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Reviewed work(s): 
Source: Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), pp. 1-28
Published by: Folger Shakespeare Library in association with George Washington University
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2870799
Accessed: 18/09/2012 09:59

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"Treason doth never prosper": The Tempest and the Discourse of Treason

CURT BREIGHT

Eightyeight yere, wee in Gods feare, may remember: Gowries August, Percyes uniust, fift November.¹

IN A RECENT COLLECTION OF ESSAYS, THE TEMPEST is twice deemed a bad, even a "boring," play. Perhaps the reason for this condemnation lies not in the play itself but in our failure to imagine the conditions of Renaissance theatrical production. If recontextualized within one aspect of English history, The Tempest, I suggest, is a politically radical intervention in a dominant contemporary discourse. The play is constructed as a series of conspiracies, and as such it can be inserted into a vast discourse of treason that became an increasingly central response to difficult social problems in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean London. Shakespeare casts Prospero as stage manager of conspiracy in episodes that directly resemble contemporary treason cases and documents. Nearly all the characters inside the play are physically and psychologically subjected by Prospero in his bid for political rehabilitation through mystification of his power as a divinely protected figure. But the audience exists outside Prospero's manipulation of characters and situations and is thereby enabled to perceive Shakespeare's clever demystification of various official strategies within the discourse of treason. The audience is allowed to see that conspiracy is often a fiction, or a construct, or a real yet wholly containable piece of social theatre. The play can thus be viewed within a sphere of oppositional discourse that arose against official discourse in this period.²

¹ John Rhodes, A Briefe Summe of The Treason intended against the King & State . . . (1606), sig. B3v.
² For recent critical condemnations of The Tempest by Terence Hawkes and Anthony B. Dawson, see "Bad" Shakespeare: Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon, Maurice Charney, ed. (London and Toronto: Associated Univ. Presses, 1988). The "difficult social problems" to which I refer were manifold. Massive population growth combined with increasing displacement from the land created large numbers of "masterless" men and women (See London 1500–1700: The making of the metropolis, A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay, eds. [London: Longman, 1986], p. 2, for London’s growth from around 120,000 people in 1550 to around 200,000 in 1600; see also A. L. Beier, Masterless Men: The vagrancy problem in England 1560–1640 [London: Methuen, 1985], for a fine discussion of this major problem; Beier indicates the culmination of this displacement on p. 22: "By 1600 the English had had the country’s major resource [land] seized from their grasp; at a time, ironically, when their requirements for food and housing were
In a 1587 pamphlet nominally devoted to the recent treason of Sir William Stanley and Rowland York, the author, an anonymous inhabitant of the fractured Low Countries, perceived and envied England's divine blessing as manifested by citywide dismemberment:

Some say that in England manie Traitors are punished, whose quarters are to be scene round about London in great number. But would to God there were in other places moe Londons, about the which might be scene the quarters of the traitors, which in other places escape their deserved punishment. . . . The standing quarters in England shew Gods blessing upon that nation, who doth reveale them, and the justice of the countrie that doth punish them. But where some times they stand not abroad in shew, betokeneth Gods curse, and the countrie sleeping or justice oppressed.3

The pamphlet is a translation from the Dutch, undoubtedly made for the sake of political propaganda useful in the ongoing struggle against Spain, but its function as propaganda does not efface the curious and lurid imagination of its original author. His rhetoric parallels the 1616 view of London engraved by Claes Janszoon de Visscher, in which the South Bank theatres and the Bear Garden are a (long) stone's throw from the gate of London Bridge, which proudly displays the severed heads of numerous "traitors."4

I begin my discussion of treason and The Tempest by citing the above passage because it epitomizes the contemporary status of treason as both a discourse and a quite tangible cultural product—simultaneously reducible and yet irreducible to text and flesh. Renaissance London was filled with repre-

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3 A short Admonition or warning, upon the detestable Treason wherewith Sir William Stanley and Rowland Yorke have betrayed and delivered for monie unto the Spaniards, the Towne of Deventer, and the Scoune of Zutphen . . . (1587), sig. Aiiii.  
4 There are two extant copies of the engraving: one in the British Museum, dated 1616, the other in the Folger Library, circa 1625. It is also reproduced on pp. 1892–93 of The Riverside Shakespeare, G. Blakemore Evans, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). See also the cover of this issue.

Increasing."'). Interventionist Elizabethan foreign policy resulted in war from about 1585 to 1603 against Spain, the greatest sixteenth-century power (see Christopher Haigh, Elizabeth I [London: Longman, 1988], p. 133). Elizabethan religious policies guaranteed conflict between the Elizabethan regime and international Roman Catholicism, and thus forced English Catholics (at least a significant minority of the population) into a precarious ideological and/or political position; those same policies alienated a small yet vocal minority of radical Protestants who by 1593 became, according to Neale, just as threatening in the regime's eyes as English Catholics (for a fine study of Elizabethan Catholicism, see Peter Holmes, Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982]; on radical Protestantism, see J. E. Neale, Elizabeth I and her Parliaments 1584–1601 [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958], p. 287). The 1590s were years of crisis highlighted by severe dearth in the middle of the decade (see The European Crisis of the 1590s, Peter Clark, ed. [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985]), but crisis was a pan-European phenomenon. In general, the entire range of sociopolitical problems caused a significant increase in active discontent from the late Elizabethan to the early Jacobean period, as detailed by Roger Manning, Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509–1640 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). In short, the government itself helped to cause many of England's sociopolitical problems at the end of the sixteenth century. The regime was successful at repressing the discontented and the dispossessed, but not at solving the problems. Hence the Jacobean regime inherited the war with Spain, an impoverished treasury insufficiently replenished by the relentless sale of crown lands to finance the wartime deficit, and religious opposition to the English Church from both Catholicism and radical Protestantism.
sentations of treason in the form of sermons, proclamations, cheap pamphlets, chronicles, drama, public trials, body parts, and the manufacture of such parts through public execution. These representations—oral, written, violently corporeal—comprise the discursive field I am calling the "discourse of treason." It was not enough simply to despatch a given "traitor." It became useful to the state to develop a language about treason to complement public execution and display of parts. But, unfortunately for the authorities, official discourse was frequently contested by voices and texts (and, in one bizarre case mentioned below, dismembered yet communicative body parts) of opposition and/or disbelief. Given the fierce display on London Bridge, the discourse of treason was experienced almost daily by Londoners, and it naturally made its way from the realm of "reality" to that of "fiction," i.e., to the public stage—perhaps most explicitly and comprehensively in Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*, but also in lost plays such as the tragedy on the Gowry conspiracy, a play that was apparently opposed and squashed by powerful councillors in the new Jacobean regime.5

