Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*

MEREDITH ANNE SKURA

For many years idealist readings of *The Tempest* presented Prospero as an exemplar of timeless human values. They emphasized the way in which his hard-earned "magical" powers enable him to re-educate the shipwrecked Italians, to heal their civil war—and, even more important, to triumph over his own vengefulness by forgiving his enemies; they emphasized the way he achieves, if not a wholly "brave," at least a harmoniously reconciled new world. Within the last few years, however, numbers of critics have offered remarkably similar critiques of this reading. There is an essay on *The Tempest* in each of three recent anthologies of alternative, political, and reproduced Shakespeare criticism, and another in the volume on estranging Renaissance criticism; *The Tempest* was a focus for the 1988 SAA session on "Shakespeare and Colonialism" and was one of the mastheads plays in the Folger Institute's 1988 seminar on new directions in Shakespeare studies. Together,

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the revisionists call for a move to counteract some "deeply ahistorical readings" of The Tempest, a play that is now seen to be not simply an allegory about "timeless" or universal experience but rather a cultural phenomenon that has its origin in and effect on "historical" events, specifically in English colonialism. "New historicist" criticism in general, of which much recent work on The Tempest is a part, has itself begun to come under scrutiny, but the numerous historical reinterpretations of The Tempest deserve closer attention in their own right, and they will be the subject of the rest of this essay.

In assessing the "new" historicist version of the play, it is important to realize that here, even more than in other new historical criticism, an historical emphasis in itself is not new. Since the early nineteenth century The Tempest has been seen in the historical context of the New World, and Frank Kermode, citing the early scholars, argued in the fifties that reports of a particular episode in British efforts to colonize North America had precipitated the play's major themes. In 1609 nine ships had left England to settle the colony in Jamestown, Virginia, and the Sea Venture, carrying all of the colonial officers, had disappeared. But its passengers reappeared in Virginia one year later, miraculously saved; they had wrecked off the Bermudas, until then believed demonically dangerous but now found to be providentially mild and fruitful. These events, much in the news in the year just preceding The Tempest, have long been seen as a relevant context for the play by all but a very few critics. These earlier historical interpretations generally placed the play and its immediate source in the context of voyaging discourse in general, which stressed the romance and exoticism of discoveries in the Old as well as the New World. Even the "factual" reports in this discourse, as Charles Frey notes, were themselves colored by the romance of the situation, for better and for worse; and the traditional view was that The Tempest's stylized allegory abstracts the romance core of all voyagers' experience.

Nor had traditional criticism entirely ignored either Prospero's flaws or their relation to the dark side of Europe's confrontation with the Other.


2 Hulme, Colonial Encounters, p. 94.

3 See, for example, Paul Brown, "This thing of darkness," p. 48.


6 E. E. Stoll and Northrop Frye are the only exceptions I have seen cited.


Kermode had identified Caliban as the "core" or "ground" of the play, insofar as confrontation with this strange representative of "uncivilized" man prompts the play's reexamination of "civilized" human nature. Harry Levin, Leslie Fiedler, Leo Marx, and others had suggested in trying to understand the New World representatives of "uncivilized" human nature, Prospero, like other Europeans, had imposed Old (and New) World stereotypes of innocence and monstrosity on the Native Americans, distorting perception with hope and fear.9 Fiedler's landmark book had indeed placed The Tempest suggestively in the context of a series of plays about the Other (or, as he called it in 1972, the "Stranger") in Shakespeare, showing Caliban's resemblance to the demonized women, Moors, and Jews in the canon. O. Manoni had added that, in this process, Prospero displayed the psychology of colonials who projected their disowned traits onto New World natives.10

Why, then, so many recent articles? In part they are simply shifting the emphasis. Revisionists claim that the New World material is not just present but is right at the center of the play, and that it demands far more attention than critics have been willing to grant it. They argue that the civil war in Milan that had ousted Prospero should be recognized as merely an episode in a minor dispute between Italian dynasties, of little import compared to the transatlantic action;11 they show how the love story can be seen as a political maneuver by Prospero to ensure his return to power in Milan,12 and how even Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda can be seen as an expression not merely of sexual but also of territorial lust, understandable in its context.13

These recent critics are not simply repeating the older ones, however; they are making important distinctions. First and most explicitly, they are not calling attention to history in general but rather to one aspect of history: to power relations and to the ideology in which power relations are encoded.14 The revisionists look not at the New World material in the play but to the play's effect on power relations in the New World. What matters is not just the particular Bermuda pamphlets actually echoed in the play but rather the whole "ensemble of fictional and lived practices" known as "English colonialism," which, it is now being claimed, provides the "dominant discursive con-texts"15 for the play. (Though the term "colonialism" may allude to the entire spectrum of New World activity, in these articles it most often refers specifically to the use of power, to the Europeans' exploitative and self-justifying treatment of the New World and its inhabitants—and I shall use it in that sense.) If Caliban is the center of the play, it is not because

11 Hulme, Colonial Encounters, p. 133.
12 Hulme, Colonial Encounters, p. 115; Barker and Hulme, p. 201; Orgel, "Prospero's Wife," pp. 62–63.
14 As Paul Werstine wrote in the brochure announcing the NEH Humanities Institute on "New Directions in Shakespeare Criticism" (The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988), "To appreciate The Tempest... today ... we must understand discourses of colonialism, power, legitimation."
15 Barker and Hulme, p. 198.
of his role in the play’s self-contained structure, and not even because of what he reveals about man’s timeless tendency to demonize ‘strangers,’ but because Europeans were at that time exploiting the real Calibans of the world, and The Tempest was part of the process. It is no longer enough to suggest that Europeans were trying to make sense of the Indian; rather, the emphasis is now on the way Europeans subdued the Indian to ‘make sense/order/money—not of him, so much as out of him.’16 Revisionists argue that when the English talked about these New World inhabitants, they did not just innocently apply stereotypes or project their own fears: they did so to a particular effect, whether wittingly or unwittingly. The various distortions were discursive strategies that served the political purpose of making the New World fit into a schema justifying colonialism.17 Revisionists therefore emphasize the discursive strategies that the play shares with all colonial discourse, and the ways in which The Tempest itself not only displays prejudice but fosters and even ‘enacts’ colonialism by mystifying or justifying Prospero’s power over Caliban.18 The new point is that The Tempest is a-political act.

Second, this shift in our attitude toward the object of interpretation entails a less explicit but extremely important move away from the psychological interpretation that had previously seemed appropriate for the play (even to its detractors) largely because of its central figure who, so like Shakespeare, runs the show. Where earlier criticism of Prospero talked about his ‘prejudice,’ the more recent revisionists talk about ‘power’ and ‘euphemisation.’ Thus, a critic writing in 1980 argued that The Tempest’s ‘allegorical and Neoplatonic overlay masks some of the most damaging prejudices of Western civilization’;19 but by 1987 the formulation had changed: ‘The Tempest is . . . fully implicated in the process of ‘euphemisation’, the effacement of power,’ in ‘operations [that] encode struggle and contradiction even as they, or because they, strive to insist on the legitimacy of colonialist narrative.’20

Psychological criticism of the play is seen as distracting at best; one recent critic, for example, opens his argument by claiming that we need to conceive The Tempest in an historical context that is not ‘hamstrung by specious speculations concerning ‘Shakespeare’s mind’.’21 Even in less polemical examples the ‘political unconscious’ often replaces, rather than supplements, any other unconscious; attention to culture and politics is associated

16 Hawkes, ‘‘Swisser-Swatter,’’ p. 28.
17 Thus stereotypes, for example, served as part of a ‘discursive strategy . . . to locate or ‘fix’ a colonial other in a position of inferiority . . . ’ (Paul Brown, modifying Edward Said on orientalism, p. 58).
18 Actually, this point too is a matter of emphasis. R. R. Cawley (‘‘Shakspere’s Use of the Voyagers in The Tempest,’’ PMLA, 41 [1926], 688–726) and Kermode, among others, had noted in passing some similarities between the play’s view of Caliban and the distortions of colonialist self-serving rhetorical purposes; but revisionists take this to be the important point, not to be passed over.
19 Leininger, ‘‘Cracking the Code of The Tempest,’’ p. 122.
20 Paul Brown, pp. 64, 66. Brown also contends that The Tempest ‘‘exemplifies . . . a moment of historical crisis. This crisis is the struggle to produce a coherent discourse adequate to the complex requirements of British colonialism in its initial phase’’ (p. 48).
21 Hulme, Colonial Encounters, p. 93. Later he does grant a little ground to the psychological critics in allowing that their ‘‘totally spurious’’ identification of Prospero with Shakespeare yet ‘‘half grasps the crucial point that Prospero . . . is a dramatist and creator of theatrical effects’’ (p. 115).
with an implicit questioning of individuality and of subjective experience. Such a stance extends beyond an objection to wholesale projections of twentieth-century assumptions onto sixteenth-century subjects, or to psychological interpretations that totally ignore the cultural context in which psyches exist. As Frederick Jameson argued in a work that lies behind many of these specific studies, it derives from the desire to transcend personal psychology altogether, because Freud’s psychology remains “locked into the category of the individual subject.” The emphasis now is on psychology as a product of culture, itself a political structure; the very concept of a psyche is seen to be a product of the cultural nexus evolved during the Renaissance, and indeed, psychoanalysis itself, rather than being a way of understanding the Renaissance psyche, is a marginal and belated creation of this same nexus.

Thus the revisionists, with Jameson, may look for a “political unconscious” and make use of Freud’s insights into the “logic of dreams”—the concepts of displacement, condensation, the management of desire—but they do not accept Freud’s assumptions about the mind—or the subject—creating that logic. The agent who displaces or manages is not the individual but the “collective or associative” mind; at times it seems to be the text itself, seen as a “libidinal apparatus” or “desiring machine” independent of any individual creator.

