original to examine discourse concerning the American natives themselves.[30] The tone of Montaigne's discourse on the American Indian nation was, for the most part, continued through the Jacobean age until it was ruptured by the massacre carried out by Algonquians under the leadership of Opechancanough in 1622.[31] In other words, I wish to claim that Montaigne's comment of the late 1570s that 'there is nothing in that nation, that is either barbarous or savage, unless men call that barbarism which is not common to them' was a sentiment that was more prevalent in contemporary thought when Shakespeare was writing the play, than any idea of the Indians as being an immediate threat.[32]

The implication of this statement is that our interpretation of the play as a document recording contemporary thinking about the Jacobean colonists and the natives of America changes significantly. The most comprehensive recent study of the manner in which the English perceived the Indians in this period unequivocally notes just how the image of the Indian was very often a positive one. Karen Kupperman's introduction to her essay on the subject is worth quoting in full.

> English observers in North America before 1640 found much to praise in the character of the Indians. They were a cheerful people, sharing what they possessed with each other, and especially loving as parents. Churlishness was a great crime among them. They were often said to be trustworthy. Above all, they were dignified and courteous; their chief men were grave and wise. In fact, even the most hostile critic allowed the dignity of the Indian. Typical is George Percy in his *Discourse of Virginia* of 1606, writing of the Werowance of Rapahanna: the Werowance 'entertained us in so modest a proud fashion as though he had been a Prince of civill government, holding his countenance without laughter or any such ill behaviour'. These words of praise for the Indian were virtually universal, appearing even in the works of men like Ralph Lane, who was

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'Shakespeare has undoubtedly derived the greatest share of his ideas, as to incident, from the narratives of discovery of the New World.' This was followed by Edmond Malone's *An account of the incidents, from which the title and part of the story of Shakespeare's Tempest were derived; and its true date ascertained* of 1808. The contradictory nature of some of the work of the Reverend Frank M. Bristol, who in 1898 claimed that 'There can be no doubt that Shakespeare had in his mind the American Indian when he conceived the character of Caliban' and then conceded 'the Indian element is so mixed up with elements of monstrosity as to be lost' (Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban*, p. 122), might suggest the difficult ground upon which this line of argument rests.

[29] Noted in Porter, *The inconstant savage*, p. 145.

[30] II.i.143–63.

[31] Karen Ordahl Kupperman puts the total killed as 347 and notes that 'Edward Waterhouse, who wrote the standard account of the massacre, and on whom Purchas relied, felt it was caused by the Indians' fear of dispossession.' See her 'English perceptions of treachery, 1583–1640: the case of the American "savages"', *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), pp. 269–76.

[32] Cited in Porter, *The inconstant savage*, p. 144.

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fundamentally hostile to them. Moreover, the praise continued from all other colonies after the massacre of 1622 temporarily ended the favourable attitude in Virginia. William Wood, writing in New England in 1634, said that they 'be wise in their carriage, subtle in their dealings, true in their promise, honest in defraying of their debts… constant in friendship, merrily conceited in discourse, not luxuriously abounding in youth nor dotingly froward in old age.[33]

As will be shown below, this kind of affirmation of the natives' civility was tied to the writers' intention of promoting settlement. We must read Florio's preface for the 1580 *Shorte and briefe narration* (dated 25 June) in the same manner. Here he describes the natives as 'of nature gentle and tractable, and most apt to receive the Christian religion, and to subject themselves to some good government'.[34]

In general, however, the period before *c.* 1591 saw American natives depicted in less than favourable terms. This was largely a result of Spanish printed accounts of their exploits in South America seeking to justify their harsh treatment of the natives, but the period in which ideas of permanent settlement began to be advanced in England not surprisingly saw changes occur in the tone of the literature.[35] Until the massacre of 1622, depictions of natives in English printed sources were, in general, largely favourable. It was not in the interest of promoters of the Virginia colony to do otherwise. Thus in 1609 we hear from Robert Johnson in his *Nova Britannia* that the natives were friendly, being 'generally very louing and gentle, and [they] doe entertaine and relieue our people with great kindnesse: they are easie to be brought to good, and would faine embrace a better condition'.[36] By 1612, and the second part of Johnson's *Nova Britannia*, he laments that damage has occurred to the state of Anglo-Indian relations, yet it has not been due to Indian aggression: he refers to the fact that 'the poore Indians by wrongs and injuries were made our enemies'.[37] We are now within the time parameters in which Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* and yet there remains an essentially 'positive' discourse on the native Indians. In his second book, published in Oxford in 1612, *A map of Virginia*, John Smith notes that the natives were 'generally tall and straight, of a comely proportion'.[38] Are we to accept this to be the historical basis for Caliban? Though a by-product of some anti-Spanish sentiment, the plight of the native Indians was supported by the publication of John Donne's *Ignatius his conclave* in 1611 containing colonial references to the treatment accorded to the natives by Spain in the New World.[39] William Strachey, he of the *Sea Venture* wreck fame, wrote in his book of laws for the Virginia Colony a specific

[33] Kupperman, 'English perceptions of treachery', p. 263.

[34] *A shorte and briefe narration of the two navigations and discoveries to the north weast partes called Newe Fraunce*. Cited in Porter, *The inconstant savage*, p. 151.

[35] See Porter, *The inconstant savage*.

[36] Robert Johnson, *Nova Britannia. Offring… fruits by planting in Virginia* (London, 1609), sig. B4^{v}.

[37] Robert Johnson, *The new life of Virginia: declaring the former successe and present state of that plantation, being the second part of Nova Britannia. Published by authoritie of his Maiesties counsell of Virginia* (London, 1612), sig. C^{r}.

[38] *A map of Virginia, with a description of the countrey, the commodities, people, government and religion. Written by captaine Smith, sometimes governour of the countrey…* . Cited in Porter, *The inconstant savage*, p. 319.

[39] Ibid, p. 174.

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prohibition against harming the Indians: 'No man shall rifle or dispoile, by force or violence, take away any thing from any Indian coming to trade, or otherwise, upon pain of death.'[40]

Naturally, the implication of this is that there were colonists who had been mistreating their Algonquian neighbours, yet when the colonists were critical of the Indians during this period, 1609–13, it was for their lack of consistency. As Hulme notes, 'what therefore came into focus was their supposed inconstancy, their failure to be either friendly (submissive) or hostile, but rather both, depending on the circumstances, a pattern of behaviour the English interpreted as *treachery*'. He then cites Gabriel Archer's comment: 'They are naturally given to trechery, howbeit we could not finde it in our travell up the river, but rather a most kind and loving people.'[41]

The story of John Smith and Pocahontas, rapidly made myth over the ensuing centuries, because it served to ensconce the English self-righteous attitude to their culture, further illustrates how difficult it is to find conflict in the relations between native Americans and the English at the time *The Tempest* was being written. Smith's 'rescue', if that was what it was, from execution by the Emperor Powhatan, by the ten-year-old Pocahontas occurred in December 1607, so the event fits comfortably into this Jacobean timetable. The episode reveals that if relations were in what we might term a 'cold war' phase, then at least both civilizations had realized, in the short term at least, that some form of co-existence was necessary.