Official discourse on treason had been perfected during the years of Cromwellian hegemony by humanists such as Richard Morison, but after 1540 it was not extensively deployed as a propagandistic tool of politic government until the 1580s. "Official" discourse was not monologic. Its prime exponents were a mixed group: powerful men such as William Cecil; anonymous pamphleteers writing under the aegis of the royal printer, Christopher Barker;ecclesiastical insiders such as Richard Bancroft, Matthew Sutcliffe, and Richard Cosin; popular writers such as John Foxe; and chroniclers such as Raphael Holinshed and John Stow, who reproduced whole pamphlets as well as boiled-down accounts of treason. In addition, men with mysterious connections to the regime, such as Anthony Munday, often entered the ideological fray on the side of the government. The complexity of official discourse is suggested by the fact that Munday's pro-government account of the capture of Father Edmund Campion was refuted by another pro-government account.

On the other side "oppositional" discourse, though less abundant, was equally complex. Cardinal William Allen and especially Father Robert Persons churned out oppositional discourse from the safety of the continent. Richard Verstegan boldly challenged the Elizabethan regime on its practice of torture in a wonderfully illustrated text, while Robert Southwell pleaded for tolerance for English Catholics in relatively mild terms. Other Catholics disputed the regime's accounts of priestly behavior at the scaffold by writing alternative accounts, while radical Protestants such as "Martin Marprelate" drove the ecclesiastical hierarchy into fits of rage by penning humorously "seditious" pamphlets. It is important to recognize that oppositional discourse is necessarily less prominent in this period than official discourse simply because of domestic censorship and intelligence networks that frequently succeeded in stemming the influx of "seditious" literature from abroad. Yet no verbal gesture is more starkly oppositional or more symbolically directed against the government's habitual practice of displaying dismembered bodies than the statement attributed to the Jesuit John Boste

before his execution: "Although I am now to be deprived of life, my blood withal and death and innocence shall preach in the hearts of those whom God will call and gather to His Holy Catholic Church. My head and quarters will preach every day on your gates and walls the truth of the Catholic Faith."  

I seek to give a political reading of *The Tempest* in a context of treason simply because the discourse of treason is central to a thirty-year period of English culture beginning in the early 1580s, when domestic Roman Catholicism seemed to evolve from quiet dissent to active threat during the influx of Jesuits and seminary priests—or so the government claimed. Although there were more executions for treason in the 1530s than in the whole of Elizabeth's reign, discursive productions of treason—arrests, trials, executions, displays, pamphlets, sermons—pervaded the sociopolitical environment of the entire second half of Elizabeth's reign and the first few years of James's government. In this sense the overall numbers are less important than the regularity of and the attendant discourse about treason cases after 1580—i.e., the almost annual parade of demonized conspirators to the scaffold, frequently preceded and/or followed by ideological disputes between the regime's apologists and its opponents. In both the 1530s and the Elizabethan period, treason legislation was manufactured in response to external pressures, and, much like the enlarging of the category of capital offenses in the interests of property rights during the later evolution of English "law," treason statutes were devised to fit existing conditions. For instance, harsh statutes of 1581 and 1585 against priests and their lay abettors, enhanced by reactionary measures such as the notorious 1584 Bond of Association, helped to create a climate in which

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Catholic activities were converted into conspiracy at a time when the nature of the Catholic mission to England was entirely debatable, creating a discourse of treason regardless of whether a given "treasonous" plot was real, imagined, or contrived by the government. Conspirators were discursively transformed into demonic figures, and the scaffold of execution became the scene of mini-dramas eminently more "dramatic" than the scaffold of the public stage that sought to exploit their power. In placing The Tempest within this discourse of treason, I am not arguing for the displacement of the discourse of colonialism as a political context for the play; rather, I am attempting to rectify the curious situation in which Caliban's conspiracy, in at least two recent and intelligent works on colonialism in The Tempest, has actually been depoliticized. By historicizing The Tempest in relation to contemporary conspiratorial discourse, I shall try to "repoliticize" the play as an intervention in the praxis of real political power. In this way Shakespeare's ambiguous representation of colonialism can be juxtaposed with what I take to be his sly "perception" of conspiratorial manipulation by European authorities.

An initial accusation of critical anachronism against my project might be lodged by those who assume that the very pervasiveness of the manifestation of treason in Renaissance England would have rendered it unremarkable to the average Londoner. But dramatists implicitly noted the grim aspects of public execution and its continuing impact on Londoners by way of citing the attendance of women at such occasions: "then have you other fellowes that take upon them to be Surgeons . . . by letting out the corruption of a State. . . . for some of them . . . before a thousand people, rip up the bowels of vice in such a beastly manner, that (like women at an Execution, that can endure to see men quartered alive) the beholders learne more villany than they knew before." Hoy cites parallels from The Fleire (1607)—"they will rise sooner, and goe with more devotion to see an extraordinarie execution, then to heare a Sermon"—and The Court Beggar (1640): "other women have / Seene the dissections of Anatomies, / And executed men rip'd up and quarter'd." The noteworthiness of female attendance seems to presuppose that there is something fundamentally ghastly about public execution. Moreover, although Londoners may have become inured to these spectacles, presumably most of the thousands who migrated to the capital were a bit

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shocked when they reached London Bridge. Indeed, the situation in London must have been somewhat unusual; otherwise the Dutch author would not have cheered the providential display of body parts, though London’s apparently continual display of heads and quarters was not unique. Edinburgh, for example, featured the remains of the Gowry conspirators for at least eight years—i.e., at least until the freshly severed head of the third key conspirator was added to the show: ‘‘... his head to be affixed and set upon a pricke of iron upon the highest part of the Towlebewth of Edenborough, where the Traitor Gowrie, and others of the Conspirators heads stand.’’