The revisionist impulse has been one of the most salutary in recent years in correcting New Critical “blindness” to history and ideology. In particular it has revealed the ways in which the play has been “reproduced” and drafted into the service of colonialist politics from the sixteenth century through G. Wilson Knight’s twentieth-century celebration of Prospero as representative of England’s “colonizing, especially her will to raise savage peoples from superstition and blood-sacrifice, taboos and witchcraft and the attendant fears and slaveries, to a more enlightened existence.”

But here, as critics have been suggesting about new historicism in general, it is now in danger of fostering blindness of its own. Granted that something was wrong with a commentary that focused on The Tempest as a self-contained project of a

22 “From the point of view of a political hermeneutic, measured against the requirements of a ‘political unconscious,’ we must conclude that the conception of wish-fulfillment remains locked in a problematic of the individual subject . . . which is only indirectly useful to us.” The objection to wish-fulfillment is that it is “always outside of time, outside of narrative” and history; “what is more damaging, from the present perspective, is that desire . . . remains locked into the category of the individual subject, even if the form taken by the individual in it is no longer the ego or the self, but the individual body . . . the need to transcend individualistic categories and modes of interpretation is in many ways the fundamental issue for any doctrine of the political unconscious” (The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981], pp. 66, 68, italics added).
24 Jameson, p. 12. So, too, Freud’s “hermeneutic manual” can be of use to the political critic (p. 65).
25 “Norman Holland’s suggestive term,” Jameson, p. 49.
26 Jameson, p. 67. Cf. Paul Brown, “My use of Freudian terms does not mean that I endorse its ahistorical, Eurocentric and sexist models of psychical development. However, a materialist criticism deprived of such concepts as displacement and condensation would be seriously impoverished . . .” (p. 71, n. 35).
27 Jameson discussing Althusser (p. 30) and Greimas (p. 48).
self-contained individual and that ignored the political situation in 1611. But something seems wrong now also, something more than the rhetorical excesses characteristic of any innovative critical movement. The recent criticism not only flattens the text into the mold of colonialist discourse and eliminates what is characteristically "Shakespearean" in order to foreground what is "colonialist," but it is also—paradoxically—in danger of taking the play further from the particular historical situation in England in 1611 even as it brings it closer to what we mean by "colonialism" today.

It is difficult to extrapolate back from G. Wilson Knight's colonialist discourse to seventeenth-century colonialist discourse without knowing more about the particulars of that earlier discourse. What is missing from the recent articles is the connection between the new insights about cultural phenomena like "power" and "fields of discourse" and the traditional insights about the text, its immediate sources, its individual author—and his individual psychology. There is little sense of how discourse is related to the individual who was creating, even as he was participating in, that discourse. The following discussion will suggest how such a relation might be conceived. Sections I and II briefly elaborate on The Tempest's versions of problems raised by new historicist treatment of the text and its relation to the historical context; sections III and IV go on to suggest that the recognition of the individuality of the play, and of Shakespeare, does not counter but rather enriches the understanding of that context. Perhaps by testing individual cases, we can avoid the circularity of a definition that assumes that "colonialism" was present in a given group of texts, and so "discovers" it there.

**I**

How do we know that The Tempest "enacts" colonialism rather than merely alluding to the New World? How do we know that Caliban is part of the "discourse of colonialism"? To ask such a question may seem perversely naive, but the play is notoriously slippery. There have been, for example, any number of interpretations of Caliban, including not only contemporary post-colonial versions in which Caliban is a Virginian Indian but also others in which Caliban is played as a black slave or as "missing link" (in a costume "half monkey, half coco-nut")30, with the interpretation drawing on the issues that were being debated at the time—on the discursive contexts that were culturally operative—and articulated according to "changing Anglo-American attitudes toward primitive man."31 Most recently one teacher has suggested that The Tempest is a good play to teach in junior colleges because students can identify with Caliban.

Interpretation is made even more problematic here because, despite the claims about the play's intervention in English colonialism,32 we have no external evidence that seventeenth-century audiences thought the play referred to the New World. In an age when real voyages were read allegorically,
the status of allegorical voyages like Prospero's can be doubly ambiguous, especially in a play like *The Tempest*, which provides an encyclopedic context for Prospero's experience, presenting it in terms of an extraordinary range of classical, biblical, and romantic exiles, discoveries, and confrontations. Evidence for the play's original reception is of course extraordinarily difficult to find, but in the two nearly contemporary responses to Caliban that we do know about, the evidence for a colonialist response is at best ambiguous. In *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) Jonson refers scornfully to a "‘servant-monster,’" and the Folio identifies Caliban as a "‘salvage and deformed slave’"34 in the cast list. Both "‘monster’" and "‘salvage’" are firmly rooted in the discourse of Old World wild men, though the latter was of course also applied to the New World natives. In other words, these two seventeenth-century responses tend to invoke the universal and not the particular implications of Caliban's condition. A recent study of the play's history suggests that "‘if Shakespeare, however obliquely, meant Caliban to personify America's natives, his intention apparently miscarried almost completely.’"35

Despite this lack of contemporary testimony, the obvious reason for our feeling that the play "‘is’" colonialist—more so than *The Winter's Tale* or *Henry VIII*, for example, which were written at roughly the same time—is, of course, the literal resemblance between its plot and certain events and attitudes in English colonial history: Europeans arrive in the New World and assume they can appropriate what properly belongs to the New World Other, who is then "‘erased.’" The similarities are clear and compelling—more so than in many cases of new historical readings; the problem, however, is that while there are also many literal differences between *The Tempest* and colonialist fictions and practice, the similarities are taken to be so compelling that the differences are ignored. Thus Caliban is taken to "‘be’" a Native American despite the fact that a multitude of details differentiate Caliban from the Indian as he appeared in the travelers' reports from the New World.36 Yet it does seem significant that, despite his closeness to nature, his naivété, his devil worship, his susceptibility to European liquor, and, above all, his

33 Even St. Paul in his travels (echoed in the play) met natives who—like Caliban—thought him a god.
34 Hulme produces as evidence against Shakespeare these four words from the cast list, which Shakespeare may or may not have written ("‘Hurricanes in the Caribbees’", p. 72).
35 Aiden T. Vaughan, "‘Shakespeare’s Indian: The Americanization of Caliban,’" *SQ*, 39 (1988), 137–53. He argues that the intention miscarried not only at the time but also for the three centuries following. He adds, "‘Rather, from the Restoration until the late 1890s, Caliban appeared on stage and in critical literature as almost everything but an Indian’" (p. 138).
36 Hulme, while noting Caliban's "‘anomalous nature,’" sees the anomaly as yet another colonialist strategy: "‘In ideological terms [Caliban is] a compromise formation and one achieved, like all such formations, only at the expense of distortion elsewhere’" ("‘Hurricanes in the Caribbees,’" pp. 71, 72). This begs the question: Caliban can only be a "‘distortion’" if he is intended to represent someone. But that is precisely the question—is he meant to represent a Native American? Sidney Lee noted that Caliban's method of building dams for fish reproduces the Indians'; though he is often cited by later writers as an authority on the resemblance, the rest of his evidence is not convincing ("‘The Call of the West: America and Elizabethan England,’" *Elizabethan and Other Essays*, ed. Frederick S. Boas [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929], pp. 263–301). G. Wilson Knight has an impressionistic essay about the relationship between Caliban and Indians ("‘Caliban as Red Man’" [1977] in *Shakespeare's Styles*, eds. Philip Edwards, Inga-Stina Ewbank, and G. K. Hunter [London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980]). Hulme lists Caliban's resemblances to Caribs ("‘Hurricanes in the Caribbees’"), and Kermode cites details taken from natives visited during both the Old and the New World voyages.
"treachery"—characteristics associated in writings of the time with the Indians—he nonetheless lacks almost all of the defining external traits in the many reports from the New World—no superhuman physique, no nakedness or animal skin (indeed, an English "'gaberdine' instead), no decorative feathers, 37 no arrows, no pipe, no tobacco, no body paint, and—as Shakespeare takes pains to emphasize—no love of trinkets and trash. No one could mistake him for the stereotyped "Indian with a great tool,"8 mentioned in passing in Henry VIII. Caliban in fact is more like the devils Strachey expected to find on the Bermuda island (but didn't) than like the Indians whom adventurers did find in Virginia, though he is not wholly a monster from the explorers' wild tales either. 38

In other ways, too, it is assumed that the similarities matter but the differences do not: thus Prospero's magic occupies "the space really inhabited in colonial history by gunpowder" 39 (emphasis mine); or, when Prospero has Caliban pinched by the spirits, he shows a "'similar sadism' to that of the Haitian masters who "'roasted slaves or buried them alive'"; 40 or, when Prospero and Ariel hunt Caliban with spirit dogs, they are equated to the Spaniards who hunted Native Americans with dogs. 41 So long as there is a core of resemblance, the differences are irrelevant. The differences, in fact, are themselves taken to be evidence of the colonialist ideology at work, rationalizing and euphemizing power—or else inadvertent slips. Thus the case for colonialism becomes stronger insofar as Prospero is good and insofar as Caliban is in some ways bad—he did try to rape Miranda—or is himself now caught trying to falsify the past by occluding the rape and presenting himself as an innocent victim of Prospero's tyranny. Prospero's goodness and Caliban's badness are called rationalizations, justifications for Prospero's tyranny. Nor does it matter that the play seems anti-colonialist to the degree that it qualifies Prospero's scorn by showing Caliban's virtues, or that Prospero seems to achieve some kind of transcendence over his own colonialism when at the end of the play he says, "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.'" 42 Prospero's acknowledgement of Caliban is considered a mistake, a moment of inadvertent sympathy or truth, too brief to counter Prospero's underlying colonialism: in spite of the deceptively resonant poetry of his acknowledgement, Prospero actually does nothing to live up to the meaning which that poetry suggests; 43 it has even been argued that Prospero, in calling


38 Shakespeare had apparently read up on his monsters (R. R. Cawley, "Shakspere's Use of the Voyagers," p. 723, and Frey, passim), but he picked up the stereotypes only to play with them ostentatiously (in Stephano's and Trinculo's many discredited guesses about Caliban's identity) or to leave them hanging (in Prospero's identification of Caliban as "'devil' ").