This is not to say that the Powhatans or Smith's men in the period before 1614 were content with their lot: they were not, but until the English in Jamestown were provided with more settlers to bear arms and farmers to grow corn, that was how it had to be. What changed in 1614 was, with a certain degree of irony, the bringing together of the two peoples by that most tried and tested of European peace-making exercises, marriage. As evidence that the native social structure was still being depicted in terms of some parity with that of Britain we need only read that there were no recorded objections to the marriage of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, which occurred in 1614, apart from that of King James, 'who was said to be worried about the propriety of an

[40] William Strachey, *For the colony in Virginia Britannia. Lawes divine, moral and martial &c* (London, 1612), p. 7.

[41] Peter Hulme, *Colonial encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London, 1986), p. 163. Hulme posits the arrival of De La Warr in 1610 as something of a turning point in the way the Indians perceived their visitors; up until the arrival of the new governor, the Algonquian Indians may not have appreciated that the English intended to stay. A reading of documentation for the years immediately following De La Warr's arrival which are important to my argument here does not, however, suggest an immediate reaction, though Opechancanough's rising of 1622 would appear to have been planned well in advance. Powhatan had questioned Smith by this time – 'many do informe me, your coming is not for trade, but to invade my people and possesse my Country' (quoted in Hulme, *Colonial encounters*, p. 307 n. 72). By the time of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (first performed in 1614) cynicism about the native Americans had increased: Waspe notes 'I'ld buy for all my Tenants too, they are a kind o' ciuill Sauages, that wil part with their children for rattles, pipes and kniues. You were best buy a hatchet, or two, & truck with 'hem.' Ben Jonson, *Bartholmew Fayre* (London, 1631), in Herford and Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, VI, III.iv.36–9. Subsequent reference will be to this edition.

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English commoner marrying an Indian princess'. Furthermore, Samuel Purchas commented that Pocahontas, baptized and christened Rebecca, 'still carried her selfe as the Daughter of a King, and was accordingly respected'.[42]

The theatre complements the picture of the natives as being far more positively viewed than has hitherto been appreciated. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Four Plays in One*, first performed between *c.* 1608 and 1613, we find Jupiter telling Mercury of peaceful American natives. He speaks of 'the Sunburnt *Indians*, that know no other wealth but peace and pleasure' and goes on to describe them as 'the innocent people not knowing yet what power and weight he [gold] carries'. Later Plutus marvels at the same Indians:

> Oh *Time*, what innocence dwells here, what goodnesse!
> they know me not, nor hurt me not, yet hug me.[43]

The masquers in *The Tempest* bear no allusion to the New World, and if Fiedler writes that they are 'oddly disguised as Hellenistic nymphs and reapers and goddesses', that is only because his thesis has precluded the consideration that the New World theme in the play is anything other than at least 'one-half of the main archetypal content of *The Tempest*'.[44]

The Indian as the bogeyman, the real 'saluage and deformed slaue', which fits the Caliban mould, does not enter into contemporary writing until after 1622. The fact that the First Folio is published in 1623 should make us immediately suspicious of the coincidence between the depiction of Caliban as a monster, and the occurrence of the massacre. John Smith's insistence in his *The generall historie of Virginia* (1624) that during his period of captivity he was repeatedly threatened with death in fact seems apocryphal. His account was written seventeen years after his capture, at a time when the English had very specific motives in demonizing the natives. Note also the tone of the words of Samuel Purchas in 1625 on the Virginia Algonquian: 'so bad people, having little of Humanitie but shape, ignorant of Civilitie, of Arts, of Religion; more brutish then the beasts they hunt, more wild and unmanly then that unmanned wild Countrey which they range rather then inhabite'.[45] This from a man who

[42] Hulme, *Colonial encounters*, pp. 143–4. Smith made no mention of his rescue by Pocahontas in his 1612 account and Rountree suggests that it did not happen at all. See Helen C. Rountree, *Pocahontas's people: the Powhatan Indians of Virginia through four centuries* (Oklahoma, 1990), pp. 38–9. Most telling of all in the search for English pro-Indian attitudes in the period before the 1622 massacre is the plan for the creation of an Indian college at Henrico. See Robert Hunt Land, 'Henrico and its college', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 18 (1938), pp. 453–98, and Peter Walne, 'The collections for Henrico College, 1616–1618', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 80 (1972), pp. 258–66.

[43] Frances Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One*, in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Comedies and tragedies* (London, 1647), sig. Ddddddd–Fffffff4^{v} (text cited from sig. Fffffff4).

[44] Fiedler, *The stranger in Shakespeare*, p. 228, p. 208. Note that Middleton in *The triumphs of love and antiquity* (London, 1619) compliments the natives as 'that kind savage the Virginian'. Cited in Robert Rawlston Cawley, *The voyagers and Elizabethan drama* (Boston, 1938), p. 346.

[45] Hulme, *Colonial encounters*, p. 158. As a comparison with the sentiments espoused by Purchas note that the text of the play provides the ubiquitous exception to the rule in the form of Prospero's comment (lament?) that Caliban is 'A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick' (IV.i.188–9).

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never travelled west of Cornwall. The period following the massacre was one in which the English in Virginia were seizing any possible excuse for appropriating land at the expense of the natives.

It is not totally implausible to suggest that the description of Caliban as entered in the First Folio might have been an interjection by a hand other than Shakespeare's in the light of contemporary reinterpretation of the otherworldly natives. The atmosphere of 1622, and the transfer in colonial writing from the American natives as being on the whole trustworthy, to them as being 'beasts', changed the milieu in which the play was being viewed. *The Tempest* in 1623 underwent its first bout of literary criticism and the result of this change in the manner of Indian perception by the English has, needless to say, been the flood of criticism and interpretation of the play which connects Caliban with, among others, the African and Indian.