From the perspective of the Elizabethan regime, there was a fortuitous coincidence between the governmental crackdown on English Catholics starting in 1581 and a series of unlikely plots to assassinate Elizabeth. But in striking contrast to official propaganda about Catholic traitors, even the Protestant Sir John Harington, godson to the queen, was willing to make a large concession by wondering ‘‘which was first... whether... [Catholics’] sinister practises drewe on these rigorous lawes, or whether the rigour of these lawes moved them to these unnaturall practises.’’ Sir John Harington’s suspicion about cause and effect represents an advance over the regime’s simplistic yet vicious move to brand all priests and their helpers “traitors” in 1581 and 1585 (respectively), but it is obviously not part of oppositional discourse, which seems to commence largely in the 1580s as a response to the increase in governmental activities. There had been an outpouring of official documents to counter the impact of the events of 1569–1572—the high point of the discursive production of treason in the first half of the reign. Beginning around 1581 it is difficult to specify equally high points of discursive production because devilish arch-traitors started to be produced on a quasi-annual basis: Campion, Somervill, Throckmorton, Parry, Babington, Mary Stuart, Hacket, Perrot, Lopez, Squire, Essex—to name only the most notorious Elizabethans. Accusations of conspiracy became a kind of ritual, feeding the politics of calculated paranoia. An increasingly harried regime discovered the usefulness of producing traitors for almost yearly execution, and when the government failed to find a definite traitor, it had no problem creating a scapegoat. For example, as I have shown elsewhere, Richard Cosin’s pseudo-biography of William Hacket, a messianic figure executed in 1591 for treason, is remarkably similar to an equally dubious biography of Dr. William Parry, executed in 1584/5. Parry had been employed by the government as a spy, but for some mysterious reason it was deemed useful to make him a traitor by manufacturing a ridiculous assassination plot (which I will discuss below). More significantly, the fact that his pseudo-biography was imitated about seven years later by an established governmental apologist to blacken the character of William Hacket not only suggests the regime’s cynicism but ought to cast doubt on every other case that is not relentlessly

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documented or otherwise judged indisputable by rigorous historical inquiry. Every historian, however, is vulnerable to deception by forged documents, confessions extracted by torture, and even personal letters, which are often accepted not as potentially distorted opinions but as the equivalent of a Shakespearean soliloquy—a direct, honest, and true statement to the audience. Langbein's fine and valuable book on torture (cited in note 7), for instance, is incomplete on the practice of Elizabethan torture and disregards the revival of torture by British authorities in Northern Ireland. Heath and Lindsay have documented the latter abuse and its "euphemization" by legal authorities assigned to investigate cases of torture. Modern torture as a tool to secure false confessions, supplemented by discursive euphemization, was not devised by overly subtle twentieth-century minds but was already successfully practiced by devilishly clever sixteenth-century masters of Realpolitik.15

Beyond oppositional discourse naturally generated by irreconcilable political and ideological disputes between the regime and its Catholic enemies, public awareness of abuses like torture undoubtedly produced opposition that is largely irrecoverable. That such opposition existed is indicated in the official discourse itself, in that it often advertised itself as a truthful retort to murmuring unbelief. The five-page An advertisement and defence for Trueth against her Backbiters, for example, after its opening page-and-a-half phrase intended to prove the government's case even before we discover the unofficial contradiction, then acknowledges the opposing voices it is here answering: "Although . . . it was manifestly declared and fully proved" that Campion and his crew were traitors, "Yet it is maliciously, falsly, and traiterously . . . whispered in corners, that the offences of these traitours, were but for their attemptings as lesuites . . . to move people to change their Religion. . . ."16 A similar discursive strategy was used in the pamphlet giving the "true and summarie reporte" of the bizarre case of the earl of Northumberland, who was declared to have shot himself in the chest while imprisoned in the Tower.17 As early as the 1530s the government understood that there was automatic and widespread resistance to its claims, and later Elizabethan assertions about unexpected deaths and suicides in prison seem almost to invite disbelief. When "traitors" like Northumberland, Somervill (in 1583), Copinger (in 1591), and Perrot (in 1592) died mysteriously in prison, the government gave explanations much like the official reports on numerous deaths in South African prisons since the early 1960s. We cannot

15 On "Diplock" tribunals as a twentieth-century version of Renaissance "justice" in Northern Ireland, as well as other abuses, see Kenneth Lindsay, The British Intelligence Services in Action (Ireland: Dunrod, 1980). A good book on early modern English torture, with prefatory references to Northern Ireland, is James Heath, Torture and English Law (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982). Although Heath claims that he has found no evidence for the use of torture to induce a plea of guilty at trial (p. 142), my research on the Hacket case indicates that the authorities used this precise strategy to railroad Hacket, who was condemned on the basis of contradictory pleas and, significantly, without the presentation of any evidence at all (see "Duelling Ceremonies").

16 An advertisement and defence for Trueth against her Backbiters, and specially against the whispring Favouers, and Colourers of Campions, and the rest of his confedarates treasons (1581), sig. Aii–Aii".