39 Hulme, "Hurricanes in the Caribbees," p. 74.

40 Lamming (n. 1, above), pp. 98–99.

41 Lamming, p. 97; Erlich, p. 49.

42 The play also seems anti-colonialist because it includes the comic sections with Stephano and Trinculo, which show colonialism to be "nakedly avaricious, profiteering, perhaps even pointless"; but this too can be seen as a rationalization: "'This low version of colonialism serves to displace possibly damaging charges . . . against properly-constituted civil authority on to the already excremental products of civility, the masterless'" (Paul Brown, p. 65).

Caliban "mine," is simply claiming possession of him: "It is as though, after a public disturbance, a slaveowner said, 'Those two men are yours; this darkie's mine.'" Nonetheless, in addition to these differences that have been seen as rationalizations, there are many other differences as well that collectively raise questions about what counts as "colonialist discourse" and about what, if anything, might count as a relevant "difference." Thus, for example, any attempt to cast Prospero and Caliban as actors in the typical colonial narrative (in which a European exploits a previously free—indeed a reigning—native of an unspoiled world) is complicated by two other characters, Sycorax and Ariel. Sycorax, Caliban's mother, through whom he claims possession of the island, was not only a witch and a criminal, but she came from the Old World herself, or at least from eastern-hemisphere Argier. She 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. Moreover, Caliban was not alone when Prospero arrived. Ariel either came to the island with Sycorax or was already living on the island—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. Nearly all revisionists note some of these differences before disregarding them, though they are not agreed on their significance—on whether they are "symptoms" of ideological conflict in the discourse, for example, or whether Shakespeare's "insights exceeded his sympathies." But however they are explained, the differences are discarded. For the critic interested only in counteracting earlier blindness to potentially racist and ideological elements in the play, such ignoring of differences is understandable; for his or her purposes, it is enough to point out that The Tempest has a "political unconscious" and is connected in some way to colonialist discourse without specifying further.

But if the object is, rather, to understand colonialism, instead of simply identifying it or condemning it, it is important to specify, to notice how the colonial elements are rationalized or integrated into the play's vision of the world. Otherwise, extracting the play's political unconscious leads to the same problems Freud faced at the beginning of his career when he treated the personal unconscious as an independent entity that should be almost surgically extracted from conscious discourse by hypnotizing away the "defenses." But, as is well known, Freud found that the conscious "defenses" were as essential—and problematic—as the supposedly prior unconscious.

44 Leininger, p. 127.

45 As Fiedler's book implies (n. 9, above), she is less like anything American than like the Frenchwoman Joan of Arc, who also tried to save herself from the law by claiming she was pregnant with a bastard; Joan simply wasn't as successful (see pp. 43–81, esp. p. 77).

46 See Brockbank, p. 193. Even these details can be discounted as rationalizations, of course. Paul Brown, for example, explains Sycorax's presence as a rationalization: by degrading her black magic, he argues, Shakespeare makes Prospero seem better than he is (pp. 60–61). Hulme notes that Sycorax may be Prospero's invention, pointing out that we never see any direct evidence that she was present (Colonial Encounters, p. 115). Orgel links Caliban's claims of legitimacy by birth to James I's claims ("Prospero's Wife," pp. 58–59).

47 See Fiedler, p. 205.

“wish,” and that they served purposes other than containment.49 Indeed, in most psychoanalytic practice since Freud, the unconscious—or, rather, unconscious mentation—is assumed to exist in texts rather than existing as a reified “id,” and interpretation must always return to the text.

As in the case of the personal unconscious, the political unconscious exists only in texts, whose “defenses” or rationalizations must be taken into account. Otherwise interpretation not only destroys the text—here The Tempest—as a unique work of art and flattens it into one more example of the master plot—or master ploy—in colonialist discourse; it also destroys the evidence of the play as a unique cultural artifact, a unique voice in that discourse. Colonialist discourse was varied enough to escape any simple formulation, even in a group of texts with apparent thematic links. It ranged from the lived Spanish colonialist practice of hunting New World natives with dogs to Bartholomew Las Casas’s “factual” account lamenting and exposing the viciousness of that hunt,50 to Shakespeare’s possible allusion to it in The Tempest, when Prospero and Ariel set spirit dogs on Caliban, to a still earlier Shakespearean allusion—or possible allusion—in the otherwise non-colonialist A Midsummer Night’s Dream, when Puck (who has come from India himself) chases Greek rude mechanicals with illusory animals in a scene evoking an entirely English conflict. The same “colonialist” hunt informs radically different fictions and practices, some of which enact colonialism, some of which subvert it, and some of which require other categories entirely to characterize its effect.

It is not easy to categorize the several links between The Tempest and colonialist discourse. Take the deceptively simple example of Caliban’s name. Revisionists rightly emphasize the implications of the cannibal stereotype as automatic mark of Other in Western ethnocentric colonialist discourse,51 and, since Shakespeare’s name for “Caliban” is widely accepted as an anagram of “cannibal,”52 many read the play as if he were a cannibal, with all that the term implies. But an anagram is not a cannibal, and Shakespeare’s use of the stereotype is hardly automatic.52 Caliban is no cannibal—he barely touches meat, confining himself more delicately to roots, berries, and an occasional fish; indeed, his symbiotic harmony with the island’s natural food resources is one of his most attractive traits. His name

49 The trend, moreover, is to move away from anthropomorphic terms like “repression” or “censorship,” themselves inherited from the political terminology on which Freud drew for his own. Like the vocabulary of “scientific” hydraulics on which Freud also drew for his notions of libido flowing and damming up, the older terms are being replaced by contemporary terminologies more appropriate to describing a conflict among meanings or interpretations, rather than between anthropomorphized forces engaged in a simple struggle “for” and “against.”

50 Spaniards, he writes, “taught their Hounds, fierce Dogs, to teare [the Indians] in peeces” (A briefe Narration of the destruction of the Indyes by the Spaniards [1542 (?)]. Samuel Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes, 20 vols. [Glasgow: Maclehose and Sons, 1905–1907], Vol. XVIII, 91). This was apparently a common topos, found also in Eden’s translation of Peter Martyr’s Decades of the Newe Worlde (1555), included in Eden’s Historie of Trauaille (1577), which Shakespeare read for The Tempest: It was also used by Greene and Deloney (Cawley, Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama, pp. 383–84).

51 Hulme, “Hurricanes in the Caribbees,” pp. 63–66; see also Orgel on this “New World topos” in “Shakespeare and the Cannibals,” pp. 41–44.

52 Neither was Montaigne’s in the essay that has been taken as a source for the play. Scholars are still debating about Montaigne’s attitude toward cannibals, though all agree that his critical attitude toward Europeans was clear in the essay.
seems more like a mockery of stereotypes than a mark of monstrosity, and in our haste to confirm the link between "cannibal" and "Indian" outside the text, we lose track of the way in which Caliban seversthe link within the text.\textsuperscript{53} While no one would deny some relation between Caliban and the New World natives to whom such terms as "cannibal" were applied, what that relation is remains unclear.

To enumerate differences between The Tempest and "colonialist discourse" is not to reduce discussion of the play to a counting contest, pitting similarities against differences. Rather, it is to suggest that inherent in any analysis of the play as colonialist discourse is a particular assumption about the relation between text and discourse—between one man’s fiction and a collective fiction—or, perhaps, between one man’s fiction and what we take for "reality." This relation matters not only to New Critics trying to isolate texts from contexts but to new historicists (or just plain historicists) trying to put them back together. The relation is also vital to lived practices like censorship and inquisitions—and there are differences of opinion about what counts in these cases. Such differences need to be acknowledged and examined, and the method for reading them needs to be made more explicit before the implications of The Tempest as colonialist discourse can be fully understood.

II

Similar problems beset the definition of the "discourse" itself, the means of identifying the fictional—and the "lived"—practices constituting "English colonialism" in 1611. Given the impact of English colonialism over the last 350 years, it may again seem perversely naïve to ask what colonialist discourse was like in 1611, as opposed to colonialism in 1911 or even in 1625, the year when Samuel Purchas asked, alluding to the "treachery" of the Virginian Indians, "Can a Leopard change his spots? Can a Savage remaying a Savage be civil?" Purchas added this comment when he published the 1610 document that Shakespeare had used as his source for The Tempest, and Purchas has been cited as an example of "colonialist discourse."\textsuperscript{54} Purchas does indeed display the particular combination of exploitative motives and self-justifying rhetoric—the "effacement of power"—that revisionists identify as colonialist and which they find in The Tempest. But, one might reasonably ask, was the discursive context in 1611, when Shakespeare was writing, the same as it would be fourteen years later, when Purchas added his marginal comment?\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} This blend of Old and New World characteristics, earlier seen as characteristic of New World discourse, is acknowledged in many of the revisionist studies but is seen as one of the rhetorical strategies used to control Indians.
\textsuperscript{55} Paul Brown, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{56} This is an entirely separate question from another that one might ask: How comparable were Purchas’s remarks, taken from the collection of travelers’ tales which he edited, censored, and used to support his colonialist ideal, on the one hand, and a play, on the other? In Purchas, Richard Marienstras argues, "the multiplicity of interpretations modulates and reinforces a single ideological system. The same can certainly not be said of . . . The Tempest" (New perspectives on the Shakespearean world, trans. Janet Lloyd [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985], p.
There seems, rather, to have been in 1611 a variety of what we might call "New World discourses" with multiple points of view, motives, and effects, among which such comments as Purchas's are not as common as the revisionist emphasis implies. These are "colonialist" only in the most general sense in which all ethnocentric cultures are always "colonialist": narcissistically pursuing their own ends, oblivious to the desires, needs, and even the existence of the Other. That is, if this New World discourse is colonialist, it is so primarily in that it ignores Indians, betraying its Eurocentric assumptions about the irrelevance of any people other than white, male, upper-class Europeans, preferably from England. It thus expresses not an historically specific but a timeless and universal attitude toward the "stranger," which Fiedler described in so many of Shakespeare's plays. We might see this discourse as a precondition57 for colonialism proper, which was to follow with the literal rather than the figurative colonizing of New World natives. But to assume that colonialism was already encoded in the anomalous situation in 1611 is to undermine the revisionist effort to understand the historical specificity of the moment when Shakespeare wrote The Tempest.