In marked contrast to this picture of Caliban as being an American savage, we do in fact have a single glimpse of what the original authorial depiction of the character may have been. Ben Jonson, in his *Bartholomew Fair* of 1614, only three years after *The Tempest*, has Ursula's servant named Mooncalf, the same name given to Caliban, and this servant's first line is also delivered from 'within', offstage. Ursula calls to her 'What, *Moone-calfe*', reminiscent of Prospero's 'What ho, slave!' (II.ii.45) while in the induction before the play the scrivener had described what the audience would be given by the writer, and noted that

> if there bee neuer a *Seruant-monster* i' the *Fayre*; who can helpe it? he sayes; nor a nest of *Antiques?* [antics] Hee is loth to make Nature afraid in his *Playes*, like those that beget *Tales*, *Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*, to mixe his head with other mens heeles.[46]

Here I believe he refers to Caliban, and wherever Jonson had seen *The Tempest* he clearly seems to find the 'antic' in the character of more importance than, for example, any 'Indian' qualities. Indeed, there is more in Caliban of the Wild Man of European literature than any American. As Stephen Greenblatt notes 'Caliban is anything but a Noble Savage. Shakespeare does not shrink from the darkest European fantasies about the Wild Man; indeed he exaggerates them. Caliban is deformed, lecherous, evil-smelling, idle, treacherous, naive, drunken, rebellious, violent and devil-worshipping.'[47]

I would conclude on the subject of Caliban's American context with the

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This I believe is *not* an editorial emendation; Shakespeare's description unfortunately gives fire to the later transformation of the depiction of Caliban in the First Folio. Compare also Waterhouse, writing in 1622: 'Victorie of them may bee gained many waies; by force, by surprize, by famine in burning their Corne, by destroying and burning their Boats, Canoes, and Houses, by breaking their fishing Weares, by assailing them in their huntings... by pursuing and chasing them with our horses, and blood-Hunds to draw after them, and Mastiues to teare them, which take this naked, tanned, deformed Sauages, for no other than wild beasts.' E. Waterhouse, *A declaration of the state of the colony and affaires in Virginia* (London, 1622), p. 24.

[46] Jonson, *Bartholmew Fayre*, *The Indvction*, lines 127–31.

[47] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Learning to curse', in his *Learning to curse: essays in early modern culture* (London, 1990), p. 26.

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point made by the Vaughans that a search through *The Tempest* for signs of the canoes, bows and arrows, or tobacco, icons which *would* have suggested to the Jacobean audience an Indian significance for Caliban, finds no such things.[48] As Skura notes of the new historicist work on the play: 'The recent criticism not only flattens the text into the mould of colonialist discourse and eliminates what is characteristically 'Shakespearean' in order to foreground what is ''colonialist'', but is also – paradoxically – in danger of taking the play further from the particular historical situation in England in 1611.'[49]

What the reader of the play should see in Caliban is a more general representation of anarchy, or social uprising, and, given the beauty of some of his speeches, of popular uprising. He is 'savage incarnate', and is indeed a generalized reflection of 'the other' in the English imperialists' drive for hegemony at home, on the nation's periphery, and overseas.[50] In the same vein, Hawkes talks of Caliban's 'revolutionary mode of expression when he turns the log-bearing exercise neatly against Prospero, advising his fellow conspirators on the efficacy of a ''log'' to ''batter his skull''' (III.ii.87–8).[51] A further development along this line of thinking comes from the suggestion that the name 'Caliban' derives from the gypsy word *cauliban* meaning 'blackness' – 'like gypsies and other vagrants, Caliban is associated with the spread of diseases (''the red plague rid you'' [I.ii.366]), with raucous dancing and with social disorder in general. Perhaps Shakespeare's audiences saw in Caliban a satirical yet occasionally sympathetic portrayal of the ''counterfeit kinde of roagues'' who epitomized to Jacobeans the dark and dangerous side of human nature.'[52] That said, he is no Autolycus, and Caliban is quickly duped by Stephano and Trinculo. His gullibility, however, is more than made up for by his perspicacity in identifying the source of Prospero's power as lying in his books. In short, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo make up a veritable jovial crew of potential criminals.

[48] Falling into possibly the largest pit trap in Shakespeare studies, the Vaughans only entertain the possibility that the description of Caliban as 'savage' was perhaps an emendation in a single footnote in their *Shakespeare's Caliban*. 'The inclusion of the word in the cast of characters suggests (unless it was inserted by the Folio's editors) that it was central to Shakespeare's conception of Caliban' (p. 8 n12).

[49] Skura,'Discourse and the individual', p. 47. She also argues here that if indeed the play *is* ''colonialist'', it must be seen as ''prophetic'' rather than descriptive'.

[50] Vaughan, 'Shakespeare's Indian', p. 152. Caliban, claims Fiedler, 'seems to have been created, on his historical side, by a fusion in Shakespeare's imagination of Columbus's first New World savages with Montaigne's Brazilians, Somers's native Bermudans, and those Patagonian ''giants'' encountered by Pigafetta during his trip around the world with Magellan.' (*The stranger in Shakespeare*, p. 233). He ranges across the globe whilst ignoring the people on Shakespeare's doorstep.

[51] Terence Hawkes, *The Shakespeherean rag* [sic] (London, 1986), p. 5.

[52] Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban*, p. 36. They also suggest that Caliban might in fact have a basis in the traditional figure of the 'green man', the 'woodwose', the 'wild man', noting that 'The Merchant Taylor's accounts indicate that green men were needed for lord mayor's pageants in 1602, 1605 and 1610' (p. 65). This would suggest at least the contemporaneous nature of the figure for a source of Caliban in 1611. There is also the traditional interpretation of the name 'Caliban' as deriving from an anagram of 'Cannibal'. This is still the easiest way out, but the fact that there is never any suggestion that Caliban eats human flesh somehow makes this route unsatisfactory.

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III

As Frank Kermode points out, and in marked comparison to Takaki, 'Shakespeare is at pains to establish his island in the Old World.'[53] I believe that what Shakespeare described in creating this island 'full of noises, Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not' (III.ii.133–5) is a microcosmic rendering of the Jacobean world. This is not a play 'about a golden world delivered from the brazen by providence and miracle'.[54] This is no utopia, with novel government and alien peoples distant from the experience of the citizens of James VI and I's kingdoms. This is the type of less than perfect state that was all around Shakespeare when he wrote the play. It would be as well to note here the conclusion made by Alden and Virginia Vaughan to their joint study of the play: 'Shakespeare did not mean Caliban to symbolise any particular person, group or quality, but rather a general *unruliness* in society and in nature.'[55]

On Prospero's island, we find a clearly defined ruler, his progeny, a potential royal marriage, a hierarchy of nobility, some more corrupt than others, an underclass, and even 'revel, riot and rebellion'. This no mere fantasy; this is cold reality dressed, though very well, in the language of the Romance genre, but always firmly anchored to Jacobean reality. When Leo Marx writes of the island that 'like Arcadia or Virginia, it is remote and unspoiled, and at first thought we are likely to remember it as a kind of natural paradise', he has overshot the mark considerably.[56] Likewise, when Francis Barker and Peter Hulme write that 'Caliban's attempt… is produced as final and irrevocable confirmation of the natural treachery of savages', one is left to ask whether revolts against authority were somehow limited to overseas areas alone?[57] For perhaps the best example of upheaval and rebellion, however, one need only look to the first scene of the play. Here, the skills of the mariner are more important than the presence of Alonso: 'What cares these roarers for the name of King? To cabin: silence! trouble us not' (I.i.16–18) says a brusque Boatswain to the protesting Gonzalo and it is not a lone reversal of order, as the Boatswain goes on:

> You are a
> counsellor; if you can command these elements to
> silence, and work the peace of the presence, we will
> not hand a rope more; use your authority: if you
> cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and
> make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance
> of the hour, if it so hap… Out
> of our way, I say.
>
> (I.i.20–7)

[53] Kermode, ed., *The Tempest*, p. xxv.

