

SAA 2013: *The Tempest* seminar abstracts

“Dukedom large enough”: The Prospero Trap

Al Cacicedo

Writing about Miranda, Jessica Slights argues that one can consider the character as her own agent and at the same time acknowledge her “embeddedness in a formative social and political community.”¹ Slights is in part reacting to a reading of Miranda—and from the point of view of other discursive frameworks, of Caliban and Ariel and the gentlemen who find themselves shipwrecked on the island as well—as a victimized puppet, controlled by grand master Prospero. Prospero, it seems, stands above the ideological apparatus that he wields as he controls the other characters, and his control is, as my students almost invariably assert, make him a kind of god. As a sort of transcendental subject, then, Prospero seems to be an entirely unembedded character. I want to consider the embeddedness of Prospero, not only in the community of the island, which of course is an important component of his representation, but also in the larger European community from which he is exiled. That community, I think, is the universe defined by the liberal arts, of which Prospero tells us he is “the prime duke” (1.2.72).² To that end, I want to consider the function of a liberal education in the Renaissance, and situate Prospero in relation to the learning outcomes of that educational system.³

I will be using some secondary sources, but primarily want to think about Renaissance ideas about the liberal arts and their purpose. So here are a couple of the texts I’ll be considering:

- Elyot, Thomas. *The Book Named the Governor*. Ed. S. E. Lehmberg. London: Dent, 1962.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. *The Education of a Christian Prince*. Trans. Lester K. Born. Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies 27. New York: Columbia UP, 1936.
- Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni. *On the Dignity of Man*. Trans. Charles Glenn Wallis. *Pico della Mirandola: On the Dignity of Man, On Being and the One, Heptaplus*. Intro. Paul J. W. Miller. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998. 1-34.
- Vives, Juan Luis. *Vives: On Education; A Translation of the De tradendis disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives*. Trans. and ed. Foster Watson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1913. Google Books. Web.
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¹ “Rape and the Romanticization of Shakespeare’s Miranda” *SEL* 41.2 (2001): 359.

² References to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. B. Evans, *et al.* (Boston: Houghton, 1974), 1611-36.

³ Apologies for the educationese, here for the sake of brevity.

**Negotiating a Balance of Trade:
The Tempest and New World Exchange**
Stephanie Chamberlain

It is perhaps unsurprising that trade concerns would find their way onto the early modern stage. Certainly the theatre was part of the overall economic system impacted by global exchange. More than this, the stage often proved an important arena for vetting ideas and concerns of the day. Such, I would argue, is the case with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, written during the height of the trade controversy gripping early modern England. Situated within a new world setting populated by monstrous people within proximity to the rich, powerful, mysterious, and exceedingly dangerous Ottoman Empire, the play explores vexing issues associated with global trade. Certainly storm, shipwreck, and piracy—ever-present dangers within global trading—figure prominently. Yet, perhaps the real danger involves equity in trading.

The question of balance surfaces early in *The Tempest*. Shortly after their shipwreck, a somewhat dazed Neapolitan party wrestles with the marital exchange that has brought about their present dilemma. While Sebastian suggests that Claribel's marriage to the King of Tunis will likely prove prosperous to Naples, Alonso expresses profound regret over an investment that has proven far too costly. For not only has he lost a daughter, whom he fears he will never see again, but his son and heir now appears lost as well. Whatever advantage Alonso hopes to gain through this investment proves an ill-advised gamble with devastating, irrecoverable losses both to father and state.

The losses figured in *The Tempest*, one of the most global of Shakespeare's later plays, come to represent, I would argue, the trade imbalances which troubled the English economy at the turn of the seventeenth century. Demand for imports far exceeded that for English exports, necessitating the export of precious bullion, already in short supply, to acquire the foreign goods which could then be re-exchanged for profit. Such practices prompted a series of national debates concerning England's involvement in global trading, and perhaps most importantly, the need for a balance of trade if the country was going to survive and prosper within an expanding world marketplace.

Transformation and Adaptation in Julie Taymor's *The Tempest*
Samuel Crowl

After Ovid Shakespeare is our greatest artist of metamorphosis and transformation. He delights in creating a squeaking Cleopatra who deigns to see, "Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness/I' th' posture of a whore." Shakespeare's transvestite theater was absorbed into the European model with both male and female actors. From Sarah Bernhardt to Diana Venora (Hamlet), Pat Carroll (Falstaff), Fiona Shaw (Richard II), Vanessa Redgrave (Prospero), and Seana McKenna (Richard III) female actors have taken the measure of some of Shakespeare's most powerful male characters. In these stage examples the script was not reimagined to change the gender of the character. We do have, however, two remarkable films—the Sven Gade-Asta Nielsen silent version of Hamlet (1920) and Julie Taymor's recent film of The Tempest (2010)—where the central character is not only played by a female but reimagined to be a female as well.