17 A true and summarie reporte of the declaration of some part of the Earle of Northumberlands Treasons . . . (1585).
know how many of these deaths might have been engineered by a government fearful of allowing a given "traitor" to speak freely on the public scaffold. But even when, as in most cases, the accused survived long enough to reach a public trial, the legal procedures of the Elizabethan regime were notoriously suitable for frame-ups: secret witnesses, no right to legal counsel, intimidation of juries, threats and practice of torture to secure confessions, the hatchness of the trial-today/execution-tomorrow mentality.\(^{18}\) When Duke Vincentio in a darkly comic and ironic moment claims that he comes to comfort Barnardine in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, having heard "how hastily you are to depart,"\(^ {19}\) we must not suppose that the rapidity of the intended execution would have shocked a contemporary audience. Nonetheless many citizens would have grasped the seriousness of accusations about state torture like those lodged by Richard Verstegan in his 1588 pamphlet, though the regime took great pains to counter reports of vicious tortments: "... there was a perpetuall care had, and the Qenes servantes the Warders, whose office and act it is to handle the racke, were ever by those that attended the examinations specially charged, to use it in as charitable manner as such a thing might be."\(^ {20}\) Thus when torture occurs in *The Tempest*—and it does occur relentlessly as a means of both physical and psychological coercion—we must be aware of its connection to large disputes over the practice of torture initiated in late Elizabethan culture.

This brief sketch of the discourse of treason is intended to reveal its contestatory function, but there is one other important factor that provides a direct link to *The Tempest*. By its very nature and etymology, "conspiracy" requires more than a single "traitor." It is not an accident that Caliban's conspiracy involves three people since a disproportionate number of cases involved precisely three conspirators and/or three men sent to execution.\(^ {21}\) This phenomenon may be due to the existence of a "conspiratorial psychology,"\(^ {22}\) or the drive to find a devilish conspiracy underneath every form of opposition to the existing order. But by the 1590s Edward Coke and Elizabethan judges were willing to upgrade popular disturbances from the

\(^{18}\) For trial today/execution tomorrow, see *A True Report of the inditiement, arraignment, conviction, condemnation, and Execution of John Weldon, William Hartley, and Robert Sutton: Who suffred for high Treason, in several places, about the Citie of London, on Saturday the fifth of October, Anno 1588...* (1588). On courtroom procedures see Bellamy (cited in n. 7, above), especially pp. 132–81.


\(^{20}\) A Declaration of the favourable dealing of her Maiesties Commissioners appointed for the Examination of certaine Traitors... (1583), sig. Aii. Verstegan is cited in note 6, above.\(^ {21}\) See *An advertisement* (1581); *A True Report* (1588); *A True Recitall touching the cause of the death of Thomas Bales, a Seminarie Priest, who was hanged and quartered in Fleet-street on AshWednesdaie last past...* (1590); the Hacket case as related by its main narrator, Cosin; *The Examinations of Henry Barrowe John Grenewood and John Penrice before the high commissioners and Lordes of the Counsel. Penned by the prisoners themselves before their deathes...* (n.d., presumably 1593); *A True Report of Sundry Horrible Conspiracies...* (1594); *The Copie of a Letter... concerning the proceeding at Winchester; Where the late L. Cobham, L. Gray, and Sir Griffin Marchkham, all Attainted of his Treason, were ready to be executed...* (1603); Hart (1608); and five additional cases between 1582 and 1602 recorded by John Stow in *The Annales* (1605).

status of misdemeanor to treason—so long as there were at least three rioters.\textsuperscript{23} The regime thus found a way to manufacture treason in situations where it often did not exist, and attempts to evade the charge of treason—by employing, for example, only two perpetrators in protests against enclosure—could be foiled by the government’s ability to uncover additional conspirators.

\textit{The Tempest}

\textit{The Tempest} is informed throughout by conspiratorial psychology. In seemingly conservative fashion the play appears to reflect and even endorse official discourse in that its action originates within a context of successful conspiracy: Prospero and Miranda are exiled to the island precisely because treason \textit{doth} sometimes prosper, pace Harington’s notorious epigram—

‘Treason doth never prosper, what’s the reason? / For if it prosper, none dare call it Treason.’\textsuperscript{24} The realistic reflection of actual contemporary conspiracies is, however, aligned against the unrealistic element of Prospero’s and Miranda’s survival: real-life treason against heads of state—William of Orange, Henri III, and Henri IV (in 1584, 1589, and 1610 respectively)\textsuperscript{25}—featured successful assassination, in contrast to the conspirators’ comparatively mild treatment of Prospero and his heir. Thus the very frame of the play simultaneously partakes of the real and the fantastic. Prospero and Miranda are living examples of the results of conspiracy, but the referential believability of treason is undermined precisely because they are \textit{alive}. Miranda’s logical question after hearing Prospero’s narrative—‘Wherefore did they not / That hour destroy us?’ (1.2.138–39)—is rather unsatisfactorily answered by Prospero’s questionable statement about the love borne them by the people: the disappearance of the ducal family in the ‘dead of darkness’ (1.130) could not have been popularly interpreted as anything other than the murder of duke and heir—as relatives of the ‘disappeared’ in Argentina, Chile, and El Salvador can affirm today.

As critics have noted, there are \textit{two} plays within an overall context of conspiracy—Prospero’s and Shakespeare’s—and the radical nature of my reading will depend upon the fact that the audience is \textit{outside} Prospero’s play and can therefore view it with critical detachment. \textit{Inside} Prospero’s play there are only characters more or less manipulated by Prospero from beginning to end. Much of this manipulation involves the discourse of treason as it manifests itself in five episodes: narrative control and the ‘freezing’ of Ferdinand in 1.2; the frustration of Antonio’s and Sebastian’s assassination attempt in 2.1; the maddening of the upper-class conspirators in 3.3; the frustration of the lower-class conspirators in 4.1; and the political rehabilitation of Prospero and heir(s) in the final scene. Prospero’s play is a single

\textsuperscript{23} Manning, \textit{Village Revolts}, p. 56.