[54] Philip Brockbank, '*The Tempest*: conventions of art and empire', in John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, eds., *Later Shakespeare* (London, 1966), p. 184.

[55] Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban*, p. 278.

[56] Leo Marx, *The machine in the garden* (New York, 1964), p. 48.

[57] Francis Barker and Peter Hulme, 'Nymphs and reapers heavily vanish: the discursive contexts of *The Tempest*', in John Drakakis, ed., *Alternative Shakespeares* (London, 1985), p. 201.

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No wonder then that Gonzalo proceeds to speculate on the manner of the man's death: 'If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable' (I.i.32–3). His is the voice of a nobility suitably piqued to find that they cannot do everything – here, they can in fact do nothing.[58]

We also witness the enigmatic Gonzalo as he moves through the spectrum of political allegiances. He begins as the tool of the usurpers, in that he is 'appointed Master of this design' (I.ii.162–3) in the removal of Prospero and Miranda from Milan. His compassion, however, has already stirred him to betray the purpose, in giving them food and water (I.ii.160). Arriving on the island he has returned to advocating all service possible to Alonso once more, and yet his speech reflecting on his ideal community in Act II, Scene i would appear to resemble what we might nowadays term anarchic thought.

> I'th commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
> No occupation, all men idle, all,
> And women too, but innocent and pure;
> No sovereignty –
>
> (II.i.45–54)

Sebastian's interjection 'Yet he would be King on't' (54) brings us back to reality with a jolt. This has thus not been an anarchic tirade at all; the fact that the lines are from Montaigne makes it more likely that this is a speech being rendered almost as a form of 'party piece'. This is no spontaneous outburst of utopian imagination, but a pseudo-intellectual piece of public speaking. If it is not then Gonzalo becomes an extremely shallow character indeed, and however simple he may appear in comparison with the Machiavels Antonio and Sebastian, I not believe this to be the case. Shakespeare uses Gonzalo to voice current popular concerns in this speech. Gonzalo's tropical arcadia is founded on legal notions with which most of the audience would be familiar, namely 'contract, succession, Bourn, bound of land, tilth'.[59]

Shakespeare is not, therefore, advocating challenges to the social order, nor is he seeking to illustrate any speculative penalties which befall those who do – the Boatswain and the other sailors come to no harm when they are returned to the assembled company at the close of the play – he merely represents the

[58] Graham Holderness notes that the mention of roarers 'with its connotations of boisterous anti-social behaviour and yob-violence, links the mutinous resistance of the waves to other kinds of rebellious or subversive defiance, and opens the imagination to the possibility of a social energy liberated from the strictures of monarchical rule.' Graham Holderness, Nick Potter, and John Turner, *Shakespeare: out of court. Dramatizations of court society* (London, 1990), p. 148.

[59] Hawkes, *The Shakespeherean rag*, p. 3.

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same conflicts which were occurring throughout his world in 1611 in a play set on an island that was in reality far closer to home than the Mediterranean, never even mind the Americas.

As critics have looked to locate Prospero's domain elsewhere, the strength of the ideological conceit of Britain as an island nation has been overlooked. Josephine Waters Bennett notes from a 1587 English translation of Solinus's *Polyhistor*: 'The Sea coast of Gallia had beene the end of the worlde, but that the Ile of Brytaine for the largenesse thereof every way, deserveth the name almost of an other Worlde.' Vergil too had Britain as 'wholly sundred from all the world', and 'in the ends of the earth'.[60] Indeed, the conceit makes its entry on to the stage at this time in Act II, Scene i of Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (*c.* 1587),

> Welcome, my lords, welcome, brave western kings,
> To England's shore, whose promontory-cleeves
> Show Albion is another little world.

By the beginning of James's reign the conceit had lost none of its force. William Harbert, in his 1604 *A prophesie of Cadwallader* noted how 'Cesar was twice repulst ere he could see This litle world from all the world remote.'[61] Part of Britain's semi-mythical history centred specifically around the nature of Britain as an island world by destiny placed apart from the rest of the earth, and thus perhaps singled out for a special role in history. The period around which the play was written and first performed saw the production of three of the most important chorographical works of the reign which celebrated the idea of the land of Britain as being a distinct entity with which Britons might henceforward identify. Camden's *Britannia* was first translated into English in 1610, Speed's *Theatre of the empire of Great Britain* appeared in 1611, and Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* in 1612, all part of a chorographic canon writing Britannia as an autonomous domain free from the absolute control of the monarch.

Indeed, references to the ancient conceit of the island nation abound, Horace speaking of Britain as 'in the ends of the earth', and 'in ultimos orbis'. Solinus had claimed that on the northernmost tip of Scotland was 'an altar engraven with Greeke letters for a vowe' which 'beareth witnes that Ulysses arrived at Calydon'. This linked Britain, as Ogygia, with the Fortunate Isles, the island of Ulysses and Calypso.[62] If we also consider Selden's notes to Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* regarding the idea of Saturn's island, and Homer's placing of the Elysian Fields at the 'utmost ends of the earth', then indeed, as Bennett notes, 'by this series of associations, the geographical "otherworld" of Britain becomes identified with the mythological Otherworld, the land of spirits'.[63] If all this seems too fanciful, we need to remind ourselves that we are investigating a play first performed in 1611 about an island separated from the rest of the

[60] Josephine Waters Bennett, 'Britain among the Fortunate Isles', *Studies in Philology*, 53 (1956), p. 114. [61] William Harbert, *A prophesie of Cadwallader* (London, 1604), sig. H4.
[62] Bennett, 'Britain among the fortunate isles', p. 117. [63] Ibid., p. 121.

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Renaissance world, ruled by a magus whose servants include two extremely 'otherworldly' beings. What I believe we are seeing in *The Tempest* is a stage representation of this particular ideological conceit of Britain as a distinct island kingdom replete with a past steeped in ancient history.

As such the play represents an extension of the British myth extant in plays such as *Cymbeline* and *A Shoe-maker a Gentleman*.[64] Here *The Tempest* illustrates this *mentalité* by which the Jacobean audience pictured their country as being not only entwined within a great and glorious historical past, but one which emphasized their separate development from history outside of their shores. *The Tempest*'s meaning of the island is that it, like Britain, is a place unlike any other, a space by no means perfect, but one which nonetheless has a magical, mythical identity and whose corruptions come about as a result of intrusion from overseas. Not only do the courtiers provide the danger to the ruler of the island but Caliban's conspiracy comes about as a result of his intoxication on the fruits of Stephano and Trinculo's courtly brand of civilization.