The Gade-Nielsen Hamlet based its treatment on a work by the nineteenth century American academic Edward P. Vining who had proposed the notion that Hamlet was, in fact, female born on the day her father was to meet the king of Norway in battle for control of the two nations. Gertrude lies to the people about the child's true identity as she fears her husband has lost the battle and thus also her female child's claim to the throne. When old Hamlet, instead, returns triumphant he is forced to continue the fiction to protect Gertrude's reputation. Taymor does not resort to such elaborate means to create her Prospera. She reshapes Prospera's backstory with a dozen or so lines of faux Shakespearean verse to create a feminist version of exile from Milan. It wasn't just her library that was "dukedom large enough" but also her laboratory, for Taymor's Prospera is a scientist (and filmmaker) as well as a student of the "liberal arts." Antonio seized power by charging her with witchcraft thus setting up for Taymor interesting parallels between Prospera and Sycorax, that other witch exiled to the island. My paper's major focus will be on Taymor's film and how she and Helen Mirren adapt and transform Shakespeare's Prospero into something more than just his female equivalent and in the process expand the notion of adaptation from a cinematic into a Darwinian context.

Expansion and Threshold in/of *The Tempest's* Models of Education Or, What Language is Caliban Cursing In?

Gwynn Dujardin

... I think [it] a piece of the Tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother-tongue.

Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*

My goal is to delineate a logic to *The Tempest's* representations of language and education. The pedagogical models the play invokes traverse more than humanist and colonial prototypes, and there are significant limitations to the applicability of any one paradigm. How does recuperating pedagogical models outside those frameworks impact our perception of the play's politics, and/or shift the foci of critical lenses through which we interpret it? Acknowledging the assortment of pedagogical models, I am interested in how *The Tempest* repeatedly depicts teaching and learning in relation to thresholds, of time, place, and action (not coincidentally those of the unities), as well as body, language, and text. As my epigraph from Sidney also suggests, I am particularly interested in investigating a model assumed to have been in operation in the play but, outside the framework of "linguistic colonialism," has yet to be fully explored in *Tempest* criticism, and indeed, as of 1611, had yet to be imposed on either the English or the inhabitants of England's sole colonial settlement: vernacular education. If we are to assume that Caliban is taught the vernacular language of his European captors, and that that language codes for English – and pedagogical references suggest that we consider both propositions very carefully – the limits and thresholds of elementary pedagogy are highly instructive, even as they complicate expectations of other more dominant models. I submit Sidney's comment – its speculative nature, on the prospect that any "man should... learn his mother tongue"; his "think[ing]" the latter "a curse"; and, in "Tower of Babylon," his startling conflation of the Genesis story involving the scattering of languages with the Revelations figure

of monstrous, sexualized, (un)civil iniquity – as a starting point for reassessing problems occasioned by the expansion of education (i.e., with Miranda and Caliban) and for understanding the play’s depictions of teaching and learning in terms of limit and threshold, overlap and ambiguity.

**“The Isle Is Full of Noises”:
Staging *The Tempest* in Taiwan**
Bi-qi Beatrice Lei

Not unlike the setting of *The Tempest* or Shakespeare’s England, Taiwan is an isle “full of noises.” Identity politics, a major source for the jarring, informs Taiwan’s Shakespearean productions as well. This paper examines a 2004 adaptation by the Contemporary Legend Theatre (CLT), a group famed for its Beijing opera rendering of Western classics, and analyzes how identity politics comes into play in its production and reception.

The setting of the play is fictional: Milan became “Canaan Kingdom,” and Naples, “Floating World Kingdom.” The costume design, by the Oscar-winning Tim Yep, does not conform to any historical period but is purely fantastical: Prospero has a huge cloak, the all-white spirits have wings, and Caliban has a lizard-like tail. The sound, however, reveals identities, affiliations, loyalties. Caliban and his people (including his “Grandma” Sycorax, who appear in his dream) are Taiwan aborigines, singing familiar aborigine tunes with catchy refrains. Everyone else, both the human characters and the spirits, sing in Beijing opera or Kunqu opera, operatic genres brought over from mainland China. In a battle between the spirits and Caliban’s people (also appearing in Caliban’s dream), we hear the clashing between aboriginal music (chanting and drumming) and traditional Chinese music (chimes and gongs).