\textsuperscript{25} On William of Orange and Henri IV see, respectively, \textit{The true report of the lamentable death of William of Nassau, prince of Orange; who was trayterouslie slayne with a dagge, in his owne courte} . . . (1584) and \textit{The Copie of a Letter Written from Paris . . . Declaring the maner of the execution of Francis Ravaillart} . . . (1610).
movement towards political rehabilitation (his "project"), but Shakespeare's play breaks this movement into pieces—vignettes that expose characteristic strategies of Elizabethan/Jacobean authority in the person of Prospero as controller of narrative (or official discourse) and stage manager of acts that participate in the discourse of treason. The audience is cunningly prepared for Prospero's "true relation" of the conspiracy enacted against himself and Miranda in 1.2 by the refreshingly subversive attitude of the Boatswain in 1.1: we are sensitive to Prospero's narrative because we have just witnessed a clash between authority and subversion. We, like Miranda, are invited to learn the "facts" about Antonio's usurpation, but unlike Miranda we are not obliged to embrace the interpretation of certain facts by Prospero ("MIRANDA How came we ashore? / PROSPERO By providence divine" [1.2.158–59]). Official discourse on treason always invests heavily in improbable providential explanations.

In structural terms Prospero's official narrative to Miranda is initially acceptable but almost immediately put in question by the exchanges that follow with Ariel and then with Caliban. As recent critics have pointed out, Prospero's narrative of Ariel's life story could only have been derived from Ariel.26 Hence Prospero's authority to tell the story as though it were the "truth"—a verbal imitation of numerous pamphlets authorized by titles such as A True Report—is dubious at best. Indeed, when we learn that his narrative is a monthly rehearsal of the true and authentic facts, we should immediately suspect that such a smooth biography is being honed into something resembling a "fiction in the archives."27 This impression can only be enhanced by the subsequent war of narratives between Caliban and Prospero (1.2.331 ff.). Caliban loses this war not because his alternative narration is false but because Prospero is able to change the terms of the narrative battle from usurpation of the island to that of attempted rape. Consequently the issue of narrative authenticity in this exchange soon becomes irrelevant given the reality of unequal power relations. This movement from straight narrative to narrative imposition to the replacement of narrative contestation by physical coercion is not discrete but rather a continuum in which the final maneuver questions the authenticity of the first, seemingly straight narration. Narrative itself is never simply true or disinterested but is instead questionable and even effaceable by a sudden exercise of arbitrary power. This early scene can be viewed as a tripartite movement that exposes both official discourse and real relations of power that become enforced when that discourse fails. This revelation may be less apparent to us than to Renaissance spectators, exposed as they were to discursive contestation between governmental apologists and their opponents. Inside Prospero's play, however, he will enjoy a monopoly over both narrative and relations of power.

Ferdinand's appearance is the first occasion for Prospero to display his monopoly, which is expressed in the language of conspiratorial discourse. While Ferdinand and Miranda are busy falling in love at first sight, Prospero replaces their discourse of mutual affection with the harsh one of conspiracy:

26 E.g., Hulme, pp. 123 ff.
27 I borrow this phrase from Natalie Zemon Davis, Fiction in the Archives (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1987).
THE TEMPEST AND THE DISCOURSE OF TREASON

PROSPERO . . . I charge thee
That thou attend me. Thou dost here usurp
The name thou ow’st not, and hast put thyself
Upon this island as a spy, to win it
From me, the lord on’t.

FERDINAND No, as I am a man!

MIRANDA There’s nothing ill can dwell in such a temple. . . .

PROSPERO Follow me.—
Speak not you for him: he’s a traitor.—Come,
I’ll manacle thy neck and feet together. . . .

FERDINAND I will resist such entertainment till
Mine enemy has more power.

MIRANDA O dear father,
Make not too rash a trial of him, for
He’s gentle, and not fearful.

PROSPERO What, I say—
My foot my tutor? Put thy sword up, traitor,
Who mak’st a show but dar’st not strike, thy conscience
Is so possessed with guilt. Come from thy ward,
For I can here disarm thee with this stick
And make thy weapon drop.

(1.2.453–74)

The notorious Bond of Association devised in 1584 mostly to bind members of the Elizabethan upper classes to take revenge not only on the murderer(s) but also on any political beneficiary of the queen’s assassination had the effect of enlarging the circle of guilt. In this context Ferdinand would not be perceived as an innocent (eventual) beneficiary of Prospero’s deposition but as a guilty conspirator susceptible to Prospero’s revenge. Moreover, in a troubled contemporary atmosphere the judges had formulated the doctrine that in treason “‘there be noe Accessories but all [are] principals.’”¹²⁸ Thus Prospero’s first encounter with a representative of what he has accurately and crucially called “‘mine enemies’” (1.2.179) demands a reestablishment—perhaps even a redrawing—of old relations of power. In this new scheme Prospero is “‘lord’” and Ferdinand “‘traitor’” (twice), and their initial relationship is framed in a specific way. While on one level Prospero is playing the role of the comically conventional blocking father, his choice of language in attacking Ferdinand has puzzled critics. Here knowledge of the discourse of treason is key. Prospero relentlessly manipulates his future son-in-law precisely because Ferdinand is a traitor—an enemy—in Renaissance terms, and must be rendered both submissive to Prospero’s dominance and ultimately grateful for the gift of Miranda. Thus Prospero creates the conditions for a “‘treasonous’” show of violence by Ferdinand and then frustrates the traitorous gesture in order to compel Ferdinand to acknowledge his absolute power. Ferdinand’s failure to strike is—as the audience knows—wholly due to “‘art,’” but Prospero wishes to mystify a magician’s power as a traitor’s guilt-stricken inability to violate legitimate authority. The moment is thus

deployed as a demystification of political strategies enacted in contemporary culture and expressed through the discourse of treason.

