The Tempest and the New World

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SHAKESPEARE SETS THE ACTION of The Tempest on an island in the Mediterranean, an island somewhere between Naples and Tunis. Yet there appear to be, at the very least, several glances in the play toward the New World. Ariel speaks of fetching magic dew from the “still-vex’d Bermoothes” (I. ii. 229). Caliban says that Prospero’s Art is powerful enough to control the god worshiped by Caliban’s mother and, apparently, by Caliban, a god named “Setebos” (I. ii. 375; V. i. 261), who was in fact worshiped by South American natives. Trinculo mentions the English willingness to pay a fee “to see a dead Indian” (II. ii. 33). And Miranda exclaims upon seeing the courtiers resplendent in their finery: “O brave new world! That has such people in ’t!” (V. i. 182–83).1

I

In the eighteenth century, scholars traced Shakespeare's use of Setebos to Richard Eden's sixteenth-century accounts of Magellan’s experience with Patagonian natives who “cried upon their great devil Setebos to help them.” In 1808, Edmond Malone argued that Shakespeare derived the title and some of the play’s incidents from accounts of a storm and shipwreck experienced by Sir Thomas Gates and other Jamestown colonists on the Bermuda islands in 1609.2 Ever since these discoveries or, more precisely, allegations of source and influence, Shakespeareans have been asking: “What has The Tempest to do, if anything, with the New World?”

Commentators in the nineteenth century were, for the most part, unwilling to advance beyond recognition of such casual and fragmentary borrowings

1 Citations are to Frank Kermode, ed., The Tempest, the Arden Edition (London: Methuen, 1954).
2 Richard Eden, The Decades of the Newe World of West India (London, 1555), p. 219; Richard Eden, The History of Trauayle in the West and East Indies (London, 1577), p. 434; the quotation has been modernized. Both Eden’s account of 1555 and the expansion by Richard Wilkes in 1577 rely upon shortened versions of Antonio Pigafetta’s narration of Magellan’s voyage, a narration that had been published by Ramusio and others and been widely circulated in French and Italian versions. What scholar first connected Shakespeare’s “Setebos” to the Patagonians remains a mystery. Richard Farmer cites Eden in correspondent’s notes to the Johnson-Steevens editions of The Tempest (2nd ed., 1778) but mentions others who made the connection of Setebos and Patagonia through sources (non-Elizabethan) other than Eden. Farmer does not mention Setebos in his famous Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1767). Malone discusses connections between The Tempest and the Jamestown adventurers in his Account of the Incidents from Which the Title and Part of the Story of Shakespeare’s Tempest Were Derived (London, 1808).

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from Eden and the Bermuda pamphlets as have been mentioned. But at the
turn of the century and thereafter, Sidney Lee, Morton Luce, Charles Mills
Gayley, and others began to assert much more detailed and sweeping
connections between Shakespeare and the entire colonial enterprise of the Virginia
Company.8 Luce in the Introduction and Appendix to his Arden edition of The
Tempest worked mainly in terms of parallel passages. But Gayley tried to go
further. According to Gayley, Shakespeare knew many of the men who were
active in the Jamestown venture and, as an “aristo-democratic” meliorist,
supported such vaguely defined colonial ideals as independence, freedom, and
a sense of obligation to society.4 Shakespeare, thought Gayley, was “above”
the average beliefs of his day, and in his wise and conscientious patriotism he
should provide inspiration to an England engaged in righteous battle against
the tyrannous Hun. Gayley’s thesis that Shakespeare acquired liberal views
from men of the Virginia Company was swiftly countered and partially refuted
by A. W. Ward. But enthusiasts such as Sidney Lee and Robert Cawley
insisted that in The Tempest problematic relations between Caliban and the
rest were meant to reflect problematic relations between the American natives
and the Virginia settlers.8

At this point entered the genial skeptic E. E. Stoll. Taking his cue from
Juvenal’s remark that it is difficult not to write satire, Stoll excoriated Gayley
and his followers for taking such “great pains to endeavor to prove acquaint-
ance on Shakespeare’s part with the promoters of colonizing in Virginia, and
sympathy with their motives and aspirations . . . Shakespeare himself says not
a word to that effect. Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, and the rest sing of the New
World and Virginia, but not Shakespeare.”86 Determined to cancel out the
image of “Shakespeare with his prophetic eyes upon us!” Stoll argued: “There
is not a word in the Tempest about America or Virginia, colonies or colonizing,
Indians or tomahawks, maize, mocking-birds, or tobacco. Nothing but the
Bermudas, once barely mentioned as a faraway place, like Tokio or Mandalay.
His interest and sympathy Shakespeare keeps to himself” (p. 487).