It is not easy to characterize the situation in 1611. On the one hand, Spain had long been engaged in the sort of "colonialist discourse" that revisionists find in The Tempest; and even in England at the time there were examples of colonialist discourse (in the rhetoric, if not yet often in the lived practices) produced by those directly involved in the colonialist project and expecting to profit from it. The official advertisements in the first rush of enthusiasm about Virginia, as well as the stream of defenses when the Virginia project began to fail, often have a euphemistic ring and often do suggest a fundamental greed and implicit racism beneath claims to be securing the earthly and spiritual well-being of the Virginia natives.58 ("[W]e doe buy of them the pearles of earth, and sell to them the pearles of heauen."59) These documents

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169). This entire book, which devotes a chapter to The Tempest, is an excellent study of "certain aspects of Elizabethan ideology and . . . the way these are used in Shakespeare" (p. 1).

57 See Pechter (n. 4, above). This kind of "condition," he argues, is really a precondition in the sense that it is assumed to be logically (if not chronologically) prior. It is assumed to have the kind of explanatory power that "the Elizabethan world view" was once accorded (p. 297).

58 See, for example, the following contemporary tracts reprinted in Tracts and Other Papers Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of . . . North America, ed. Peter Force, 4 vols. (1836-47; rpt. New York: Peter Smith, 1947); R. I., "Nova Britania: OFFERING MOST Excellent fruities by Planting IN VIRGINIA. Exciting all such as be well affected to further the same" (1609), Vol. 1, No. 6; "Virginia richly valued" (1609), Vol. 4, No. 1; "A TRUE DECLARATION of the estate of the Coloni in Virginia, With a confutation of such scandalous reports as have tended to the disgrace of so worthy an enterprise" (1610), Vol. 3, No. 1; Sil. Jourdan, "A PLEINE DESCRIPTION OF THE BARMYDAS, NOW CALLED SOMMER ILANDS," (1613), Vol. 3, No. 3.


efface not only power but most practical problems as well, and they were supplemented by sermons romanticizing hardships as divine tribulation. Scattered throughout this discourse are righteous defenses of taking land from the Indians, much in the spirit—and tone—of Rabbi Zeal-of-the-Land Busy defending his need to eat pig. (This was also the tone familiar from the anti-theatrical critics—and, indeed, occasional colonialist sermons included snipes at the “Plaiers,” along with the Devil and the papists, as particular enemies of the Virginia venture.)

On the other hand, even in these documents not only is the emphasis elsewhere but often there are important contradictory movements. For example, “A True Declaration,” the official record of the Bermuda wreck, refers once to the Indians as “humane beasts” and devotes one paragraph of its twenty-four pages to the “greedy Vulture” Powhatan and his ambush. It notes elsewhere, however, that some of the English settlers themselves had “created the Indians our implacable enemies by some violence they had offered,” and it actually spends far more time attacking the lazy “scum of men” among the settlers, who had undermined the colony from within, than demonizing the less relevant Indians.

And on the whole, the exploitative and self-justifying rhetoric is only one element in a complex New World discourse. For much of the time, in fact, the main conflict in the New World was not between whites and Native Americans but between Spain and England. Voyages like Drake’s (1577–80) were motivated by this international conflict, as well as by the romance of discovery and the lure of treasure—but not by colonizing. Even when Raleigh received the first patent to settle and trade with the New World (1584), necessitating more extended contact with Native Americans, the temporary settlements he started in the 1580s were largely tokens in his play

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60 Alexander Brown, in The Genesis of the United States, reprints extracts from the following pertinent documents: William Symonds, “VIRGINIA: A SERMON PREACHED AT WHITE-CHAPPEL . . .” (1609), Vol. 1, 282–91; Daniel Price, “SAVLES PROHIBITION STAEIDE . . . And to the Inditement of all that persecute Christ with a reproof of those that traduce the Honourable Plantation of Virginia” (1609), Vol. 1, 312–16; and, most important, William Crashaw’s sermon titled “A New-yerees Gift to Virginia,” and preached, as the title page announced, before “Lord La Warre Lord Governour and Captaine Generall of Virginia, and others of [the] Counsell . . . At the said Lord Generall his . . . departure for Virginia . . . Wherein both the lawfulness of that action is maintained and the necessity thereof is also demonstrated, not so much out of the grounds of Policie, as of Humanity, Equity and Christianity” (1610), Vol. 1, 360–75.

61 In Alexander Brown, see William Crashaw for two of these references (in “A New-yerees Gift to Virginia” [1610], and “Epistle Dedicatorie” to Alexander Whittaker’s “Good Newses from Virginia” [1613], Vol. 2, 611–20; and see Ralphe Hamor in A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia (1615), Virginia State Library Publications, No. 3 (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1957).

62 Pp. 16, 17.

63 For the general history of the period, see David Beers Quinn, England and the Discovery of America, 1481–1620 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Alexander Brown’s Genesis identifies similar shifting motives in the history of colonization. Such voyages were made famous by often-reprinted accounts, especially in collections by Richard Eden and Richard Hakluyt, both of whose anthologies Shakespeare would consult for The Tempest. In the introductory material in these collections, as in the voyages themselves, the self-interest is obvious but so mixed with excitement and utopian hopes, and so focused on competition with Spain, that the issue of relation to Indians was dwarfed by comparison.
for fame and wealth rather than attempts to take over sizable portions of land
from the natives.  

Only when the war with Spain was over (1604) and ships were free again
did colonization really begin; and then "America and Virginia were on
everyone's lips."  

But this New World discourse still reflects little interest
in its inhabitants. Other issues are much more widely discussed. For example,
what would the New World government be like? Would James try to extend
his authoritarianism to America? Could he? This was the issue, for example,
most energizing Henry Wriothesley, Shakespeare's Southampton, who led the
"Patriot" faction on the London Virginia Council, pushing for more Ameri-
can independence.  

(As for James's own "colonial discourse," it seems to
have been devoted to worries about how it would all affect his relations with
Spain, and to requests for flying squirrels and other New World "toyes." )

Of more immediate interest, perhaps, to the mass of real or armchair
adventurers were the reports of New World wealth that at first made Virginia
known as a haven for bankrupts and spendthrifts, as well as for wild
dreamers—followed by the accounts of starvation, rebellion, and hardship
brought back by those who had escaped from the reality of colonial exis-
tence. Now the issue became "Is it worth it?" The official propaganda,
optimistic about future profits, was soon countered by a backlash from less
optimistic scoffers challenging the value of the entire project, one which sent
money, men, and ships to frequent destruction and brought back almost no
profit.

Even the settlers actually living with the natives in the New World itself
were—for entirely non-altruistic reasons—not yet fully engaged in
"colonialist" discourse as defined by revisionists. In 1611 they had not
managed to establish enough power to euphemize; they had little to be
defensive about. They were too busy fighting mutiny, disease, and the

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64 If he didn't succeed in establishing a settlement, he would lose his patent. His interest in
the patent rather than the colony was shown by his apparent negligence in searching for his lost
colonies (Quinn, n. 63, above, p. 300). He could hold onto his patent only so long as there was
hope that the colonists were still alive; clearly the hope was worth more to Raleigh than the
    colony.

65 Matthew P. Andrews, The Soul of a Nation: The Founding of Virginia and the Projection
    of New England (New York: Scribner's, 1943), p. 125. An entire popular literature developed,
so much so that the Archbishop of York complained that "of Virginia there be so many tractates,
divine, human, historical, political, or call them as you please, as no farther intelligence I dare
desire" (quoted in Andrews, p. 125).

66 It is this issue rather than colonialism that stimulated an earlier period of political
    commentary on the New World material in The Tempest: Charles M. Gayley, Shakespeare
    and the Founders of Liberty in America (New York: Macmillan, 1917); A. A. Ward, "Shakespeare
    and the makers of Virginia," Proceedings of the British Academy, 9 (1919); see also E. P. Kuhl,
    "Shakespeare and the founders of America: The Tempest," Philological Quarterly, 41 (1962),
    123–46.

67 Contributing to the welter of contradictory discourses was the Spanish ambassador's flow of
    letters to Spain insisting, not irrationally, that the whole purpose of maintaining a profitless
    colony like Jamestown was to establish a base for pirate raids against Spanish colonies.

68 Letter from Southampton to the Earl of Salisbury, 15 December 1609, in Alexander Brown,

69 The quantity and quality of the objections, which have not on the whole survived, has been
    judged by the nature of the many defenses thought necessary to answer them. See notes 58, 60,
    61.
stupidities of the London Council to have much energy left over for Indians. It is true that no writer ever treated Native Americans as equals—any more than he treated Moors, Jews, Catholics, peasants, women, Irishmen, or even Frenchmen as equals; travellers complacently recorded kidnapping natives to exhibit in England, as if the natives had no rights at all.70 And it is true that some of their descriptions are distorted by Old World stereotypes of wild men or cannibals—though these descriptions are often confined to earlier pre-colonial explorers’ reports.71 Or, far more insidiously, the descriptions were distorted by stereotypes of unfallen innocent noble savages—stereotypes that inevitably led to disillusionment when the settlers had to realize that the Indians, like the land itself, were not going to fulfill their dreams of a golden world made expressly to nurture Englishmen. The ‘‘noble savage’’ stereotype thus fueled the recurring accusation of Indian treachery, a response to betrayal of settlers’ fantasies as well as to any real Indian betrayal,72 and one to which I will return in discussing The Tempest.