A relevant conspiratorial context for analyzing Prospero’s scene with Ferdinand is a sporadic tradition of supposed assassination attempts that failed. In 1584 William Parry is reported to have been unable to strike Queen Elizabeth even under the most ideal circumstances. The primary pamphlet devoted to this case claims (rather absurdly, it seems to me) that Parry—sworn, determined, and bound by oath to murder the queen—was granted private access to her on numerous occasions but did not attempt the deed. 29 The full mystification of sovereignty occurs in a statement/interrogation at Parry’s trial concerning one potential opportunity for assassination:

. . . thou diddest confess, that thou haddest prepared two Scottish Daggers, fit for such a purpose: and those being disposed away by thee, thou diddest say that an other would serve thy turne. And with all, Parry, diddest thou not also confess before us howe wonderfully thou wert appauled and perplexed upon a suddaine at the presence of her Maiestie at Hampton Court this last Sommer, saying that thou diddest thinke thou then sawest in her, the very likenes & image of king Henry the seventh? And that therewith, and upon some speeches used by her Maiestie, thou diddest turne about and weepe bitterly to thy selfe? And yet diddest call to mynde that thy vowes were in heaven, thy letters and promises on earth, and that therefore thou diddest say with thy selfe, that there was no remedy but to do it? 30

Some twenty years before Lady Macbeth’s hesitation, contemporaries were thus asked to believe that a devoted and ruthless assassin (on numerous occasions) could not plunge the dagger into the royal person. The cracks in official discourse begin to show in such a case—especially when we reflect on the continental logic of 1584, 1589, and 1610—but there was no other way to damn the traitor and yet mystify monarchical power than by spreading a version of the regicide Claudius’s highly ironic assertion, “There’s such divinity doth hedge a king / That treason can but peep to what it would, / Acts little of his will” (Hamlet, 4.5.123–25). Once this myth of royal invulnerability was established, it became available for general repetition and hence mystification. In the pamphlet on the Squire plot, for example: “. . . I think he spake as having heard that which is very true, of some conspirators that having undertaken and vowed her Majesty’s destruction, have nevertheless at the very instant of the access and opportunity been stricken with astonishment and had no power to execute their malice.” 31 The myth of Parry’s specific response to majesty is thus generalized as endemic among assassins—a brilliant rhetorical strategy contrived as a deterrent in official discourse.

As for Scottish treachery, an absurdity even greater than the Parry case occurred in 1600 when (we are told) James VI talked his way out of

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29 A true and plaine declaration of the horrible treasons, practised by William Parry the traitor against the Queenes Maiestie . . . containing a short collection of his birth, education and course of life . . . (n.d., probably 1585), pp. 2–3.
30 A true and plaine declaration, p. 35.
31 A Letter Written out of England . . . Containing a true report of a strange Conspiracy contrived between Edward Squire, lately executed for the same treason, as actor, and Richard Wallpoole, a Jesuit, as de viser and suborner, against the person of the Queen’s Majesty . . . (1599, from The Works of Francis Bacon, 14 vols., ed. James Spedding [New York: Garrett Press, 1862], Vol. 9, 113).
assassination even though the "traitor" in question, "Maister Alexander," held a dagger to his heart:

But his maiesties feare was, that he could hope for no sparing at his handes: having such crueltie in his lookes, and standing so irreverently covered with his Hat on, which forme of rygorous behaviour, could prognosticat nothing to his maestie, but present extremitie. But at his maisties perswasive language, he appeared to be somewhat amazed, and uncovering his head againe, swore and protested that his maiesties life should be safe, if he would behave himselfe quietly, without making noyes or crying.32

James, of course, survived the Gowry conspiracy, and his Scottish officials were (as I noted earlier) miraculously able to uncover a third conspirator eight years later, who was duly executed not for plotting against James but for failing to report his knowledge of the 1600 treason—itself a highly question-able event.33 The officially narrated actions of the knife-wielding Alexander—indeed, the entire event/text—is filled with the unlikely and the unbelievable: James is supposedly lured to Gowry's castle by a ridiculous tale concerning the discovery of gold coins; the timorous James is able to overpower an armed man; James and his reinforcements are outnumbered almost two to one by the earl of Gowry and his servants, but they win this dubious battle (apparently without casualties) and the earl is stabbed through the heart.34 The absurdities climax in the account of what happens after the earl's death. The pockets of the dead earl are searched,

But nothing was founde in them, but a little close parchment bag, full of Magicks characters, and words of enchantment, wherein it seemed that hee had put his confidence, thinking himselfe never safe without them, and therefore ever caried them about with him: beeing also observed, that while they were upon him, his wound whereof he died, bled not, but incontinent after the taking of them away, the blood gushed out in great abundance, to the great admiration of all the beholders.35

Modern readers (even those who ardently support Renaissance authority) see this final narrative as incredible, though (according to Keith Thomas) most Elizabethans would have had no reason to doubt the plausibility of this magical tale.36

The crucial point is that the 1600 pamphlet is a mystification that only modern readers and a limited number of ideologically motivated contemporary observers can fully demystify. The same is not true for The Tempest. Shakespeare's original audience was allowed to see what the perplexed Ferdinand could not see—a magician's spell cleverly converted through

32 J. Ruthven, The Earle of Gowries conspiracie against the Kings Maiestie of Scotland . . . (1600), sig. B3'-B4' (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes, 1600).
33 In fact, in 1600 Scotland, the Gowry case was publicly questioned. As Jenny Wormald writes: "the kirk also added considerably to the king's difficulties after that most mysterious episode of 5 August 1600 known as the Gowry conspiracy; the leading ministers in Edinburgh publicly proclaimed their disbelief in the king's version of the death of the kirk's most favoured magnate" (Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470–1625 [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981], p. 128).
34 The Earle, sig. A2'–A3', C1', C2'.
35 The Earle, sig. C2'.
language into a political explanation for Ferdinand’s inability to wield his weapon. Magic is displaced by that which does not exist—Ferdinand’s guilt-stricken and traitorous conscience. Prospero’s desire to mystify his power has precisely the same goal as his later and outwardly milder stage management of courtly spectacle in 4.1, by which time in the play Ferdinand is willing to believe Prospero “against an oracle” (ll. 11–12) and to call him “so rare a wondered father” (l. 123); but his conditioning in Prospero’s total superiority must begin harshly and immediately at their first encounter. Only in this way can Prospero hope to retain political influence over his son-in-law when they leave the island. Since he abjures his magic before returning to Italy, such political influence is essential.