8 After Malone’s Account, the subject was not treated exhaustively until Morton Luce edited
the Arden Tempest editions of 1902, 1919, and 1926. Sidney Lee argued that Caliban resembled an
American Indian and Prospero a planter, in articles of 1907 and 1913 and in a revised edition of
Hale argued, in Prospero’s Island (New York: Dramatic Museum of Columbia University, 1919),
that Shakespeare probably met the adventurers and read the narratives of Bartholomew Gosnold’s
voyage to the New England coast in May of 1602. Henry Cabot Lodge, in the Introduction to
Hale’s book (p. 15), mentions that Walter Raleigh, writing in the MacLehose edition of Hakluyt,
Vol. 12, said: “Shakespeare, almost alone, saw the problem of American settlement in a detached
light.”

4 Gayley writes in this vein: Shakespeare “believed in the right of the individual to liberty,
property and the pursuit of happiness; in equality before the law; and in law ‘all-binding, keeping
form and due proportion;’ in even-handed justice; in duty to the common order in society and
state; in fraternity of effort and patriotic allegiance. Like the best of them he affirmed right
conscience as arbiter of internal issues; and he believed in a God overruling with justice the affairs
of all nations.” Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America (New York: Macmillan, 1917),
p. 161.

Press, 1919); Robert Ralston Cawley, “Shakespeare’s Use of the Voyagers in The Tempest,”
PMLA, 41 (1926), 688–726. Cawley followed this with two books, The Voyagers and Elizabethan
Drama (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1938), and Unpathed Waters: Studies in the Influence of the Voyagers

47 Certain Fallacies and Irrelevancies in the Literary Scholarship of the Day,” Studies in
Philology, 24 (1927), 487.
Despite Stoll’s protestations, however, the Virginia or New World claimants, if we may call them that, have continued, undeterred, to maintain and in some respects to strengthen their position. Most persuasive to contemporary Shakespeareans, perhaps, are essays by scholars such as Frank Kermode, Geoffrey Bullough, and Hallett Smith discussing New World materials as they may have influenced The Tempest. Speaking of certain Bermuda pamphlets, Professor Kermode concludes that in writing The Tempest “Shakespeare has these documents in mind.” Professor Bullough lists a host of notions found in travel literature on the New World and says: “All these ideas came into Shakespeare’s mind and affected the characterization and texture of his play. He was not writing a didactic work; nevertheless, approval of the Virginia Company’s aims, and recognition of its difficulties seem to be implied in his depiction of Prospero, Caliban, and the intruders into the island.” Professor Smith notes that Richard Eden’s accounts of explorations by Magellan and others tell of St. Elmo’s fires in ship’s rigging, Indians who die before their captors can exhibit them in Europe, Caliban-like natives who seek for grace, Utopian, golden world innocence, strange roaring sounds heard in woods, dogs used to pursue natives, natives interested in music, mutinies suppressed, and so on. Smith concludes: “Shakespeare’s imagination, at the time he wrote The Tempest, would appear to have been stimulated by the accounts of travel and exploration in the new world.”

Kermode, Bullough, and Smith typify those scholars concerned to show what accounts of the New World Shakespeare probably had in mind when he constructed The Tempest. Other scholars form a second group of New World advocates more concerned to show how prophetic the play seems today, particularly in its depiction of sociopolitical problems within colonial and developing nations. As Leslie Fiedler, one of the more extreme proponents, would have it, by the time Prospero has put down the plot of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo,

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. With even more astonishing prescience, The Tempest foreshadows as well the emergence of that democracy of fugitive white slaves, deprived and cultureless refugees from a Europe they never owned, which D. H. Lawrence was so bitterly to describe. And it prophesies, finally, like some inspired piece of science fiction before its time, the revolt against the printed page, the anti-Gutenberg rebellion for which Marshall McLuhan is currently a chief spokesman.