If the Armada expedition of 1588 had reinforced this notion of separation, of divine providence, of a chosen Protestant state destined to survive, the Union of the Crowns caused the conceit to move rapidly forward. The Scot John Russell noted in 1604 'That notable saying of the famous poet is verray remarquable, "*et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos*"; qhairof it felloues, giff the ile of Britanie be devydit from all utheris, sould it not import ane perfyit unioun amangis ourselffis?'[65] Shakespeare's play is picking up upon these varied strands of the British myth under James VI and I. If John Norden in his *Speculum Britanniae* in 1593 was quoting Josephus on the Romans having extended their empire by conquering another world, the significance of this concept becomes much more pronounced when James Stuart actually styles himself 'King of Great Britain' in 1604.[66] Suddenly the island previously divided does indeed become 'another world', and if it was known by 1611 that Britain was not at 'the ends of the earth' then she could and did extend her boundaries to encompass that territory discovered to the west. We need only look to James's speech to parliament in 1603 to appreciate the ideological significance linking his Union project with the British past. Here he claims of his new kingdom 'it is now become like a little World, within it selfe, being intrenched and fortified round about with a naturall, and yet admirable strong pond or ditch, whereby all the former feares of this Nation are now quite cut off'.[67] Again in his speech to parliament in 1605, James refers to 'this little world of my Dominions, compassed and seuered by the Sea from the rest of the

[64] See Marshall, 'The idea of the British empire in the Jacobean public theatre, 1603–*c*1614', pp. 86–126.

[65] John Russell, *A Treatise of the Happie and Blissed Unioun* (1604) in Bruce Galloway and Brian Levack eds., *The Jacobean union. Six tracts of 1604* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 101.

[66] Bennett, 'Britain among the Fortunate Isles', p. 116.

[67] *A speach, as it was delivered in the vpper hovse of the parliament to the lords spiritvall and temporall, and to the knights, citizens and burgesses there assembled, on mvnday the XIX. day of March 1603. Being the first day of the first parliament*, in Charles Howard McIlwain, *The political works of James I* (Harvard, 1918), p. 272.

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earth'.[68] In *The Masque of Blackness*, Jonson's first court masque, performed in 1605, this same conceit occurs:

> With that great name Britannia, this blessed isle
> Hath won her ancient dignity and style,
> A world divided from the world, and tried
> The abstract of it in his general pride.

Dekker too makes reference to it in *The Whore of Babylon* (1606–7) when the empress, representing Rome, and contemplating invasion, laments the defences of the English:

> Her kingdom wears a girdle wrought of waves
> Set thick with precious stones, that are so charmed
> No rocks are of more force; her Fairies' hearts
> Lie in enchanted towers, impregnable:
> No engine scales them.
>
> (I.i.112–16)

Titania, representing Queen Elizabeth sagely plans: 'To be safe from foreign wildfire balls We'll build about our waters wooden walls' (I.ii.64–5).[69]

Furthermore, King James appears in the 1613 engraving by Crispin van de Passe wearing a laurel wreath with the portrait including the words 'Qui regis imperio divisos orbe Britannos, Rex tot virorum fortium.'[70] Peter Hulme's suggestion that the island in *The Tempest* is merely 'an interlude, a neutral ground between extirpation and resumption of power' therefore ignores the inherent ideological force behind this island association.[71]

If, then, we have arrived at the tacit conclusion that the play's Jacobean *American* context looks at least dubious, we should not, however, assume that the play is lacking in reference to imperial imagery. The description of their arrival on the island given to Miranda by her father tells a tale of upheaval and dislocation, as a lord is removed from his kingdom. The usurpation is not grieved at by Prospero as much, however, as the fact that his *kingdom* has been subjected to the domain of another:

> PROSPERO: Of temporal royalties
> He thinks me now incapable; confederates –
> So dry he was for sway – wi' th' King of Naples
> To give him annual tribute, do him homage,
> Subject his coronet to his crown, and bend
> The dukedom yet unbowed – alas, poor Milan! –
> To most ignoble stooping.
> MIRANDA: O, the heavens!
>
> (I.ii.110–16)

In the Jacobean period, the recurring motif in the Romances of reconciliation

[68] *A speach in the parliament hovse, as neere the very words as covld be gathered at the instant* (1605), in ibid., p. 281.
[69] Thomas Dekker, *The whore of Babylon*, ed. Marianne Gateson Riely (New York, 1980).
[70] Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the politics of literature* (Stanford, 1989), p. 49.
[71] Hulme, *Colonial encounters*, p. 124.

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through the children and the hope for the future through this secured succession makes a link between the subject matter of Shakespeare's plays and the royal family. As James was becoming the ruler not only of his internal imperium of England and Scotland, so too his increasing dominion in North America and in the north of Ireland makes his imperial role a topical one. To appreciate how the play deals with discourse on empire and the concomitant responsibilities one need only look to the imagery and discussion associated with Prospero's inordinate supply of power as a ruler over a foreign territory to which he has extended his government.[72] Miranda draws notable emphasis to the precise bounds of Prospero's strength when she laments

> Had *I* been any *god of power*, I would
> Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere
> It should the good ship so have swallow'd,
> (I.ii.10–12) (my italics)

and Prospero goes on to describe himself: 'Thy father was the Duke of Milan, and *A prince of power*' (I.ii.54–5) (my italics) and as 'Prospero the prime duke…' (I.ii.72). Referring to Prospero's words at III.iii.88–90, Stephen Greenblatt notes that 'to compel others to be ''all knit up In their distractions'', to cause a paralyzing anxiety, is the dream of power, a dream perfected over bitter years of exile'.[73] As Roger Warren indicates in his description of Sir Peter Hall's 1988 production of the play at the National Theatre, Michael Bryant, playing Prospero, gave this last particular phrase 'a grandeur that left no doubt about the issues of power that were at stake'.[74] Prospero's transcendence over the levels of power available to the human renaissance monarch towards what is sub-divine brings us close to the type of deification of the monarch practised by the French in figuring Henri IV and by the Spanish in representing Charles V.[75] Corfield comes close to recognizing this when he finds that 'The fundamental aspiration of Prospero toward the gods is dramatically characterized in *The Tempest*… in terms of a dialectic between Caliban's association with the element earth and Ariel's connection with air.' Corfield notes that Prospero's striving for super-human levels of power drives him to search for the ethereal as opposed to the corporeal, noting that just as he abjures his magic, he sees Ariel released to the winds.[76] His claim that 'Prospero is closer to Ariel

[72] John Mebane sums up: 'It is quite natural that in *The Tempest*, the most fully realised of the romances, Shakespeare would focus on the figure of the magus, the most fully developed expression of renaissance hopes for the development of humankind's moral, intellectual and spiritual potential.' John S. Mebane, *Renaissance magic and the return of the Golden Age* (Nebraska, 1989), p. 176.

[73] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Martial law in the land of Cockaigne', in his *Shakespearean negotiations: the circulation of social energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 1988), p. 143.

[74] Roger Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's late plays* (Oxford, 1990), p. 163.