But, given the universality of racial prejudice towards New World natives along with all ‘‘Others,’’ in this early period the movement was to loosen, not to consolidate, the prejudices brought from the Old World. The descriptions of these extended face-to-face encounters with Native Americans were perhaps even more varied than contemporary responses to Moors and Jews, who were usually encountered on the white man’s own territory, where exposure could be limited and controlled. The very terms imported from the Old World to name the natives—‘‘savages’’ or ‘‘naturals’’—began to lose their original connotations as the differing descriptions multiplied and even contradicted themselves. The reports range from Harriot’s widely republished attempt at scientific, objective reporting (1588), which viewed natives with great respect, to Smith’s less reliable adventure stories (1608–31), disputed even in his own time by Purchas. And although these do not by any means live up to our standards for non-colonialist discourse, their typical attitude is a wary, often patronizing, but live-and-let-live curiosity, rather than the exploitative erasure which would later become the mark of colonialist discourse. So long as the conflicts remained minimal, Native Americans were seen as beings like the writers;73 further, tribes were distinguished from one another, and recognition was granted to their different forms of government, class structure, dress codes, religion, and language.74 And when conflict did trigger the

70 A practice that Shakespeare did not admire if Stephano and Trinculo are any indication.
71 As are the two monsters cited as possible prototypes for Caliban by Geoffrey Bullough (Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, 8 vols. [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958], Vol. 8, 240). There were exceptions, of course, as in George Percy’s Observations . . . of the Plantation of . . . Virginia (1606), in Purchas, Vol. XVIII, 403–19.
72 See Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Settling With the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580–1640 (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), pp. 127–29. The origins of this nearly universal belief in Indian treachery are of course multiple, ranging from the readiness of the English to project their fears onto any available victim, whether Indians or mariners (who were also regularly accused of treachery in these narratives), to the prevailing stereotypes of the Other, to specific English acts of provocation, to the general tensions inherent in the situation. Without arguing for any one of these, I merely wish to suggest that the notion of ‘‘colonialist discourse’’ simplifies a complex situation.
73 Even as proto-white men, their skin as tanned rather than naturally black, etc. See Kupperman, and Orgel, ‘‘Shakespeare and the Cannibals.’’
74 Greenblatt, in his study of the ways in which white men verbally ‘‘colonialized’’ Indians, emphasizes the degree to which whites assumed that the Indians had no language. Although
recurring accusation of "treachery," the writers never presented the Indians as laughable Calibans, but rather as capable, indeed formidable, enemies whose skill and intelligence challenged that of the settlers. Horrors had already been perpetrated by the Spanish in the name of colonialism; not learning from these—or perhaps learning all too well—the English would soon begin perpetrating their own. But that lay in the future. When *The Tempest* was written, what the New World seems to have meant for the majority of Englishmen was a sense of possibility and a set of conflicting fantasies about the wonders to be found there; these were perhaps the preconditions for colonialism—as for much else—but not yet the thing itself.

To place colonialist discourse as precisely as possible within a given moment (like stressing the differences between *The Tempest* and colonialist discourse) is not to reduce the discussion to a numbers game. What is at stake here is not a quibble about chronology but an assumption about what we mean by the "relevant discursive context," about how we agree to determine it, and about how we decide to limit it. Here too there are differences of opinion about what counts, and these differences need to be acknowledged, examined, and accounted for.

III

My point in specifying Shakespeare's precise literal and temporal relation to colonialist discourse—in specifying the unique mind through which the discourse is mediated—is not to deny that the play has *any* relation to its context but to suggest that the relation is problematic. In the effort to identify Caliban as one more colonialist representation of the Other, we fail to notice how remarkable it is that such a Caliban should exist. In 1611 there were in England no literary portrayals of New World inhabitants and certainly no fictional examples of colonialist discourse. Insofar as *The Tempest* does in

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he notes that there were exceptions, he makes it sound as if these exceptions were rare and were largely confined to the "rough, illiterate sea dog, bartering for gold trinkets on a faraway beach," rather than to the "captains or lieutenants whose accounts we read" ("Learning to Curse," pp. 564–65). On the contrary, even the earliest travelers had often included glossaries of Indian terms in their reports (e.g., the Glossary in the introductory material of Eden's translation of Martyr's *Decades* [1555], as well as in various later English reports reprinted in Purchas's *Pilgrimes* [1625]); and in reading through Purchas's helter-skelter collection, one is struck by the number of writers who grant automatic respect to the Indians' language. A possibly figurative rather than literal force for comments on the Indians' "want of language" is suggested by Gabriel Archer's account of a 1602 voyage. Here it is the English, not the Indians, who are deficient in this respect: they "spake divers Christian words, and seemed to understand much more then we, for Want of Language, could comprehend" ("Relation of Captain Gosnold's voyage," *Purchas*, Vol. XVIII, 304, italics mine).

75 See R. R. Cawley, *Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama*, passim, and *Unpathed Waters: Studies in the Influence of the Voyagers on Elizabethan Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 234–41. Neither of R. R. Cawley's two books about the voyagers' influence on contemporary English literature cites any pre-1611 passage of more than a few lines. It is true that in the 1580s Marlowe's plays took off from the general sense of vastness and possibility opened up by voyages to the New as well as to the Old World. In addition Drayton wrote an "Ode to the Virginia Voyage," perhaps expressly for the settlers leaving for Jamestown in 1606; and one line in Samuel Daniel's "Musophilis" has a colonialist ring: he speaks of "vent[ing] the treasure of our tongue . . . T' enrich unknowing Nations with our store." True, too, that in a quite different spirit Jonson, Marston, and Chapman collaborated in *Eastward Ho* (1605) to make fun of gallants flocking to Virginia with expectations as great as those bringing
some way allude to an encounter with a New World native (and I will for the remainder of this essay accept this premise), it is the very first work of literature to do so. There may be Indians, more or less demonized, in the nonliterary discourse. Outside of Shakespeare, however, there would be none in literature until two years after The Tempest, when they began to appear—feathers and all—in masques.76 And Shakespeare went out of his way to invent Caliban: Strachey’s account of the wreck on the uninhabited Bermuda islands—Shakespeare’s main New World source—contains, of course, no island natives.77 For these Shakespeare had to turn elsewhere in Strachey and in others who described the mainland colony in Virginia. Shakespeare was the first to show one of us mistreating a native, the first to represent a native from the inside, the first to allow a native to complain onstage, and the first to make that New World encounter problematic enough to generate the current attention to the play.

To argue for Shakespeare’s uniqueness is not to argue that as fiction The Tempest is above politics, or that as a writer of fiction Shakespeare transcended ideology. It does imply, however, that if the play is “colonialist,” it must be seen as “prophetic” rather than descriptive.78 As such, the play’s status immediately raises important questions. Why was Shakespeare—a man who had no direct stake in colonization—the first writer of fiction to portray New World inhabitants? Why then? Shakespeare had shown no signs of interest in the New World until The Tempest, despite the fact that there had been some colonial activity and some colonialist rhetoric for several years among those who did have a stake in it. How did the colonialist phenomenon spread?

To hasten over Shakespeare’s relation to colonialism as if it were not a question but a conclusion is to lose one of the most important bits of data we may ever have about how such things as colonialism—and discourse—work. Problematic as it may be to speculate about an individual mind, it is even more problematic to speculate about the discourse of an entire nation or an entire period. One way to give substance to such large generalizations is to trace, in as much detail as may be available, the particulars on which they are based. Here the particulars include the individuals who produced, as well as reproduced, the larger cultural discourse—especially individuals like Shakespeare, who, more than almost any other, both absorbed and shaped the various conflicting discourses of the period.

To do this, as I have been arguing, it is necessary to consider the entire

76 The three brief exceptions are references to Spanish cruelty to Indians, all published before the truce with Spain. The Stationers’ Register lists “The crueltie of ye Spaniardes toward th[e] Indians, a ballad” (1586) and “Spanishe cruelties” (1601), now lost. Robert Greene notes in passing that the Spaniards hunted Indians with dogs, while by contrast the English treated the natives with “such courteys, as they thought the English Gods, and the Spaniards both by rule and conscience halfe Devils” (The Spanish Masquerado [1589], Life and . . . Works, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 15 vols. [London and Aylesbury: privately printed, 1881–86], Vol. V, 282–83). See Cawley, Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama, pp. 385–86.

77 When Strachey finishes with his account of the Bermuda episode and turns to a description of Virginia, he does devote one sentence to the Indians’ treachery.

78 See Frey, p. 31.
play, without deciding prematurely what is "only a distortion" or "only an irrelevance." In addition, however, we must also look to a context for The Tempest that is as relevant as colonialist discourse and perhaps even more essential to the presence of colonialism in The Tempest in the first place—that is, to the context of Shakespeare's own earlier "discourse." Only then can we see how the two fields of discourse intersect. In making use of the New World vocabulary and imagery, Shakespeare was in part describing something much closer to home—as was Jonson when he called the London brothel district "the Bermudas," 79 or as would Donne when he found his America, his "new founde land," in the arms of his mistress. Or as was Dudley Carleton in a gossipy letter from London about Lord Salisbury enduring a "tempest" of reproof from a lady; or Sir Ralph Winwood in trying to "begin a new world by setting himself and his wife here at home." 80

Long before writing The Tempest, Shakespeare had written another play about a ruler who preferred his books to government. Navarre's academy in Love's Labor's Lost was no island, but, like an island, it was supposed to be isolated from territorial negotiations. And Navarre, oblivious to colonial issues, though certainly not exempt from timeless aristocratic prejudice, brought his own version of Ariel and Caliban by inviting Armado and Costard to join him. Like Prospero, he asked his "Ariel!" to make a pageant for him, and he imprisoned his "Caliban" for trying to "do" a wench. His relation to the two is not a matter of colonization but rather of condescension and ironic recognition, as Navarre is forced to see something of himself in the conflict between fiery Armado's over-active imagination and earthy Costard's lust. 81 Only much later did this pattern come to be "colonial."