Writers in this mode tend to weave elaborate themes of colonialism, race relations, and cultural history out of The Tempest. But they sometimes work

out themes of even broader design, as when Leo Marx, with convincing particularity, suggests ways in which "the topography of The Tempest anticipates the moral geography of the American imagination." If Kermode, Bullough, and Smith tend, in the fashion of traditional source study, to connect The Tempest to the history that predates it, the visionary group that includes Fiedler and Marx connect the play more to the history that postdates it. Both groups are willing, however, to go beyond the local, immediate, sensuous life of the text. And it is in this respect, primarily, that they challenge Stoll’s assertion that there is nothing in The Tempest about America.

Professor Stoll would have us view The Tempest solely as drama, distrusting any source-hunting that might turn us away from the local artistic context. It is always tempting to see art as self-contained and autonomous, as having no need for any cumbersome historical "interpretation." Thus Northrop Frye writes:

It is a little puzzling why New World imagery should be so prominent in The Tempest, which really has nothing to do with the New World, beyond Ariel's reference to the "still- vexed Bermoothes" and a general, if vague, resemblance between the relation of Caliban to the other characters and that of the American Indians to the colonizers and drunken sailors who came to exterminate or enslave them.12

Frye concedes a degree of New World presence in the very text of the play, of course, primarily in the imagery (though just what images are truly indigenous to the New World, in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, remains problematic). But he resembles Stoll in asserting that the historical context of the New World bears little relevance to the inner, self-enclosed, self-referential working of the play. The real argument here is over the functions of drama—over, in Hamlet’s terms, the purpose of playing. Professors Stoll and Frye, in arguing that The Tempest has nothing to do with the New World, associate themselves with a kind of formalism or aestheticism that is too little concerned with historically-conditioned meanings of language. They commit, as Robert Weimann puts it in his essay on "Shakespeare and the Study of Metaphor," the "autonomous fallacy."13

II

When works of art are asked to generate their own meanings, they and culture generally suffer. For language is never autonomous. Considered in its

13 New Literary History, 6 (1974), 166. Bruce Erlich, in an unpublished paper presented to the Seminar on Marxist Interpretations of Shakespeare at the 1976 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, has argued, in somewhat more convincing fashion than the authors listed in note 10 above, that we may have a duty at times, and in our time, to play down the purely aesthetic or "beautiful" dimensions of The Tempest and recognize instead "how a work of profound social realism can be written in the mode of romance and 'sacramental allegory'" (p. 11).
most elemental form, as the paper and ink of a text, *The Tempest* has no content at all. It is only when we assign to the print information in our minds that it takes on meaning. The issue is always: What information shall we assign? What are the best standards of relevant information?

For centuries, men and women have read or heard Caliban promise Stephano:

> I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;  
> And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts;  
> Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how  
> To snare the nimble marmoset; I'll bring thee  
> To clustering filberts, and sometimes I'll get thee  
> Young scamels from the rock.

(II. ii. 167–72)

Any reader or hearer's imagination may supply a general context, no matter how vague, for pig-nuts and the nimble marmoset. But “scamels” is another matter. What happens in the brain when that word is first perceived? One may be totally at a loss. Or one may assume that a variety of bird or shellfish or other edible, unknown to one because of limited experience, is referred to. A reader who consults notes or reference works will find that “scamel” appears, without much authority, in a dialect dictionary as the name for a kind of bird. But the majority of editors favor emending “scamel” in *The Tempest* to “seamell,” another variety of bird. My point is that we must go “outside” the play to apprehend and create meanings for words and passages within it.

Useful evidence for many such meanings in *The Tempest* is provided by outside reading in travel literature of the New World. There is good reason to believe that Shakespeare had read or heard of Magellan's encounter with the Patagonians who worshiped Setebos. French and Italian accounts of Magellan's or, more properly, El Cano's circumnavigation of 1519–22 were widely circulated and discussed in Shakespeare's day; they relate that the men, off Patagonia, ate small fish described as “fort scameneux” and “squame.” The possibility that Shakespeare, in referring to “scamels,” is adapting a foreign word like “squamelle” (that is, furnished with little scales) would seem worth investigating. But, whether or not a new source and image for “scamels” became thus established, the larger question would remain: not so much what Shakespeare's actual sources were, but what linguistic and narrative force-field we should bring to the play to disclose its meanings.

Shakespeareans interested in accounts of the New World voyagers have tended to restrict their focus to those accounts which Shakespeare is traditionally assumed to have read, as if only his reading could make the accounts inform *The Tempest* and, further, as if his reading necessarily would make a given account inform the play. I believe that we should question whether such source study is in fact the most productive and rewarding approach to a play.