[75] See Corrado Vivanti, 'Henri IV, the Gallic Hercules', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 30 (1967), pp. 176–97, and Frances Yates, *Astraea: the imperial view in the sixteenth century* (London, 1993).

[76] Cosmo Corfield, 'Why does Prospero abjure his ''rough magic''?', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), p. 35. On the result of the abjuration Hamilton writes that the play therefore 'legitimizes the king's position while at the same time exerting pressure on it by legitimizing the position of the opposition' (*Virgil and The Tempest*, p. 54).

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than he is to us' is constrained by his not thinking beyond the text towards its political significance.[77]

Prospero is as far above the human as King James liked to think he was above his own subjects. In his speeches James continually asserted his divinely ordained position. In his 1605 speech to parliament James claimed such an elevation 'since Kings are in the word of God it selfe called Gods, as being his Lieutenants and Vice-gerents on earth, and so adorned and furnished with some sparkles of the Diuinitie'.[78] In his speech to parliament in 1609 he again emphasized that 'Kings are not only God's lieutenants vpon earth and sit vpon God's throne, but euen by God himselfe they are called Gods.'[79]

This was, furthermore, taken up by other writers. In a sermon preached before the king in 1606 John Buckeridge wrote:

> And Kings and Emperors, as they have their calling immediate from God, So they admit no superior on Earth but God, to whom only they must make their account. And so much Tertullian acknowledged, *Colinus imperatorem ut hominem a Deo secundum et solo Deo minorem* [We Christians know our Emperor as the second man after God, and minor to none but to God]. *Super imperatorem non est nisi solus Deus qui fecit Imperatorem*, saith Optatus [The Emperor admits no superior but that God that made the Emperor].[80]

We have therefore a monarch around whom these strands of mystique were wrapped, as they had been around Elizabeth I and Henry VIII, but one for whom the suggestion of empire was far more potent. Unlike Elizabeth, he had already made one imperial reconciliation, whatever some of his subjects happened to think about it, by taking the crown of England in 1603.[81] In this light *The Tempest* reveals a highly political charge, as Ferdinand draws emphasis to this royal conceit: 'sure, it waits upon Some god o' th' island' (I.ii.391–2) and as Prospero has been figured by Ferdinand as a god, so too then is Miranda, to whom Ferdinand addresses his 'Most sure the goddess On whom these airs attend!' (I.ii.424–5). Caliban too acknowledges the power Prospero possesses as being specifically on this divine level:

> his Art is of such pow'r
> It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
> And make a vassal of him.
>
> (I.ii.374–6)

[77] Corfield, 'Why does Prospero abjure his ''rough magic''?', p. 45. A sentiment echoed by Peter Hall's 1989 Stratford production of the play, where the actor playing Prospero, Michael Bryant, 'used this delighted, and delightful, moment [Act II, Scene i] to suggest that Prospero would rather deal with the world of Ariel's airy imagination than with Caliban's earthiness.' Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's late plays*, p. 168.

[78] *A speach in the parliament hovse, as neere the very words as covld be gathered at the instant* (1605), in McIlwain, *Political works*, p. 281.

[79] *A speach to the Lords and Commons of the parliament at White-hall, on Wednesday the XXI. of March. Anno 1609*, in ibid., p. 307.

[80] John Buckeridge, *A sermon preached at Hampton Court before the King's Majestie* (London, 1606), p. 12.

[81] See Richard Koebner, '"The imperial crown of this realm." Henry VIII, Constantine the Great and Polydore Vergil', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 26 (1953), pp. 29–52, for details.

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Prospero's 'Art', always given the capital letter 'A' in the Folio, is his magic, supposedly derived from his books, but Prospero is no Faustus. His is a compact with Lucifer, while Prospero's is a very different arrangement. In her discussion of witchcraft beliefs in early modern Scotland, Christina Larner noted the connection between what Prospero does through his magic and what it makes him associated with: 'The charm, the failed charm, the favourable prophecy, the unfavourable prophecy, and the curse are closely connected, and essentially fall from the lips of the same person, the person of power.'[82]

Prospero as duke of Milan has moved beyond this status – the power accorded him by Shakespeare is too great. Hence his decision to appear as he was as duke when confronting the courtiers – as his pawns they must only be able to see him as he chooses. His true guise as lord of the island is one of those matters of state, a true piece of *arcana imperii*. Such an explanation makes it somewhat easier to swallow the darker side of Prospero. Edwards has him as an 'unlovable authority figure' and notes that 'restraint, and control, and suppression are not attractive', yet for the Jacobean audience the man's behaviour is serving a greater purpose and is a matter to which the audience has been made privy. We know that he seeks the marriage and peace. We know that he has been grievously wronged and the audience must suspend judgmentalist liberality as Prospero goes about making right prevail. Here *right* happens fortunately to make *might*.[83]

In the play there is a strong current of *arcana imperii* surrounding what Prospero is *capable* of doing and what he chooses to tell his compatriots on the island *about* that power. Miranda never sees Ariel: she has spent her life on the island in ignorance of the spirit's existence. And if Miranda is kept in the dark so too, of course, are Caliban and those who arrive on the island. Prospero's enemies are never allowed to know either the extent or the source of his power. Gonzalo's fearful

> All torment, trouble, wonder and amazement
> Inhabits here. Some heavenly power guide us
> Out of this fearful country!
>
> (v.i.104–6)

is followed by Prospero's comfort to the old man which evades the truth:

> You do yet taste
> Some subtleties o' th' isle, that will not let you
> Believe things certain.
>
> (v.i.123–5)

'Things certain' are of course Prospero's way of saying 'trust me – I know what

[82] In the case of the doomed Doctor, Mephistophilis provides the power in the same manner that Prospero has his books; the difference lies in the fact that if Prospero can cast spells, Faustus cannot. Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: the witch-hunt in Scotland* (London, 1981), p. 142.

[83] Edwards, *Threshold of a nation*, p. 108. I do not, however, proceed with the subsequent descent into the darker side of the state of Prospero's island envisaged by Greenblatt who claims that 'Prospero's magic is the romance equivalent of martial law' (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean negotiations*, p. 156).