The result of the scene in which Ferdinand, as “traitor,” is subjected to Prospero is not that the audience is encouraged to believe that all rulers possess some hidden mystical power—since Prospero on the island is clearly an exception to the norms of both human life and rulership—but is encouraged to discern the difference between reality and mystification. The play exposes a gap between a naked exercise of power and the concealment of that exercise by displacement to an alternative explanation that is false. The quality of Prospero’s magic as “white” or “black,” and even contradictory contemporary beliefs about the efficaciousness of magic by way of disputes over witchcraft, exorcism, etc., is not the issue here; the point, rather, is that Prospero’s official discursive explanation to Ferdinand for his inability to use his sword is mendacious, and that it replicates official explanations within the discourse of treason. Prospero’s discourse does not correspond to the dramatic reality of the magic. If the audience is allowed to see that official discourse can be patently false, it is thereby allowed, perhaps even encouraged, to question the veracity of official discourse in contemporary politics. The ultimate cultural pay-off for the original audience—i.e., what we may call Shakespeare’s clever radicalism, subversion, or irreverence—is that the audience is allowed to witness the exposure of a strategy that directly resembles the official nonsensical explanations for the failure of Dr. Parry and Master Alexander to stab the Virgin Queen and the Rex Pacificus, respectively. As an exposure of the difference between reality and discursive explanation, the episode casts doubt on the official discourse of treason circulating currently (i.e., in 1610–11) in Jacobean England—currently, in that the discourse of 1585 and 1600 was not dead. It was part of an “intellectual history” of treason continually refreshed in the popular mind. Dekker’s The Whore of Babylon (printed 1607) brought back to life three extremely dubious conspiracies by Campion, Parry, and Lopez, while James devised annual celebrations to commemorate his delivery not only from the Gunpowder Plot but also from the Gowry Conspiracy. The further light (or rather blood) shed on the Gowry affair in 1608 as well as three surviving Paul’s Cross sermons suggest the political mileage that the authorities continued to extract from the Gowry case. 37

37 Millar MacLure, The Paul’s Cross Sermons 1534–1642 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1958), pp. 227 ff. Although my main point concerns the gap between the play’s reality and discourse and its relevance to Realpolitik rather than the quality of Prospero’s magic, the magic itself has been the subject of intense debate. See the fine discussion of this complex issue by Barbara A. Mowat, “Prospero, Agrippa, and Hocus Pocus,” English Literary Renaissance, 11 (1981), 281–303.
audiences would bring a knowledge of conspiracies to the theatre. Otherwise why would Dekker write about old conspiracies, and why would someone try to stage the Gowry affair? While plays like Dekker’s *Whore* wholly embraced the hierarchical perspective, *The Tempest* can be viewed as an astute deflation of the strategies of political authority.  

Ferdinand’s "treason" is only the beginning of Prospero’s plan to (re)condition all his enemies. But it is also only the first major episode in a play filled with conspiratorial vignettes. Immediately after Ferdinand is led away, another favorite ploy of politic government—i.e., the creation of conditions favorable to conspiracy—is represented. The royal party enters and Gonzalo elaborates his utopian/colonial fantasy:

> All things in common nature should produce  
> Without sweat or endeavour. *Treason*, felony,  
> Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine  
> Would I not have, but nature should bring forth  
> Of it own kind all poison, all abundance  
> To feed my innocent people.  
>  
> (2.1.157–62, emphasis added)

It is ironic that treason is mentioned immediately before the attempted assassination of Alonso, significant that it stands at the head of the list and is followed by weapons useful for the enactment of treason, and additionally significant because the passage in Montaigne that is the source of the dramatic passage does not privilege "treason" in this way. The conspiracy of Antonio and Sebastian that follows Gonzalo’s speech is enabled only by the

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38 The reason why *The Tempest* was not censored cannot be explained in a mere note, but I am trying to deal with the vexed problem of Renaissance coercion in a book forthcoming from Macmillan (UK) that will include a focus on aristocratic struggles to control security apparatuses that helped to generate treason. Suffice it to say that by 1611 the original Elizabethan discourse of treason was losing some of its “market” value. Like McCarthyist accusations of a commie hiding under every rock, the almost yearly “discovery” of a monstrous conspiracy was increasingly difficult to sustain, as Jonson’s cynical comment when taken out of context suggests: “‘Treasons and guilty men are made in states / Too oft to dignify the magistrates’” (*Cattline*, ed. W. F. Bolton and Jane F. Gardner [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1973], 3.1.102–3). Robert Cecil, trained in the arts of government intelligence by his father, Burghley, died in 1612. Cases of treason drop off significantly after the first insecure years of the Jacobean regime, which Cecil had exploited to despatch a few serious enemies. About the same time, cases of state torture almost disappear. Most of the notorious examples of censorship and self-censorship involving Nashe, Jonson, Daniel, Greville, etc., occurred between 1597 and 1605. By 1611 treason was obviously topical (given the recent assassination of Henri IV) yet simultaneously a less dangerous subject than it had been just a few years earlier simply because the state had a smaller investment in controlling it on either scaffold. And when the state slackens its coercive apparatus, as modern events testify, radical commentary can become both more prevalent and less easily punishable. There is no space here to contextualize *The Tempest* in relation to plays by Dekker, Chapman, and Jonson printed after the Gunpowder Plot, plays that can be aligned with conservative official discourse. In my book I hope to deal with these plays as well as others that, like *The Tempest*, are arguably akin to oppositional discourses that cast doubt on the state’s version of events. In my view Dekker’s *Whore* is at one end of the political spectrum while *The Tempest* is near the other, but the *Whore* cannot be simply dismissed as transparent propaganda. The fact that authorities actually expected English subjects to accept certain cases and discursive productions that we can dismiss as laughable, and the fact that many people actually believed in witchcraft, means that Dekker’s propaganda play would have been credible to many spectators. By aligning Shakespeare against Dekker, we can get some sense of the theatre’s wide range of ideological possibilities, some sense of what could be said at a given historical juncture.