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15 “Squama” may be found, for example, in Thomas Eliot's English *Dictionary* (1538), Thomas Thomas' Latin *Dictionarium* (1587), and John Florio's Italian lexicon, *Queen Anna's New World of Words* (1611). The OED lists “squamellate,” and Littré's *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* lists “squamelle.”
such as *The Tempest.* Whether or not Shakespeare had read Eden's narrative of Magellan's voyage, such accounts can inform or illuminate *The Tempest* because they provide models of Renaissance experience in the New World.

The French and Italian accounts cited above were well-known in Shakespeare's time, and they mention that two of the mutineers against Magellan were named Antonio and Sebastian. With the help of one Gonzalo Gomez de Espinosa, Magellan put the mutiny down. We are told, in addition, that one of the ships in Magellan's fleet was wrecked but that "all the men were saved by a miracle, for they were not even wetted." One recalls the assertion by Shakespeare's Gonzalo that "almost beyond credit" the garments of the court party hold their freshness and are "rather new-dyed than stained with salt water" (II. i. 61–62). It would begin to appear that a New World venture in addition to the Jamestown model provides a model for the play. Whether or not Shakespeare read this or any other account of Magellan's voyage, these were the sorts of terms, names, and incidents that were being bruited about. Magellan's voyage was discussed as polar or lunar expeditions have been in modern times. We need to read the voyage literature, therefore, not necessarily to find out what Shakespeare read, but to ascertain what Shakespeare and his audience together would have been likely to know—what they would have gathered from a variety of sources. We need to determine what information and what special responsiveness we as readers and spectators of *The Tempest* should bring to the play.

To gain a command of notions about the New World that an Elizabethan would have found embodied in *The Tempest,* modern students of the play's backgrounds must read not only Eden's sketch but also the other accounts of Magellan and, beyond those, the various accounts of other voyages and voyagers. To do so is to find that there are telling patterns of entry into the New World.

**III**

To some extent, the voyagers carried their perceptions with them ready-made. It is a truism that from Columbus onward, Old World names for flora and fauna, Old World beliefs about golden age primitives, and so on were imposed upon the life of the New World. But, in journeys of thousands of miles and thousands of days, the old order was left behind, too. Voyagers attempting circumnavigation from Europe around the tip of South America usually sailed down the west coast of Africa, arced across to Brazil, and then worked their way south into the colder and stormier latitudes of Argentina's coast. It was at about this point, on entering the vicinity of Port San Julian (somewhat north of Tierra del Fuego) and on encountering the strange, big, naked Patagonian natives, that voyagers began to lose their confidence and their imported "understanding." Here we find repeated accounts of mutiny and miracle.

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When Drake circumnavigated the globe in 1577–80, he partially followed Magellan’s route. His party knew in some detail of Magellan’s experiences. And Drake, like Magellan, suffered a mutiny at Port San Julian, a mutiny which he, too, suppressed. At about the same time, his men were encountering the Patagonian natives and hearing, once more, of their god—this time heard pronounced as “Settaboth.” Drake’s chaplain, one Francis Fletcher, kept a journal in which he recorded details of the encounters with the Patagonians. Again, some of the resemblances to happenings in *The Tempest* are striking. It will be recalled that when Alonso and his party come upon the banquet presented by the “several strange Shapes” Prospero and Ariel have summoned, the response of Gonzalo is one of amazement and gratitude:

If in Naples
I should report this now, would they believe me?
If I should say, I saw such islanders,—
For, certes, these are people of the island,—
Who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet, note,
Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of
Our human generation you shall find
Many, nay, almost any.

(III. iii. 27–34)

Compare Francis Fletcher’s account of the first meeting between Drake’s men and the Patagonians. Fletcher speaks of “making a stay to look for the coming of the ships which were not yet come after a most deadly tempest”:

Herewith the General with some of his company went on shore where the Giant men and women with their children repaired to them showing themselves not only harmless, but also most ready to do us any good and pleasure. Yea they showed us more kindness than many Christians would have done, nay more than I have for my own part found among many of my Brethren of the Ministry in the church of God.19

Fletcher goes on to say that the natives brought them such food “as their country yielded in most kind and familiar sort.” A little later, the party lands upon a small island. Thinking to gather eggs there, they are overwhelmed with birds, in Fletcher’s words, “more and more overcharged with feathered enemies whose cries were terrible, and their powder and shot poisoned us unto even death if the sooner we had not retired.” In *The Tempest*, of course, Ariel, in guise of a Harpy (reminiscent of the one encountered in the *Aeneid*), claps

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his wings upon the banquet table and drives back the court party who, like Fletcher’s party, have drawn their swords.