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I'm doing'. This rhetoric of royal mystique, the separation of the king from the people, was that which King James alluded to when he wrote 'that which concernes the mysterie of the Kings power, is not lawfull to be disputed'.[84] This is what allows Prospero to be elevated above human experience – he too has his 'secretest drifts'.[85] Prospero is, in effect, saying what James did in his speech in Star Chamber in 1616: 'If there fall out a question that concernes my Prerogatiue or mystery of State, deale not with it'.[86]

Prospero is the type of learned emperor which those who supported James VI and I's project for the establishment of the empire of Great Britain hoped for. Representing him as a philosopher-ruler and patriarch associated him with the national identity. Indeed, 'in his roles as father and magus ruler, Prospero participates in the most mystifying terms of royal ideological representation'.[87]

However, attempts to identify Prospero exactly with James flounder on the inherent difficulty of reconciling the positive elements of the character with its more awkward ramifications. Consider the attempt made by Donna Hamilton:

> Prospero, a ruler with magical and thus transcendent powers, stands in homologous relationship to King James and his concerns about his rights to a certain amount of power and to be served (and supplied) properly. Ariel and Caliban, who are in bondage and who continually express their longing for freedom, are homologous to the metaphors, idioms and rhetoric used in the Commons to express the subjects' right to liberty and freedom, their right to present grievances or to 'complain', and the fears of 'restraint' and loss of property…
> …Just as Ariel seeks Prospero's assurance that in exchange for tasks performed Prospero will grant him freedom, so the Commons wanted the king to know that they expected something in return for their willingness to grant supply.[88]

The final judgement on her thesis here is her own comment that the process of associating Prospero with James driven to its literal conclusion is that an identification of the female who had previously tried to control Ariel 'would seem to make Sycorax into a parody of Queen Elizabeth'.[89]If Shakespeare

[84] McIlwain, *Political works*, p. 333.

[85] In his *Basilikon Doron*. See ibid., p. 5. Indeed, James goes on to warn his son, 'Let them that haue the credite to serue in your Chalmer, be trustie and secret; for a King will haue need to vse secrecie in may things' (p. 44).

[86] Ibid., p. 332.

[87] Hamilton, *Virgil and The Tempest*, p. 43.

[88] Ibid., p. 48, p. 49.

[89] Ibid., p. 115. In a continuing series of comparisons she suggests elsewhere that Prospero rearing the young Ferdinand for marriage and rule mirrors the attention James paid to the upbringing of Henry (p. 37), that 'the element in Ferdinand's role that resonates with current affairs is the strong emphasis upon exercises in discipline and self-control in Prospero's education of him, an emphasis that registers contemporary anxieties, especially about the expansion of royal power and excessive royal expenditures' (p. 40), and that the idea of the marriage of Claribel was similar to the marriage of the princess Elizabeth (p. 41). Hamilton cites two letters written by Sir Walter Raleigh, one of which contained a comment ruling out Savoy which Raleigh claimed was too far away: 'Our kings of England… have no business over the Alps.' She then goes on to write that the result of the distance between Claribel and her home 'signifies to her father and countrymen the precariousness and unpredictability of their own future, a future that might have been better secured had the marriage been to someone else' (p. 42). Her suggestions are not convincing, especially in the light of the conclusion we reach, as noted above, in placing Queen Elizabeth within the tale Hamilton has constructed.

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were concerned with portraying a magician-ruler in this play, a flattering stage representation of King James, it might be expected that he or the King's Men would do so in other plays before the end of the reign in 1625. This did not happen – Prospero was one of a kind, and his surname was not Stewart.[90]

IV

'They abuse *Virginea*, but they are but *Players*: they disgrace it: true, but they are but *Players*... But why are the *Players* enemies to this *Plantation* and doe abuse it?'[91] William Crashaw was finding that the public theatre by 1609, when he read his sermon, was ridiculing the Virginia plantation. Yet this was clearly before *The Tempest*'s first performance in *c.* 1611, so we are forced to look elsewhere to find the source of such abuse. The play which fits the bill was the Jonson, Chapman, and Marston collaboration, *Eastward Ho*, famous for the fact that Jonson came close to having his ears cut off as a punishment for the play's anti-Scots satire.[92] Here Sir Petronel Flash, a newly made but impoverished knight plans to evade his new bride, whose lands he has just sold, in order to finance his Virginian escapade. Talking of his followers, Petronel laments

> Would I might lead them to no hotter seruice,
> Till our *Virginian* gould were in our purses.
>
> (III.ii.331–2)

Yet he would not be the only character on the Jacobean stage to seek a voyage to the colony to evade justice. Vaster in *The Honest Lawyer* (1616) plans to escape from the grasp of a usurer: 'Ile to *Virginia*, like some cheating Bankrout, and leaue my Creditour ith' suddes.'[93]

Eastward Ho also incorporates an extended scene in which the very idea of America as being a land of plenty is lampooned, and from it consider Captain Seagull's relation of the abundance of gold:

> SEAGULL: I tell thee, Golde is more plentifull there then Copper is with vs: and for as much redde Copper as I can bring, Ile haue thrice the waight in Golde. Why man all their dripping Pans, and their Chamber pottes are pure Gold; and all the Chaines, with which they chaine vp their streetes, are massie Golde; all the Prisoners they take, are fetterd in Gould: and for Rubies and Diamonds, they goe forth on holydayes and gather

[90] Orgel, ed., *The Tempest*, p. 4.

[91] William Crashaw, *A sermon preached in London before the right honorable the Lord Lawarre, lord governour and captaine generall of Virginea*... (London, 1610), sig. H4. Sig. H3^{v}-H4 deals with why he believed that players should not be allowed over to Virginia. His main objection to their being allowed to sail for the colony was the fact that they were idle, and he goes on to claim that their subsequent vitriol against Virginia was in fact a result of this ban on their departure. All references will be to Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston, *Eastward Hoe* (London, 1605), in Herford and Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, IV, pp. 487–619.

[92] According to Kawachi, the play was first performed on 16 June 1605, and subsequently in August 1613, and before James at court on 25 January 1614. Yoshiko Kawachi, *Calendar of English Renaissance drama, 1558–1642* (New York, 1986).

[93] S. S., *The honest lawyer* (London, 1616), sig. H4^{v}. Kawachi dates the play's first performance as between *c.* 1614 and 1615.

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'hem by the Sea-shore, to hang on their childrens Coates, and stick in their Cappes, as commonly as our children weare Saffron guilt Brooches, and groates with hoales in 'hem.[94]

(III.iii.22–8)

The idea of sailing to a land of supposed wealth and plenty when those who returned from it told a very different story was something which the playwrights clearly felt worthy of ridicule.

The *Masque of Flowers*, performed by the gentlemen of Gray's Inn in the Banqueting House at Whitehall on Twelfth Night 1613 for the marriage of Robert Carr and Frances Howard, also contrasts strongly with *The Tempest*.[95] Perhaps the most interesting of the American references in the masque, in that it is the most obscure, is the character of Kawasha. He is a comic figure representing tobacco in the debate with Silenus, who represents alcohol. It seems likely that the writer of the masque drew on the description of 'Kiwasa' in Purchas's *Purchas his pilgrimage*:

Their Idol called *Kiwasa*, is made of wood fower foote high, the face resembling the inhabitants of Florida, painted with flesh colour, the brest white, the other parts blacke, except the legges which are spotted with white; hee hath chaines or strings of beades about his necke.[96]

In the masque Kawasha enters 'borne upon two Indians' sholders attired like Floridans' (166–7) and his physical description is quite specific: 'His body and legs of olive-colour stuff, made close like the skin; bases of tobacco-colour stuff cut lke tobacco leaves, sprinkled with orsidue; in his hand an Indian bow and arrows' (176–9). The text of the masque is so particular as to point to the writer having seen the drawings of John White and Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, specifically the depiction of Kawasha as pictured on the frontispiece of Hariot's 1590 *Briefe and true report*.[97]

Less than six weeks after the *Masque of Flowers* Chapman too was figuring a piece in which many elements of the American plantation could be colourfully brought on to the streets of London. The *Memorable Masque* is preoccupied with a depiction of the Virginian natives as sun-worshippers and guardians of vast quantities of gold, a matter which in fact suggests a greater affinity with Guiana and El Dorado.[98] The masque, written for the Palatine marriage, bears all the

[94] The full scene is at III.iii.16–57. For an extended survey of the play, see Marshall, 'The idea of the British empire in the Jacobean public theatre', pp. 205–8.