Wu Hsing-kuo, the artistic and executive director and Prospero impersonator, claims that this is a play of and for Taiwan, and a play about forgiving and reconciliation. His problematic conception of Taiwanese and the play’s polarized reviews, however, demonstrate that while the definitions of Taiwan and Taiwanese remain controversial, disharmony or heteroglossia will persist.

**The Opening Storm Scene of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*
and its European Pictorial Milieu**
John Mucciolo

Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (c. 1610) opens with a spectacle: a storm buffeting a ship, its passengers *in extremis*. For critics of the play, it has become axiomatic to claim William Strachey’s “True Repertory of the Wrack” (c. 1609) as the source of *The Tempest*’s opening storm scene. Responding to the torrent of “colonialist” interpretations spawned by the Strachey

link to the play, David Scott Kastan advised that “we should look more closely at the old world than the new” (1999). In the spirit of Professor Kastan’s remark, this paper will view *The Tempest* from the perspective of its European pictorial and performative milieus. How is the ship-in-storm motif represented in precedent storm narratives, paintings, and emblems? Do the pictorial and masque-design traditions provide any indication of the opening storm scene’s staging at its 1613 royal performance at Whitehall? To explore these questions, among others, may provide a new view of Shakespeare’s stage tempest.

The Tempest and A Brave New World —
An investigation in its meaning in the 21st century
Rolf O. Mueller

The opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in London in 2012 seemed apt to present a key note to the play with the famous lines “ Be not afraid; the isle is full of noises,/Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not....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.135-43). Is a brave new world a Caliban vision or the dream of it?- A Myth?- The isle is ten leagues beyond man’s life, a meeting ground of elemental forces. Is the play a study in colonialism and justifies its ban in the Tucson School District? Or is *The Tempest* a haunted poem inspired vaguely by many sources- folk-tales, romantic comedies and the pamphlets about the wreck in Bermuda (“the still-vexed Bermoothes”)?

Two representative productions were set in the 21st century: one in the Arctic, directed by Rupert Goold in 2006 (RSC), in the other setting we were transported to an imaginary space inspired by a variety of African scenes in 2009, directed by Janice Honeyman (Courtyard, Stratford-upon-Avon).-My point is to read and perform *The Tempest* and *A Brave New World* as constructions of “hodological” spaces, as can also be seen in *Twelfth Night* and *Pericles*. The link between them is the interdependence of time and space, which is created on various cultural levels. In particular *The Tempest* offers the creation of *A Brave New World* in which these spaces are exposed and complemented through a genuine theatrical perspective from the outside. Reading and performing *The Tempest* will have to consider new dimensions and places suggesting *A Brave New 21st Century World*?

Caliban and Other Outsiders

(adapted from concluding chapter of Shakespeare and Outsiders, forthcoming from Oxford)
Marianne Novy

While Caliban is treated by Prospero as an outsider to civilization, and should be visibly different from the European characters, the play is ambiguous about exactly how he should look. The term “monster” is applied to him first by the unreliable Stefano, because Trinculo has

crawled under Caliban's gabardine and Stephano thinks he sees a creature with four legs—then Trinculo picks up the term but no one else does. Like Othello, Shylock, and Malvolio, Caliban has abilities that the dominant people in his society use. Apart from his distant memories of Sycorax, he has no link with a community of his own. He shows the overt self-assertion that marks many comic outsiders, but he is unlike Malvolio and Shylock, for example, in that he can be sociable, likes music, contributes to collective effort. Linking him with the tragic world, his bitterness has a sense of betrayal, but he also apparently has the ability to learn from his experience, though his ending is open.

Caliban is not the only outsider in The Tempest. Though visibly similar to the other Europeans, Antonio is a moral outsider, who unlike Caliban fails to repent. As the only woman and the only nonhuman in the play, Miranda and Ariel are also outsiders. But most notably, Prospero is also an outsider, an exile from Milan and a newer resident of the island than Caliban or Ariel. Like Ariel and Caliban, he also wants to be free.

The fact that the meaning of outsider can expand so much is relevant to Shakespeare's structure, in which the most obvious outsiders reflect qualities and/or situations of other characters.