The next incident Fletcher describes is that of seeing the natives “in divers companies upon several hills not far from us with leaping, dancing, and great noise and cries with voices like the bulls of Basan.” One recalls Gonzalo’s mention at the banquet scene of “mountaineers / Dew-lapp’d like bulls” (III. iii. 44–45).

Fletcher also tells of a native being introduced to wine:

Another of the Giants standing with our men taking their morning’s draughts showed himself so familiar with us that he also would do as they did who taking the glass in his hand (being strong with canary wine) it came not to his lips when it tooke him by the nose and so suddenly entered into his head that he was so drunk or at the least so overcome with the spirit of the wine that he fell flat.

Fletcher says that the giant then sat up and tasted the wine and conceived an insistent liking for it—all reminiscent of Caliban’s inebriating encounter with Stephano and Trinculo.

Finally, Fletcher recounts an incident that could well stand behind Caliban’s famous speech to his companions upon hearing Ariel’s tabor and pipe. Caliban says:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That, if I then had wak’d after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak’d,
I cried to dream again.

(III. ii. 133–41)

Fletcher writes of the Patagonians:

They begin to dance and the more they stir their stumps the greater noise or sound they give and the more their spirits are ravished with melody in so much that they dance like madmen and cannot stay themselves unto death if some friend pluck not away the baubles, which being taken away they stand as not knowing what is become of themselves for a long time. In the great storms whereof we have spoken before, myself having some loss of good things spoiled in my trunk . . . , among other things glass vials, bottles, went to wreck among the which, some being covered with wicker rods, the broken glass remained within the cases, whereof one being in my hand and making noise, one of the Giants supposing it to be an instrument of music must of necessity have it, which, when he had received, he and his companies were so overcome with the sweetness of the music that, he shaking the glass and dancing, they all followed and danced after his pipe over mountains and valleys, hills and dales, day and night, till all the strings were consumed. For, the glass being continually laboured, did become small powder and wasted by little and little quite away, and the music ended. The next day they came again but all a morte that their sweet instrument had lost its sound and made great means to have another.

In *The Tempest*, Caliban leads his companions after Ariel’s music, and Ariel later says that he “charm’d their ears,” led them long ways, and left them
“dancing.” And, somewhat in the fashion of Fletcher’s natives, they, too, lament the loss of their bottles.

We thus find combined in Fletcher’s narrative the tempest; the mutiny; the natives with their god Settaboth; their natives’ kindness, thought to exceed that of many Christians (with the telling repetition of Fletcher’s “more kindness than many . . . nay more than I have . . . found among many” in Shakespeare’s “more . . . kind, than . . . you shall find / Many, nay, almost any”); the incident of swords drawn against birds who prevent food-getting; the description of a giant becoming drunk; and the incident of the giants ravished with sweet music and dancing after it. Fletcher may have made part or all of it up, or put together an amalgam of travelers’ tales. But the similarities between his narrative and Shakespeare’s play help us define what Elizabethans wanted to crystallize out of a strange and brave new world. Reading contemporary accounts of the voyagers illuminates The Tempest, in part, by widening our notions of New World concerns beyond colonial politics and race relations to the very stuff of romance. Shakespeare shared with Fletcher, the Bermuda pamphleteers, and others an interest in tempests, shipwrecks, and mutinies, an interest in exotic fish and fowl, an interest in natives and their offerings, in native manners and native music—in short, an interest in the same matters that absorbed all the travelers of his day. We will never settle how much of this material was indigenous to the Western Hemisphere and how much was imported in the minds of men who came from Europe. But that Magellan, Drake, Cavendish, and, no doubt, others should have met with tempests, mutinies, and cross-kind natives all in a particular part of the New World seems less important than the way their overlapping experience helped define what a new world might be.20 By reading the voyagers, in other words, we can read Shakespeare with a keener appreciation of how aspirations and events having to do with the New World become universalized in The Tempest.