[95] All references to the masque will be to E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *The masque of flowers* (1614), in T. J. B. Spencer and S. W. Wells, eds., *A book of masques: in honour of Allardyce Nicoll* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 149–77.

[96] Ibid., p. 165. Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage* (London, 1613), p. 638.

[97] Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (London, 1590). See also Paul Hulton, 'Images of the New World: Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues and John White', in Andrews, Canny, and Hair, eds., *The westward enterprise*, pp. 195–214, and Paul Hulton, *America, 1585: The complete drawings of John White* (North Carolina, 1984).

[98] George Chapman, *The Memorable Masque of the two honourable houses, or Inns of Court, the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn* (15 February 1613). All line references are to the text printed in Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, eds., *Inigo Jones and the theatre of the Stuart court*, I (Berkeley and London, 1973). See also D. J. Gordon, 'Chapman's *Memorable Masque*', in Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Renaissance imagination* (California, 1975), pp. 194–202.

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hallmarks of the late Prince Henry's thinking rather than that of his father and the setting of the play leaves little doubt as to the extent of its propaganda. On the stage is a rock veined with gold whose summit is made of gold, and as the priests of the sun enter the summit of the mountain opens disclosing the Virginians sitting in a gold mine. Behind them the sun sets in the sky, being the time of their sun worship. Of course it is James who is the sun, Eunomia telling the Virginian princes to renounce superstition and look to 'this our Briton Phoebus' (599).

Chapman's masque synthesizes everything positive about the overseas potential of the Americas, as represented in propaganda dating from the earliest period of Elizabethan expansionism into the New World. These are harmless peoples, 'their vizards of olive colour but pleasingly visaged' (line 38) ripe for proselytization. The difference between this vision and that portrayed in *The Tempest* could not be clearer: Caliban and Ariel are hardly a peaceful people, and if it is a mission of colonization then with the return of the 'invaders' at the close of the play, it has been a dismal failure.

What is most striking about the masque is not, however, as much the differences between the representations of things American – I have already claimed that *The Tempest* is not about America – as the points of contact between the two texts as historical documents relating to the idea of empire. They reveal that the play and the masque share much in terms of imperial iconography, though the masque is eminently more explicit in the manner in which it does this. In the masque we are told that

> Poets (our chief men of wit) answer that point directly, most ingeniously affirming that this isle is (for the excelling of it) divided from the world (divisus ad orbe Britannus) and that, though the whole world besides moves, yet this isle stands fixed on her own feet and defies the world's mutability.
>
> (285–90)

As Britain is a distinct island territory so too is the Virginian island which floats across the sea towards Britain: 'In which island (being yet in the command of the Virginian continent) a troop of the noblest Virginians inhabiting, attended hither the god of riches (299–302). Honour crosses 'The Briton ocean' (480), we are told that of the unity of love and beauty 'thus the golden world was made' (652), referring to the Palatine marriage, a triumph for militant Protestantism, and as the benediction Honour announces, 'may the blessings of the golden age Swim in their nuptials' (656–7).

Elements of the same imperial aspirations permeate both play and masque, yet it is the degree to which the *Memorable Masque* goes along the path of advocation of direct overseas intervention which ultimately makes it seem so far away from Shakespeare's play. To be more precise, the masque illustrates how an advertisement for overseas expansion *could* look, and makes *The Tempest* and criticism aiming at finding in it a support for colonialism look very weakly founded indeed.

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V

The Tempest has been twisted to fit many different pantheons of thought. It has been the source of many false trails and superimposed themes which have rendered its Jacobean context almost invisible behind its supposed American connection. Indeed, there has been a concerted preoccupation with fitting the play into a mould which renders more clearly a preconceived picture of the 'evils of imperialism' in a politically correct world, as critics have used selective historical fact as evidence without looking at the Jacobean picture. Shakespeare wrote a play at the time of both the Ulster plantation and the Virginia project, but he made only one major concession to the stockholders of the Virginia Company – he did not openly deride the plantation project. In this respect *Eastward Ho* bears more witness to a Virginia commentary than *The Tempest* ever does.

I believe that in this play Shakespeare's text, centring on the island and its ruler, manifests this concern with Britain as an insular and distinct community. When Philip Edwards therefore writes 'the play without any shadow of doubt continuously raises issues about the confrontation of the Old World with the New and by the indefiniteness of the geography it brings that confrontation back into Europe and everywhere else', he looks to an inherently *external* projection of the imperial thinking behind the play.[99] He throws the imperial context of *The Tempest* away from the theatres in London where it was performed.

To do this is to accentuate a process by which we look not at what the plays Shakespeare wrote meant for the immediate audience, but what they meant for the nation and beyond, the 'wider implications' as it were. True, Shakespeare is regarded as our national poet, but he wrote for people, for a theatre audience, and, in the case of *The Tempest*, one in 1611.[100]

'Revisionists claim that the New World material is not just present but is right at the centre of the play, and that it demands far more attention than critics have been willing to grant it', complains Meredith Skura. Evidently, the age of post-revisionism is upon us.[101]

[99] Edwards, *The threshold of a nation*, p. 103.

[100] Some would claim at this point that he was writing primarily for the court, in his role as a member of the King's Men, one of the most recent being the playwright Howard Brenton, who has called him 'an Establishment creep' ('Will of the people', *The Independent*, 2 June 1993, p. 14). Being a member of the theatre company under the royal patronage of a monarch who does not seem to have had much love for theatrical performances is not the ideal venue for the promotion of an 'official line', whatever the policy. Being under royal patronage gave the actors limited financial security, but, probably more importantly, it prevented their arrest as 'sturdy beggars', as their touring of the country was as men with no recognized job – the 1572 statute against vagrancy, the 'Acte for the Punishment of Vacabondes', had included 'Common Players' among its list of miscreants.

[101] Skura, 'Discourse and the individual', p. 44. In his introductory essay 'Theatre and government under the early Stuarts', J. R. Mulryne notes (p. 5) that in this field of interpreting Jacobean theatre in general 'there are signs that a newer revisionism is needed and underway'. See J. R. Mulryne and M. Shewring, eds., *Theatre and government under the early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1–28.

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