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Confused Noise : Secularization and Its Discontents in Shakespeare's Tempest

Anthony Oliveira

In his recent book *The Swerve*, Stephen Greenblatt has echoed a thesis propounded by scholars as early as Burckhardt and as recent as Charles Taylor – that modernity and Western atheism entered the world as two twins cleaving together: "Something happened in the Renaissance [...] it became increasingly possible to turn away from a preoccupation with angels and demons; [...] to contemplate without trembling the death of the soul. In short, it became possible – never easy, but possible – in the poet Auden's phrase to find the mortal world enough."

Yet secularization was not without its discontents – nor, as modern political/theological discourse witnesses, has this turbulent storm faded. In a reading of *The Tempest*, I hope to

anatomize how this remarkably prescient text forecasts not just the “brave new world” that divorces politics from theology – church from state and self – that Greenblatt valorizes, but also charts a curious anxiety and dismay at a cosmos grown disenchanted: a cold, grey dawn to the secular age.

The Tempest is, I will suggest, from its first lines to its last about the crisis of sovereignty occasioned by Europe’s first tentative argosies towards a new, secularized polis and the resulting spiritual/political cataclysm that evidently needs must follow; with the authorizing, stabilizing *nomos* of kingship endangered by this sea voyage, the play stages a series of collapses in master/servant distinction, culminating in Prospero’s hymeneal masque of gods and spirits compelled by art to bless – only to dissolve into “strange, hollow, and confused noise”, and precipitating from an unsettled Prospero a startling radical secular manifesto, eulogizing an end to the pageantry of kingship and the jouissance of faith.

Rather than Greenblatt’s sunny vision of the splintering of the shackles of superstition, *The Tempest* stages something closer to Žižek’s great crisis of the secular state (“In the absence of God, *nothing at all is permitted*”) and the first lesson of every sorcerer: that for the magician, there can be no such thing as magic.

“A Bootless Inquisition”? Reconsidering Miranda

Rachel Prusko

The Tempest’s Miranda has not fared well in feminist and postcolonial criticism, emerging from these discourses as a character with, as Lorie Leininger puts it, “no way out of the cycle of being a dependent foot in need of protection” (226). Indeed, Ania Loomba notes that Miranda “obeys in silence and has been taught not to question why” (154). But is Miranda really just the foot to Prospero’s head? My essay attempts to reconsider Miranda by reading her as an inquisitive teenager, a fifteen-year-old girl bent on self-fashioning. The essay explores *The Tempest*’s long expository scene, in which Miranda endeavors to gain control of her father’s story, to manipulate and perhaps even colonize this narrative, and thus to script for herself a subjectivity beyond Prospero’s enforced norms. Miranda claims from him her history and establishes herself within it; a sense of self for this teenager turns not only on finally hearing Prospero’s exposition, but also on her own role as a listener, for her interruptions and questions disrupt, propel, and shape his narrative. Shakespeare does not position Miranda merely as, to use Gérard Genette’s terms, a passive intradiegetic listener, present within the narrative but only for the purpose of receiving Prospero’s metadiegetic tale and thus serving the exposition; rather, the playwright emphasizes Miranda’s developing voice: she works her way into the story from its margins, vying with her father for narrative authority.

A Machiavellian Prospero: Revising Politics in *The Tempest*

Jeffrey Rufo

Although several of Shakespeare's plays are regularly discussed in the context of Machiavellism (or, Machiavellian political thought), the romances are largely absent from the critical conversation. In recent books on the subject (by Hugh Grady and John Roe), the vast majority of plays discussed are either high tragedies (*Hamlet*, *King Lear*), or else the English and Roman histories (the plays of the second tetralogy, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, etc.). The romances deserve more attention than they tend to receive from the Machiavellian critics because Shakespeare's late work, like the political and historical works of Machiavelli, asks increasingly complex political-philosophical questions about the world and human history.

This paper is a case study in a broader analysis of Shakespeare's acclimation to Machiavellian thought at the end of his career. *The Tempest* deals directly with the preeminent Machiavellian problems for Shakespeare and his English contemporaries: the conflict between moral philosophy and politics, between ethics and power, between moral and political modes of counsel. How does a regime combine wisdom, virtue, and power when the wise are disinclined to rule and rulers refuse to consult the wise? Shakespeare provides a resolution, if not a sincere answer, to this seemingly intractable problem in the unique and distinctive form of Prospero himself. *The Tempest* can and should be read as the culmination of an evolving relationship with Machiavellian political thought in Shakespeare's career. And although the Machiavellism of *The Tempest* is less lurid than in earlier plays, it is not the case that Shakespeare manages or even wants to contain either the infamous doctrines of *The Prince* or the more radical republican claims of *The Discourses on Livy*. Rather, *The Tempest* is a more sensitive reaction to and in some ways a more accurate reading of Machiavelli than nearly all other British texts of the Jacobean era.