IV

Just as reading about the southern voyages can help to enlarge and vivify our perception of New World concerns, so reconsideration of connections between

20 Re Cavendish, see The Last Voyage of Thomas Cavendish: 1591–1592, ed. David Beers Quinn (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976). The example of the Patagonian worshipers of Settebos is one of the best to illustrate how factual perceptions and fictional projections of Old World observers blended to create a Renaissance image of New World inhabitants. Pigafetta encountered the Patagonians in 1520, and his “grotesque portrait remained a legend for several centuries—a cliche and a stimulus for the inquisitive European mind. No less a philosopher than Vico made the Patagones the prototypes of a barbaric and heroic humanity” (Antonello Gerbi, “The Earliest Accounts of the New World,” in First Images of America, 1, 41–42). Cf. Joseph Hall, The Discovery of a New World, trans. J. Healey (London, 1609), sig. A4r, in The Discovery . . . ed. Huntington Brown (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1937), p. 13: “If one of your Patagonian Giants should catch you and eat you quite vp, where are you then my fine discoverer?” And cf. Thomas Lodge, A Margarite of America (London, 1596), Dedication: “Touching the place where I wrote this, it was in those straits christned by Magelan; in which place to the southward many wonderous Isles, many strange fishes, many monstrous Patagones withdrew my senses; briefly, many bitter and extreme frosts at midsummer continually clothe and clad the uncomfortable mountaines; so that as there was great wonder in the place wherein I writ this, so likewise might it be maruell’d, that in such scantie fare, such causes of fear, so mightie discouragements, and many crosses, I should deserve or eternize anything.” Such accounts as these help explain Shakespeare’s wondrous island setting, his Patagonian Caliban, his references to “strange fish,” “monsters,” and men jostled from their “senses.” These are the standard stuff of both travel narratives and romance.
The Tempest and Jamestown can help to refocus the issues, particularly with relation to the balance of interest between history and romance.

Among the Virginia backgrounds, for example, is a pamphlet of 1610 by one of the Bermuda survivors, Richard Rich. Though Rich's Newes from Virginia has been noted by Luce and others for its spelling “Bermoothawes” (closer to Shakespeare's than the spellings elsewhere), the full suggestiveness of the pamphlet has never been brought out. Writing in eight-line tetrameter stanzas, Rich describes the miraculous survival of the group shipwrecked in the Bermudas in 1609. He then goes on to proselytize on behalf of Jamestown. He mentions that two members of the company were lost. And though a son and daughter were born during the Bermuda stay (as if in compensation), the colonists were, in Rich's words,

... opprest with grief
and discontent in mind.
They seem'd distracted and forlorn,
for these two worthies' loss,
Yet at their home return they joyed,
among'st them some were cross.21

Into the midst of these Alonsos, Gonzalos, and Antonios—the distracted, the joyful, and the cross—comes the "noble Delaware" who, in Prospero's manner, "comforts them and cheers their hearts." Rich mentions a worthy knight named Ferdinando among the men who assist Delaware and, like Shakespeare's log-bearing Ferdinand, "unto their labor fall, / as men that mean to thrive." As for the Virginia commonwealth, Rich speaks of "this plantation" and says: "we hope to plant a nation, / where none before hath stood." Gonzalo in The Tempest, imagining the "plantation" of the isle, insists that there "all things in common nature should produce." Rich, too, writes of nature's plenty—fish, fowl, grapes, strawberries—and of a land like Gonzalo's "commonwealth" where "There is indeed no want at all," where "every man shall have his share," "every man shall have a part." And in an address to the reader, Rich concludes, à la Prospero, with an Epilogue:

As I came hither to see my native land,
To waft me back lend me thy gentle hand.

My point is not that Shakespeare must have read Rich, though it seems likely he did. My point is that we tend not to appreciate the extent to which some themes, situations, incidents, and even phrases in The Tempest were part of the common coin of Shakespeare's day. To examine this coin, to read such accounts of the voyagers and adventurers, is to enrich one's understanding of the play. Shakespeare shows how what happened and what was hoped for tended to mingle in the minds of far travelers who said they found what they sought, their woes all changed to wonder, and their losses yielding to greater gain.

A final example must suffice. At the heart of The Tempest lies the scene in which Ferdinand labors for love. He asks Miranda: "What is your name?" She replies:

21 Newes from Virginia: The Lost Flocke Triumphant (London, 1610), II, 59-64.
Miranda.—O my father,
I have broke your hest to say so!