The Tempest is linked in many other ways not only to Love's Labor's Lost but also to the rest of the canon, as continued efforts of critics have shown, 82

79 In his edition of The Tempest, Kermode notes this parallel with Bartholomew Fair (2.6.76–77), "'Looke into any Angle o' the towne, (the Streights, or the Bermuda's) . . .'" (p. 24, n. 223).
81 Many other similarities link The Tempest to the earlier play, including some which might have been taken to suggest The Tempest's focus on the New World. Thus, for example, Stephano cries out when he first sees Caliban, "'Do you put tricks upon's with salvages and men of Inde, ha?'" (2.2.58–59). But Berowne, though rooted in the Old World, resorts to similarly exotic analogies to describe the passion which Rosaline should inspire in his colleagues. Who sees her, he says,

That, (like a rude and savage man of Inde),
At the first op'ning of the gorgeous east,
Bows not his vassal head . . . ?
(Love's Labor's Lost, 4.3.218–20)

See Kermode's note on the line in The Tempest.
82 Specific resemblances between subplots here and the plots of other plays have been noted (between the plot to murder Alonso and Macbeth, between Ferdinand's courtship of Miranda and Romeo and Juliet, etc.). See Alvin B. Kernan, "'The great fair of the world and the ocean island: Bartholomew Fair and The Tempest,'" in The Revels History of Drama in English, 8 vols., eds. J. Leeds Barroll, Alexander Leggatt, Richard Hosley, Alvin Kernan (London: Methuen, 1975), Vol. III, 456–74. G. Wilson Knight has described the place of The Tempest in Shakespeare's overarching myth of the tempest. Even more suggestive, Leslie Fiedler has traced the less obvious personal mythology that provides a context for the play. Drawing on marginal details, he shows the play's concern with themes that pervade the entire canon, such as the interracial marriage that here, not accidentally, initiates the action of the play. His work is the starting point for mine.
and it is revealing to see how, in each case, the non-colonial structures become associated with colonialist discourse. Indeed, the very details of *The Tempest* that revisionists see as marking the "nodal point of the play’s imbrication into this discourse of colonialism" are reworkings of similar moments in earlier and seemingly precolonial plays. The moment I will focus on for the rest of this paper is the one that many revisionists take as the strongest evidence in the play for the falseness of Prospero’s position—the moment when the hidden colonialist project emerges openly,84 when the "political unconscious" is exposed.85 It occurs when Caliban’s plot interrupts the pageant Prospero is staging for Ferdinand and Miranda, and Prospero is so enraged that Miranda says she has never seen him so angry. The explanation, it has been suggested, is that if psychology matters at all, Prospero’s anger here, like his anger earlier when Caliban tried to rape Miranda, derives from the politics of colonialism. It reveals Prospero’s political "disquiet at the irruption into consciousness of an unconscious anxiety concerning the grounding of his legitimacy" on the island.86

But the dramatic context counters the assumption that politics is primary in this episode. Like Caliban, Prospero differs in significant ways from the stereotyped "real life" characters in colonial political drama. Unlike the single-minded colonial invader, Prospero is both an exile and a father; and the action of the play is initiated when both these roles are newly activated by the arrival of Prospero’s old enemies, those who had exiled him as well as his daughter’s husband-to-be. At the moment of Prospero’s eruption into anger, he has just bestowed Miranda on his enemy’s son Ferdinand87 and is in the midst of presenting his pageant as a wedding gift, wrapped in a three-fold warning about chastity.88 If Prospero is to pass on his heritage to the next generation, he must at this moment repress his desire for power and for revenge at home, as well as any sexual desire he feels toward Miranda.89 Both desires are easily projected onto the fishily phallic Caliban, a walking version of Prospero’s own "thing" of darkness. Not only has Caliban already tried to rape Miranda; he is now out to kill Prospero so that he can turn Miranda over to Stephano ("she will give thee brave brood"); and Caliban does not even feel guilty. Caliban’s function as a walking screen for projection may help explain why Caliban’s sin does not consist in cannibalism, to which, one assumes, Prospero was never tempted, but rather in Prospero’s own repressed fantasies of omnipotence and lust.90 Of course Prospero is also angry that Caliban is now threatening both his authority on the island and his justification

83 Barker and Hulme, p. 198.
84 Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 133.
85 Paul Brown, p. 69.
87 The last time Prospero got so angry that Miranda had to apologize was when Ferdinand began to court Miranda.
89 The incestuous impulse implicit in the situation is even clearer in Shakespeare’s own earlier romances; both Fiedler and Nuttall, among others, have explored these in the context of the vast literature of romance that lies behind the play. See also Mark Taylor, *Shakespeare’s Darker Purpose: A Question of Incest* (New York: AMS Press, 1982).
90 Fiedler, p. 234.
of that authority; but the extraordinary intensity of Prospero’s rage suggests a conjunction of psychological as well as political passion.

This conjunction of the psychological and the political not only appears here in The Tempest but also characterizes a surprising number of Prospero-like characters in Shakespeare’s earlier plays who provide a suggestive context for The Tempest. All through the canon one finds characters who escape from active lives to some kind of pastoral retreat, who step aside from power and aggression—and usually from sexuality as well—and from all the forbidden fantasies in which these are enacted. But while each adopts a disinterested stance, as if having retired behind the scenes, each sees life as a play and manipulates others still on stage in a way that suggests a fascination with what he has rejected and assigned to the “Others.” And each of these has his “Caliban” and his moment of sudden, irrational anger when his “Caliban” threatens to overstep the limits defining him as “other” and separating him from “Prospero.” At this moment of confrontation, boundaries threaten to disappear and hierarchies are menaced. And in each of the earlier plays, this moment is indicative of inner conflict, as the earlier “Prospero” figure confronts someone who often has neither property nor power to colonize, and whose threat is largely symbolic. In all these plays Shakespeare is dealing not just with power relations but also with the psychology of domination, with the complicated ways in which personal psychology interacts with political power.

As early as the mid-1590s, two figures show some resemblance to Prospero. Antonio, the merchant of Venice, sees the world as “A stage where every man must play a part, / And mine a sad one” (1.1.78–79). Almost eagerly accepting his passive lot, he claims to renounce both profit and love. But, as Marianne Novy suggests, a repressed self-assertion is hinted at in the passive/aggressive claims he makes on Bassanio and comes out clearly when he lashes out at the greedy and self-assertive Shylock with a viciousness like Prospero’s towards Caliban, a viciousness he shows nowhere else.91 He admits calling the Jew a dog and says,

\[
\text{I am as like to call thee so again,}
\text{To spet on thee again. . . .}
\text{(1.3.130–31)92}
\]

A related and similarly problematic exchange occurs in the Henry IV plays, written a year or so later, where role-playing Prince Hal, during his temporary retreat from power, had found a version of pastoral in Falstaff’s tavern. After reclaiming his throne, when he finds that Falstaff has also come from the tavern to claim a role in the new kingdom, Hal suddenly repudiates Falstaff with a cruelty as cold as Prospero’s anger at Caliban—and equally excessive:


92 All Shakespeare quotations are from The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). The earlier group of critics who had pointed out the racist assumptions in Antonio’s behavior made many of the same points recently made on Caliban’s behalf. The two cases are indeed similar, and although both can be seen as examples of “colonialism”—with the word “colonialism” used very loosely as it is today for any exploitative appropriation—the more historically specific “colonialist discourse” does not seem to be the appropriate context for Shylock.
“I know thee not, old man.” In both these cases, though the resemblance to Prospero is clear, the relation to an historically specific colonialism is hard to establish.

Then in As You Like It (1599) and Measure for Measure (1604) come the two exiled or self-exiled Dukes who leave home—one to ‘‘usurp’’ the deer in the forest (2.1.21–28), the other to ‘‘usurp’’ the beggary in the Vienna streets (3.2.93)—and who most resemble Prospero. Duke Senior in As You Like It is banished to the pastoral forest of Arden, where he professes himself utterly content to live a life notable for the absence of both power and women (a ‘‘woeful pageant,’’ he calls it cheerfully [2.7.138]). He is saved from having to fight for power when his evil brother (unlike the one in Shakespeare’s source) conveniently repents and hands back the dukedom; but an ambivalence about sexuality is at least suggested when this mildest of men lashes out at Jaques, precisely when Jaques returns from melancholy withdrawal and claims the fool’s license to satirize society’s ills—to ‘‘cleanse the foul body of the infected world.’’93 ‘‘Fie on thee!’’ says the Duke,

. . . thou thyself hast been a libertine,
As sensual as the brutish sting itself,
And all th’ embossed sores, and headed evils,
That thou with license of free foot hast caught,
Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world.

(2.7.65–69)

Jaques seems to have touched a nerve. Elsewhere Jaques makes a claim on behalf of the deer in the forest rather like the claim Caliban makes for himself on the island, complaining that Duke Senior has ‘‘usurped’’ these ‘‘velvet friends’’; he even makes it ‘‘most invectively,’’ having, like Caliban, learned how to curse. Just as in the case of Caliban, we cannot laugh away the claim the way the Duke does. But Jaques’s complaint seems intended more as an insight into the Duke than a comment on the deer—whom Jaques later kills anyway.

The touchiest of these precursors, Vincentio in Measure for Measure (1604), is the one who most closely resembles Prospero. He too prefers study to government, and he turns over his power to Angelo, claiming ‘‘[I] do not like to stage me to their eyes’’ (1.1.68)—but then he steps behind the scenes to manipulate the action. Like Prospero, Vincentio sees his manipulation as an altruistic means of educating his wayward subjects into chastity, repentance, and merciful mildness; but it seems to serve more private needs of self-definition as well. For it first allows him, as ‘‘ghostly father,’’ to deny any aggressive or sexual motives of his own, and then allows him to return at the end to claim both power and sexual rewards as he resumes his dukedom and claims Isabel.94 Vincentio’s ‘‘Caliban’’ is the libidinous and loose-tongued Lucio, who not only indulges his own appetites but openly accuses the Duke of indulging his, so that it is unusually clear in this case that the ‘‘Caliban’’ figure is a representation of the Duke’s own disowned passions.