Punishment versus Prudence: *The Tempest* and the Humanist Tradition -- Especially Pedagogy

Richard Strier

Of all Shakespeare's plays, there is none more concerned with pedagogy in a deep sense than is *The Tempest*. *Love's Labors Lost* is more concerned with the humanist curriculum, especially, of course, the "sweet smoke of rhetoric," and it features learned jokes about the curriculum (Ovid smelling out the sweet flowers of invention) and an actual schoolmaster, but *The Tempest* focuses on the deepest question of all for the humanist pedagogical and cultural agenda: how far can human nature be transformed; can persons be taught or led, by any human means, to become morally or spiritually better? I will argue that the play answers this question in a largely gloomy and negative way, that it can be seen to substitute Machiavellian for humanist optimism, but that it does not give up on humanist optimism entirely.

Selected Bibliography:

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* Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca, New York, 1996).

* John Gillies, "Shakespeare's Virginian Masque," *ELH* 53 (1986).

* Richard Strier, "'I am Power': Normal and Magical Politics in *The Tempest*," in Derek Hirst and Richard Strier, eds., *Writing and Political Engagement in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1999), 10-30.

The Tempest Tamed: John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's's The Sea Voyage (1622)
Virginia Mason Vaughan

We know that John Fletcher (1579-1625), Shakespeare's collaborator on *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, was actively involved in the King's Company, that he knew Shakespeare's works and alluded to them frequently, and that it's possible that the Company groomed him to take over as their lead playwright when Shakespeare was in the process of retiring to Stratford. We also know that in 1610 Fletcher wrote a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew: The Woman's Prize, or, The Tamer Tamed*, a play that talks back to Shakespeare by giving Petruchio's wife Maria the upper hand. But *The Tamer Tamed* was not the only vehicle for Fletcher's engagement with Shakespeare. In his Preface to *The Enchanted Island* (1667) John Dryden reported that Fletcher "had so great a value for it [*The Tempest*], that he thought fit to make use of the same Design, not much varied, a second time. Those who have seen his *Sea-Voyage*, may easily discern that it was a Copy of Shakespeare's *Tempest*: the Storm, the desert-Island, and the Woman who had never seen a Man." In an effort to understand the Blackfriars audience's initial reception of *The Tempest* and the ways its attitude might have changed by 1622, my paper analyzes the elements that Fletcher and Massinger borrowed from Shakespeare as well as the alterations they made. In particular, my paper focuses on continuities and shifts in structure, staging, and characterization. Close reading of *The Sea Voyage* indicates that the changes made by John Dryden and William Davenant in 1667 were a continuation of a transformation Fletcher and Massinger had begun only eleven years after *The Tempest* was first performed.

'The isle is full of noises' Reconceptualising *The Tempest*

Rachel Willie

This paper attempts to comprehend the appropriation of *The Tempest* in mass culture. The opening ceremony to the Olympic Games did not just herald the start of a summer of sport, it represented the culmination of a cultural Olympiad. Supported by London 2012 Festival and promoted by the Royal Shakespeare Company, the World Shakespeare Festival established the bard as the undisputed focal point of this celebration of British culture. These endeavours to engage mass culture with Shakespeare fed through to the ceremonies that opened and closed the Olympic and Paralympic Games, where (mis)quotation of *The Tempest* provided the framing narrative.

Given that the opening ceremony has steadily grown from quasi-military pageantry to a form of self-fashioning and global presentation for the host nation, this adoption of *The Tempest* raises questions regarding the conception of space and place. Prospero's magical island is transformed from a space of exile to a place of modernity comprising snogging teenagers, boogying nurses and skydiving octogenarian sovereigns. While celebrating the Windrush as the dawn of multiculturalism, Danny Boyle's 'isle of wonders' took pains to eschew the less palatable elements of Britain's colonialist past. However, the very lines taken from *The Tempest* bring into focus postcolonial anxieties. The opening ceremony may give these lines to an Isambard Kingdom Brunel-impersonating Kenneth Branagh, but their previous utterances by Caliban complicate the narrative, reminding those audience members familiar with the play that there are uneasy political resonances that belie the sense of wonder the ceremony overtly promotes. This feeds through to the rest of the ceremony, the complex allegory of which seems to echo a Stuart Court Masque. Resting uneasily within a framework of cultural capital that rendered the ceremony as alienating as it was engaging, the entertainment clings to the notions of tradition that it seeks to reject.