Fer. —Admir’d Miranda!
Indeed the top of admiration! worth
What’s dearest to the world!

(III. i. 36–39)

One has but to turn to the title page of Thomas Harriot’s Brief and True Report on Virginia (in de Bry’s widely circulated Latin translation of 1590) to find the striking head-phrase describing what is to follow in the Report: Admiranda narratio, it says.22

V

We now come to the dynamic crossing of history and romance. What Harriot, the sober scientist and historian, would describe as a brief and true report, de Bry, the publisher, sees as a narration to be admired. What grime and agony Richard Rich experienced in the Bermudas and at Jamestown become transmuted into the glitter of the balladeer. What tempests and shipwreck, mutinies and discontent, were suffered by travelers often become, in the eventual success of the journey, metamorphosed into fortunate falls. In melding history and romance, therefore, Shakespeare merely dramatized what his contemporaries enacted.23 Richard Rich promises that each of his fellows who comes to Virginia will have a house and a “garden plot.” In Prospero’s masque for Miranda and Ferdinand, Ceres is summoned from the “sea-marge, sterile and rocky-hard,” to “this grass plot,” “this short-grass’d green.” And Ferdinand finds that this “most majestic vision” makes him want to “live here ever” with Miranda and the “wonder’d” Prospero who “makes this place Paradise” (IV. i). As Shakespeare saw, our imaginations project in every world, old and new, the same surpassing story of a will to make a garden in a wilderness, to find the human fellowship that lies all around us.24

22 Theodor de Bry, ed., Admiranda narratio fida tamen, de commodis et incolarum ritibus Virginiae . . . Anglico scripta sermones, a Thoma Hariot (Frankfurt, 1590). This is Part 1 of de Bry’s America series. The title pages in other volumes refer to “admiratione” (Part 5) and “admiranda historia” (Part 4). The title page of the Harriot volume bears an engraving of a figure seated on an animal’s skull which has a string of beads or, more probably, pearls above its eyes. “Full fathom five thy father lies; / Of his bones are coral made; / Those are pearls that were his eyes. . . .”

23 In his essay “Shakespeare’s Brave New World” in First Images of America, 1, 83–89, Paul A. Jorgensen appears terminally undecided about the possible influence of New World voyaging upon The Tempest. Of actions and ideas in the play Jorgensen says: “All can be traced to conventions, literary and philosophical, independent of the new geography” (pp. 86–87). Yet he suggests at the same time that concerns of the play may have been stimulated by contemporary thought about the New World. Such confusion may be lessened if two observations are kept in mind: (1) The Tempest should not be set off as fiction against the “new geography” or any historical phenomenon as fact. The term “new geography” tends to disguise the point, discussed above, that accounts of the New World cannot be dissociated from the projective, fiction-making, creative aspect of history-writing. (2) Romance, like other kinds of literature, feeds on contemporary thought, on “history,” and not merely on self-enclosed “conventions.” Just as today’s dominant forms of romance, such as science fiction and the detective story, explore contemporary notions of what it means to journey to outerworld or underworld, so Shakespeare’s romances explore contemporary issues connecting Old World and New.

24 The enthusiastic may see Shakespeare’s interest in the romance voyaging mode opening up through Antony and Cleopatra, the sea-tossed Pericles first tempted by the “fair Hesperides,” the travels and travails in Cymbeline between pastoral Wales in a “swan’s nest” Britain and the old and
Shakespeare’s *Tempest* ends with a grand gathering. Prospero in his ducal attire confronts his one-time enemy Alonso, forgives him, embraces the good counselor Gonzalo, and offers forgiveness to Antonio, whom many have found not only unworthy of such forgiveness but unwilling to respond in kind. Then Miranda and Ferdinand are discovered. The Sailors return, amazed at their own survival. And, lastly, Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban enter to stand in wonder before the gathering. Says Caliban, all breathless: “O Setebos, these be brave spirits indeed!” (V. i. 261). We are invited, for a moment, to look at representatives of the Old World through New World eyes. As it turns out, Setebos could not ward off, was no match for, such Europeans. To read about the New World voyagers is to see why. In their combination of apparent magic and mastery over the elements, in their greed and missionary zeal, in their hopes for gain and for grace, the voyagers, like the visitors to Prospero’s isle (or is it Caliban’s?), earned for themselves that peculiar mix of mockery and admiration that an audience finds in Caliban’s term “brave spirits.”