93 Nuttall (n. 88, above) notes the strangeness of the Duke’s explosion and the fact that Jaques’s request for a fool’s license ‘‘has shaken Duke Senior’’ (p. 231).
Lucio’s slanders include the claim that the Duke has “usurp[ed] the beggary he was never born to,” but, like Jaques speaking for the deer, he is more concerned with revealing the Duke’s contradictory desires here than with defending beggars’ rights. Goaded by Lucio’s insubordination, the Duke lashes out at him as he does at no one else and threatens a punishment much worse than the one he assigned to the would-be rapist and murderer Angelo or to the actual murderer Barnardine.

In the case of all of these “Prosperos,” it is hard to see the attack on “Caliban” as part of a specifically colonialist strategy, as a way of exploiting the Other or of rationalizing illegitimate power over him rather than over what he represents in “Prospero” himself. To a logical observer, the Prospero-attack seems at best gratuitous—and the more frightening for being so. It has no political rationale. The “political” attack always takes place outside the play’s old world, after the characters’ withdrawal to a second world that is not so much a new world as one that projects, exaggerates, turns upside down, or polarizes the conflicts that made the old world uninhabitable. In the case of each earlier “Prospero,” the conflicts seem internal as well as external, so that when he moves out to meet his “Caliban,” he is always meeting himself. Political exile is also presented as self-estrangement, a crisis of selfhood expressed in social and geographical divisions. And in each case, Shakespeare exposes the fragility of such arrangements, whether they take the form of the pastoralization of the forest of Arden, or of the scapegoating of Shylock in Venice, or of Falstaff’s carnival misrule in the tavern, or of the theatricalizing of the prison in Vincentio’s Vienna, or of Prospero’s “colonizing” of a utopian island.

Whatever varying political role each earlier “Caliban” plays as inhabitant of his second—or second-class—world, each seems to embody a similar psychological quality. In each case he displays the overt self-assertion that the retired or retiring “Prospero” cannot—or wishes not to—muster for himself, and that for Shakespeare seems to be the mark of the Other. Each is an epitome of what Shakespeare (perhaps in his own punning ambivalence about acknowledging it as his own) elsewhere calls “will.”95 This “will” includes a range of forbidden desires and appetites often attributed to the Other and always associated with the “foul body,” as Jaques calls it; or with the fat appetitive body, as in Hal’s picture of Falstaff; or with the body as mere pounds of flesh and blood; perhaps with what we might call, after Bakhtin, the “grotesque” body. And it is defined in opposition to the ethereal, or ariel, virtues such as “mercy,” “honor,” and “chastity” characterizing the various “Prosperos.”

The “will” of these “Calibans” can carry suggestions of primitive oral greed, as in Shylock’s desire to “feed fat” his revenge with a pound of human flesh, in Falstaff’s voracious appetite, or in Caliban’s name. Or it emerges in a rampant sexual greed, as in Falstaff, in Jaques’s past, in Lucio, perhaps even in Shylock’s reproductive miracles with sheep, and of course in Caliban himself. But the most alien aspect of self-assertion or “will” in these plays emerges in a primitive vengefulness. This vengefulness is associated with an infantile need to control and dominate and with the scatological

95 Primarily of course in the sonnets, but in the plays as well. See Novy’s discussion of self-assertiveness in Shylock.
imagery of filth—with a disgust at the whole messy, physical world that always threatens to get out of control. Thus Shylock’s drive for revenge is linked to his Jonsonian “anal” virtues (“fast bind, fast find”), to his fecal gold, and to his tightly locked orifices (“stop my house’s ears, I mean my casements” [2.5.34]). Thus, too, Duke Senior’s description of Jaques “disgorging” his “embossed sores” suggests that he is projecting onto Jaques his disgust at the idea of “the foul body of the infected world”—and his fear that Jaques will “disgorge” and overflow his boundaries rather than cleanse; Jaques’s very name associates him with this scatological vision. Caliban, very much concerned with revenge, also takes on a taint of anality through the words of Trinculo and Stephano. The latter sees Caliban hiding under his gabardine with Trinculo and takes Caliban for a monster whose first act is to “vent” a Trinculo—a Gargantuan act of defecation; Trinculo elsewhere complains that Caliban led them to a “foul lake” that “o’erstunk their feet till they smelled ‘all horse-piss’.”

Thus, although Caliban is like the New World natives in his “otherness,” he is linked at least as closely to Shakespeare’s earlier “Calibans.” What is interesting in any attempt to understand The Tempest’s uniqueness in other aspects is that in Caliban for the first time Shakespeare shows “will,” or narcissistic self-assertion, in its purest and simplest form as the original “grandiosity” or “megalomania” of a child;[97] for the first time he makes the representative of bodily existence a seeming child whose ego is a “body ego,” as Freud said, a “subject” whose “self” is defined by the body. There is a childishly amoral—and almost asexual—glee in Caliban’s sexuality (“O ho, O ho, wouldn’t had been done!” he says of the attempted rape [1.2.349]) and a childish exaggeration in his dreams of revenge (“brain him / . . . or with a log / Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake, / Or cut his weazand with thy knife” [3.2.88–91]).[98] Like a child he thinks often about his mother,[99] and now that she is gone, he dreams of riches dropping from heaven and cries to dream again; like a child he was taught language and shown the man in the moon.[100] And like an imperious child he is enraged when his pie in the sky does not appear. If he rebukes Prospero for first stroking and then disciplining him, if he objects to being made a subject when he was “mine own king” (1.2.342), this is the rebuke made by every child, who begins life as “His Majesty the Baby,” tended by his mother, and who is then subjected to the demands of the community,[101] represented by the father. Childhood is the period in which anyone—even the most powerful Elizabethan aristocrat—can experience the slave’s side of the master/slave relation, its indignities, and the dreams of reversal and revenge it can imbue. Appropriate and acceptable in a baby, all these traits (like Caliban himself) “with age [grow] uglier” (4.1.191)—and far more dangerous.

Caliban’s childishness has been dismissed as a defense, another rational-

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96 Caliban later joins the two courtly servants in appropriately scatological double entendres.
98 Compare Antonio’s cold calculations as he plans to kill Alonso.
99 Albeit in a “My mommy is going to get you” fashion.
100 Nuttall, p. 225.
101 So, too, any child might complain that he was taught to speak and now his “profit on ‘t” is to be trapped in the prison house of language.
ization of Prospero’s illegitimate power. But if it is a defense, it is one which itself is revealing. Caliban’s childishness is a dimension of the Other in which Shakespeare seems extremely interested.

It is a major (not peripheral) source both of Caliban’s defining characteristics and of what makes his relation to Prospero so highly charged. Caliban’s childish innocence seems to have been what first attracted Prospero, and now it is Caliban’s childish lawlessness that enragés him. To a man like Prospero, whose life has been spent learning a self-discipline in which he is not yet totally adept, Caliban can seem like a child who must be controlled, and who, like a child, is murderously enraged at being controlled. Prospero treats Caliban as he would treat the willful child in himself.

The importance of childishness in defining Caliban is suggested by the final Tempest precedent to be cited here, one that lies behind Prospero’s acknowledgment of Caliban as his own thing of darkness—and in which the Caliban figure is literally a child. This figure is found in Titus Andronicus, where a bastard child, called “‘devil’ and ‘slave,’” is cast out by his mother but rescued by his father, who promises—in language foreshadowing Caliban’s imagery in The Tempest—to raise him in a cave and feed him on berries and roots. Here the father is black Aaron the Moor, and the childish thing of darkness, whom Aaron is at some pains to acknowledge, is his own literally black son. What is remarkable about this portrait of a barbarian father and son is that Aaron’s is the only uncomplicated parental love in a play-world where civilized white men like Titus kill their own children on principle. It is a world, by the way, which contains the only literal (if unwitting) cannibal in Shakespeare’s plays, the child’s white mother. Unlike Titus, Aaron can love his child because he can identify with him; as an “uncivilized” black man, he can accept the greedy, sensual, lawless child in himself: “This is my self, the vigor and the picture of my youth,” he says (4.2.108). This love, which comes easily to Aaron in acknowledging his own flesh and blood, is transformed in The Tempest to Prospero’s strained and difficult recognition of a tribal Other whose blackness nonetheless figures his own.

The echoes of Aaron not only suggest the family resemblance between Prospero and Caliban. They also suggest that here Shakespeare is changing his earlier vision of authority. In the earlier play it is white Titus who—like Prospero—gives away his power and is betrayed; but it is black Aaron who is

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102 See Leininger, p. 125, for the most effective presentation of this view; also Paul Brown, p. 63.

103 Here, too, Shakespeare seems unusual. Not until our child-centered, post-Freudian age do we find writers so directly representing the aliens on our galactic frontier as children—whether as innocents like Steven Spielberg’s E. T. or as proto-savages like his Gremlins. Others had associated the primitive with metaphorical childhood: De Bry’s 1590 edition of Harriot’s Briefe and true report and, later, Purchas’s version of Strachey associated the primitive Indians with the childhood of the English nation, and writers spoke of the Indians as “younger brethren” (Kupperman, n. 72, above, p. 170). What is unusual in Shakespeare is the emphasis and the detailed portrayal of emotional as well as cognitive childishness. Leah Marcus argues, in another context, that the English in the chaotic and disorienting intellectual context of the seventeenth century were especially susceptible to dreams of the golden age—and to sympathetic portrayals of childhood wholeness (Childhood and Cultural Despair [Pittsburgh, Pa.: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1978]). Most of the instances of such portrayals did not appear until later in the century, however.

stigmatized as the vengeful villain. And Titus maintains this black-and-white distinction even while savagely carrying out his own revenge. But distinctions in The Tempest have become less rigid. By merging his fantasy about a ‘‘white’’ (but exiled and neurotically puritanical) duke with his fantasy about a villainous (but loving) ‘‘black’’ father, Shakespeare for the first time shows, in Prospero, a paternal leader who comes back to power by admitting rather than denying the ‘‘blackness’’ in himself. Prospero may not, as several revisionists point out, physically do much for Caliban at the end; however, what he says matters a great deal indeed, for his original transgression, when he first defined Caliban as the Other, was intellectual as well as physical. When Prospero finally acknowledges Caliban, although he is a long way from recognizing the equality of racial ‘‘others,’’ he comes closer than any of Shakespeare’s other ‘‘Prosperos’’ to acknowledging the otherness within, which helps generate all racism—and he comes closer than anyone else in colonialist discourse. Prospero acknowledges the child-like Caliban as his own, and although he does not thus undo hierarchy, he moves for the first time towards accepting the child in himself rather than trying to dominate and erase that child (along with random vulnerable human beings outside himself) in order to establish his adult authority.