The question, finally, of what *The Tempest* has to do with the New World becomes wonderfully rich and strange. I should not wish to impel the play totally out of history into an autonomous imaginative construct, nor would I impel it too far in the other direction, reducing it to an historical document.25

*Intriguing but also law-giving world of Italy/Rome, and the sea voyage in The Winter’s Tale from sophisticated Sicilia to rustic, golden age Bohemia. Cf. A. L. Rowse, The Elizabethans and America* (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 190: “The influence of the voyagers speaks in them all, inciting the imagination to strange scenes and countries across the seas.” More important, and deserving further exploration, however, is Shakespeare’s habit of cross-qualifying romance and history as well as utopian and dystopian “strange scenes” (“strange” being the talismanic word of *The Tempest*). Henry VIII, written next after *The Tempest*, is obviously both history and romance as it matches the falls of Buckingham, Wolsey, and Katherine against Cranmer’s providential vision of James: “Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine, / His honour and the greatness of his name / Shall be, and make new nations” (V. iv. 50–52). Thus the romances, especially *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, progress toward the colonial commentary of *Henry VIII*, portraying England as an actor in world history viewed as masque—that is, theatrical play acted by historical, non-play personages. Shakespeare shows that colonial history must not be too easily read in terms of providential romance. Insofar as *The Tempest* glances at the “new nation” of Virginia or any utopia via Gonzalo’s “plantation ... commonwealth,” Miranda’s “brave new world,” or Prospero’s isle itself, it suggests that the will to make a garden in the wilderness must not relax in assurance of divine guidance but must assert itself in the discipline, freely-accepted servitude, long learning, confinement, and labor all so repeatedly stressed in the play. This stress upon the willed labor it takes to earn providential reward, in Caliban’s terms to “seek for grace,” is a crucial item in reports of voyagers and colonists. Cf. Edmund S. Morgan, “The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607–18,” *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), 595–611. This stress helps keep the apt balance in *The Tempest* between romance and history, providence and human will, which is slighted by providentialists who fail to recognize the painful labor of those who would “insert a fictional career into the unfolding of time” (George Slover, “Shakespeare’s Sense of History: Preface to an Analogical Reading of *The Tempest*,” unpub., p. 3) and slighted by antiprovidentialists who fail to recognize the prayerful praise echoing through the play that “trees all faults.” Cf. Jorgensen’s emphasis on the “rigorous testing” and “benevolent pessimism” of the play, in *First Images*, I, 87, or Jan Kott’s notion that “The Tempest is the most bitter of Shakespeare’s plays” because “nothing is purified” (“The Tempest, or Repetition,” *Mosaic*, 10 [1977], 21, 36).

25 On connections between utopian discourse (analogous to “romance”) and travelers’ narratives (analogous to “history”), see the suggestive, if opaque, essay by Frederick Jameson, “Of Islands and Trenches: Naturalization and the Production of Utopian Discourse,” *Diacritics*, 7 (1977), 2–21, especially 16–17, arguing that travel narratives often absorb description into narrative and nature into culture (for example, seeing the Patagonians as super-Christian in kindness or Caliban as noble savage) whereas utopias tend to absorb narrative into description, culture and history into timeless, ideal nature, so that utopias like More’s and Prospero’s threaten “to turn around into their opposite, a more properly dystopian repression of the unique existential experi-

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With many new worlds, including ours, *The Tempest* does, in truth, have much to do. And as I have tried to suggest, in order to explore the meanings implicit in the play's peculiar merger of history and romance, interpreters must travel and labor still onward.

ence of individual lives” (p. 17). Cf. Stephen J. Greenblatt, “More, Role-Playing, and Utopia,” *Yale Review*, 67 (1978), 517–36. In *The Tempest*, the central device for interpenetration of timeless design and temporal human will is the masque which three times in the play presents magic spectacle but then reaches out, in “interruption” to its audience, so that men are made aware of acting against a background of divine/demonic drama, and, again, romance and history meet. All of these perspectives upon *The Tempest*—voyagers' projections and perceptions, romance and history, utopia and dystopia, masque and anti-masque—help reveal reasons for the persistent balance of optimistic and pessimistic readings of the play.