Thus, although Shakespeare may, as the revisionists claim, to some degree reproduce Prospero’s colonialist vision of the island, the play’s emphasis lies not so much in justifying as in analyzing that vision, just as Shakespeare had analyzed the origins of dominance in the earlier plays. The play insists that we see Prospero’s current relation to Caliban in terms of Prospero’s own past; it contains the ‘‘colonial’’ encounter firmly within the framing story of his own family history. And though that history does not extend backward to Prospero’s own childhood, it does begin with family ties and Miranda’s memory of ‘‘the dark backward and abysm of time’’ (1.2.50), before either she or Prospero had known the Other. Prospero was then, he thought, in total harmony with his world and himself, happy in his regressive retreat to his library-Eden; he was buffered from reality, he thought, by a ‘‘lov’d’’ brother so linked to himself and his own desires that Prospero had in him a trust with no ‘‘limit, / A confidence sans bound’’ (1.2.96–97), like the trust that Miranda must have had in the women who ‘‘tended’’ her then. Only when Antonio’s betrayal shattered that trust and Prospero was ousted from Eden—newly aware of both the brother as Other and of himself as a willful self in opposition—did he ‘‘discover’’ the island and Caliban. In a sense, then, Caliban emerged from the rift between Prospero and Antonio, just as Ariel emerged from Sycorax’s riven pine. Once the brother has shown that he is not identical to the self, reflecting back its own narcissistic desire, then he becomes the Other—and simultaneously rouses the vengeful Other in the self. In The Tempest the distance that a ‘‘colonialist’’ Prospero imposes between self and Other originated in a recoil from the closest relation of all; it was a recoil that in fact defined both the ‘‘distant’’ and the ‘‘close,’’ the public and the private—the political and the personal—as separate realms. When Prospero acknowledges Caliban, he thus partly defuses an entire dynamic that began long before he had ever seen the island.

105 Might the brothers’ definition by opposition perhaps have influenced Shakespeare’s choice of names: Prospero and Antonio?
When Shakespeare created a childish "Caliban," he was himself rounding out a dynamic process that had begun as long ago as the writing of Titus Andronicus. We will never "know" why Shakespeare gave to this final version of his exile story a local habitation incorporating aspects of colonialist discourse. But the answer lies not only in that discourse but also in him and in what was on his mind. Some of the most "specious" speculations about Shakespeare's mind have been stimulated by his presumed resemblance to Prospero at the end of the play: past his zenith, on the way to retirement, every third thought turned to his grave. Without trying speciously to read minds, however, it seems safe to say that to some degree Shakespeare had been for several years concerned with the aging, loss, mortality, and death that recur in so much of what we know he was writing and reading at the time. To this degree, both the play and its context deal with the end of the individual self, the subject and the body in which it is located. It is the end of everything associated with the discovery of self in childhood, the end of everything Caliban represents—and thus the greatest threat to infantile narcissism since His Majesty the Baby was first de-throned. John Bender has noted that the occasion of the play’s presumed court debut in 1611 was Hallowmas, the feast of winter and the time of seasonal celebrations figuring the more final endings and death associated with winter. 106 As part of the celebrations, Bender suggests, the play might have served to structure a communal response to the recurring "seasonal mentality" brought on by the reminder of mortality. Whether or not this is true, that which "recurs" in seasons and communities comes only once to individuals; and as the final stage in Shakespeare’s own "seasonal" movement from A Midsummer Night’s Dream to The Winter’s Tale, the play can be seen as staging a final "crisis of selfhood" and of betrayal like those in the earlier exile plays—but this time a far more extreme one. 107 For those who rage against the dying of the light, it is a crisis that awakens the old infantile narcissistic demand for endless fulfillment and the narcissistic rage and vengefulness against a world that denies such satisfactions. 108

To one on the threshold of retirement from the Old World, the New World is an appropriate stage on which to enact this last resurgence of the infantile self. We take for granted the historical conditions generating utopian visions in the voyagers' reports outside the play. What the example of Caliban’s childish presence in the play suggests is that for Shakespeare the desire for such utopias—the golden worlds and fountains of youth—has roots in personal history as well as in "history." The desire has been shaped by the most local as well as by the largest, collective, material constraints: by being born small and weak in a world run by large, strong people with problems of their

106 John B. Bender, "'The Day of The Tempest,'" English Literary History, 47 (1980), 235–58.
107 It also marks Shakespeare's return to the pattern of withdrawal from active life used in Love's Labor's Lost—but this time with a difference. The earlier play had shown young men hoping to conquer death by forsaking the world and all it represents. The Tempest shows an old man coming to terms with death by acknowledging the body and what it represents.
own; by being born in "a sexed and mortal body"¹⁰⁹ that must somehow become part of a social and linguistic community. Caliban's utopia of sweet voices and clouds dropping riches (3.2.137–43) draws most directly on the infantile substratum that colored Columbus's report when he returned from his third voyage convinced "that the newly discovered hemisphere was shaped like a woman's breast, and that the Earthly Paradise was located at a high point corresponding to the nipple."¹¹ But the play's other "utopias" draw on it too. Gonzalo's utopia is more socialized ("nature should bring forth, / . . . all abundance, / To feed my innocent people" [2.1.163–65]); Prospero's pageant utopia is more mythic (a world without winter, blessed by nurturing Ceres); but, like Caliban's, their utopias recreate a union with a bounteous Mother Nature. And, like every child's utopia, each is a fragile creation, easily destroyed by the rage and violence that constitute its defining alternative—a dystopia of murderous vengeance; the interruption of Prospero's pageant is only the last in a series of such interruptions.¹¹¹ Each is the creation of a childish mind that operates in binary divisions: good mother/bad mother, love/rage, brother/Other.

That Shakespeare was drawn to the utopian aspects of the New World is suggested by the particular fragment of New World discourse that most directly precipitated (Kermode's suggestive term) the play—the Bermuda pamphlets, which record what was "perhaps the most romantic incident associated with America's beginnings."¹¹² What attracted Shakespeare, that is, was the story in which a "merciful God," a loving and fatherly protector, rescued a whole shipload of people from certain death; it was a story that countered thoughts of winter with reports of magical bounty in the aptly named "Summer Islands."

The concerns that made Shakespeare's approach to colonialist discourse possible may have been operative later in other cases as well. In analyzing the colonialist discourse growing out of political motives, it is important not to lose touch with the utopian discourse growing out of a different set of motives. Without reducing colonialism to "the merely subjective and to the status of psychological projection,"¹¹³ one can still take account of fantasies and motives that, though now regarded as secondary, or as irrelevant to politics, may interact with political motives in ways we have not yet begun to understand—and cannot understand so long as we are diverted by trying to reduce psychology to politics or politics to psychology. The binary dynamics of infantile utopian fantasies can, for example, help explain why frustrated settlers succumbed so easily to the twin stereotypes of the Native Americans as innocent primitives who would welcome and nurture the settlers, and as hopelessly treacherous Others. They can serve as a reminder that the desire for friendship and brotherhood can be as destructive as a desire to exploit.

¹¹⁰ Cited in Levin (n. 9, above), p. 183.
¹¹¹ See Bender (n. 106, above) on the way dreams are always followed by violence in the play; the violence is not a cause of the problem on the island but rather an effect.
¹¹² Andrews (n. 65, above), p. 126.
¹¹³ Jameson cites as being "very much in the spirit of [his] present work" the concern of Deleuze and Guattari "to reassert the specificity of the political content of everyday life and of individual fantasy-experience and to reclaim it from . . . reduction to the merely subjective and to the status of psychological projection" (The Political Unconscious, n. 22, above, p. 22).
Reference to irrational, outdated infantile needs can help explain why the settlers, once they actually did begin colonizing, set out with such gratuitous thoroughness to "reduce" the savage to civility. As James Axtell describes the process, "In European eyes, no native characteristic was too small to reform, no habit too harmless to reduce." Such behavior seems to go beyond any immediate political or material motive and seems rather to serve more general psychological needs stirred up by conflict with the natives. The recent emphasis on the colonists' obvious material greed and rational self-interest—or class-interest—has unnecessarily obscured the role of these less obvious irrational motives and fantasies that are potentially even more insidious.

Shakespeare's assimilation of elements from historical colonialist discourse was neither entirely isolated from other uses or innocent of their effects. Nonetheless, the "colonialism" in his play is linked not only to Shakespeare's indirect participation in an ideology of political exploitation and erasure but also to his direct participation in the psychological after-effects of having experienced the exploitation and erasure inevitable in being a child in an adult's world. He was not merely reproducing a preexistent discourse; he was also crossing it with other discourses, changing, enlarging, skewing, and questioning it. Our sense of The Tempest's participation in "colonialist discourse" should be flexible enough to take account of such crossings; indeed our notion of that in which such discourse consisted should be flexible enough to include the whole of the text that constitutes the first English example of fictional colonialist discourse.115


115 The original version of this essay was presented at a session on "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance History," chaired by Richard Wheeler at the 1987 MLA annual meeting. The current version has greatly benefited from careful readings by Janet Adelman, Anne and Rob Goble, Carol Neely, Marianne Novy, Martin Wiener, and several anonymous readers.