39 For the Montaigne passage, see Orgel, ed., *The Tempest*, p. 135 n.
sleep induced by Ariel, and the assassination is frustrated only by the reentry of Ariel to wake Gonzalo:

My master through his art foresees the danger
That you, his friend, are in, and sends me forth—
For else his project dies—to keep them living.

*He sings in Gonzalo’s ear*
While you here do snoring lie,
Open-eyed conspiracy
His time doth take.
If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber, and beware.
Awake, awake!

(2.1.295–303)

This episode, like real treason cases, is mysterious. But it is arguable that Prospero is responsible for setting up the conspiracy. He certainly creates the conditions by having Ariel put them to sleep. At 1.2.317–18 Prospero secretly instructs Ariel to perform a task that could involve the manipulation of either Ferdinand or the royal party or both, but in any event the conspiracy is enabled and disabled by the henchman Ariel, and recalled later by Prospero to blackmail Sebastian and Antonio:

But you, my brace of lords, were I so minded,
I here could pluck his highness’ frown upon you,
And justify you traitors. At this time
I will tell no tales.

(5.1.126–29)

Although Prospero does not specify the evidence that he could use to prove them traitors, the threat is enough. Antonio, Sebastian, and, in fact, all the others must be convinced of Prospero’s mysterious power. Sebastian’s muted response (‘The devil speaks in him!’ [l. 129]) is an attribution of demonic power that Prospero denies with the simple retort “No,” but this rejoinder is clearly not an explanation or elucidation of his power. Prospero’s political rehabilitation now and maintenance of power later in Milan will rely upon the fully bewildered aristocrat who would otherwise constitute a renewed threat to the dukedom. Antonio and Sebastian never know the extent of Prospero’s power, and this lack of knowledge is precisely what guarantees their future quiescence. A modern audience probably feels that Antonio and Sebastian are villains treated with remarkable lenience, but some members of Shakespeare’s audience undoubtedly viewed the stage-managed assassination attempt and its frustration with cynical detachment. In a culture featuring the quasi-annual announcement, from about 1581 to 1605, that a given conspiracy had been miraculously contained, the government’s wolf-cry ultimately became a bit thin. Shakespeare’s play reinforces the politics of doubt by exposing how authority can create conditions favorable to conspiracy and then stage-manage the outcome. In this episode, though, the containment becomes

a potential weapon only against the two conspirators, and Prospero needs to display his mysterious power to all his enemies. The reeducation of all the aristocrats thus necessitates something more extensive and explicit than the private taming of Antonio and Sebastian. Prospero "discovers" an object lesson for the royal party in the conspiracy of Caliban.

Recent politically oriented analyses of this conspiracy focus so exclusively on the issue of social class that they fail to note its function as an intra-class weapon. I say this not in order to deny the importance of class issues but to differentiate the rising Prospero from his sinking aristocratic counterparts. Upper-class domination in today's England, for instance, is rather different from the more competitive and anxious environment of Renaissance England, which featured a decimation (in this word's most literal sense) of the aristocracy. In a period featuring a yearly average of about sixty Elizabethan peers, a total of six were attainted for treason—not to mention other cases of exile and imprisonment. The deposition of Prospero had compelled him to acknowledge a world of Realpolitik that mimics both the inter- and intra-class rivalry of Renaissance England. There is no need to compile a litany of English upper-class "traitors." It is sufficient to note that the regime not only punished convicted traitors but did not hesitate to create aristocratic scapegoats when such a move was necessary or advantageous. The Tempest stops short of representing what happened to aristocratic conspirators like Norfolk, the Northumberland brothers, Mary Stuart, and Essex. Instead it employs a version of the last-minute reprieve at the conclusion of Measure for Measure that Stephen Greenblatt parallels with the stage-managed pardon of Cobham, Gray, and Markham in 1603. But Prospero's strategy of final reprieve must be preceded by action that will assure his own continued power over them. He must make them acknowledge his dominance—just as Elizabeth compelled the attainted earl of Hertford to recognize hers by making him view the decollation of Essex. There is nothing quite so powerful as negative exempla.

Caliban's conspiracy appears to present a précis of Elizabethan fears regarding masterless men, and the drunkenness of the conspirators enforces specific official beliefs that subversion sprang from the local alehouse. Moreover, Stephano's organization of the upcoming regime into monarchs and viceroyos is indebted to a tradition of official scorn heaped upon commoners who would be king, such as "King Hacket" and the monarchy at Münster. Caliban first mentions the plot in 3.2—though, significantly, only after Ariel has entered as an invisible version of the original Elizabethan-style "intelligencer" so tremendously feared by Jesuits such as William Weston. The presence of Ariel and his intention to inform Prospero guarantee the failure of the conspiracy. (Ariel as a stage version of the contemporary spy not

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41 E.g., see Paul Brown, "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine': The Tempest and the discourse of colonialism" in Political Shakespeare, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, eds. (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 48–71, esp. p. 63.
42 Haigh (cited in n. 2, above), pp. 50–51.
46 Sutcliffe, pp. 73 and 139; Cosin, pp. 81 ff.
only recalls Jonson’s outbursts against the late Elizabethan intelligencer\textsuperscript{47} but also constitutes an alternative explanation for the “miraculous” discovery of so many devilish annual conspiracies against the established order.) Shakespeare sets up the Caliban conspiracy in 3.2 but leaves it suspended while he presents, in 3.3, the spectacle of the subjugation of the court party and Prospero’s enjoyment of enforced aristocratic grovelling. In this scene Prospero begins to extract what appears to be a Renaissance form of revenge by slow torment. Guy Fawkes was not the only “devil of the vault”: as Prospero asserts, some of the aristocrats are “worse than devils” (3.3.36). Prospero commences his systematic humiliation of the upper-class conspirators by creating and then destroying the banquet through Ariel in the guise of a harpy. Just as Prospero’s spirits “hiss” Caliban “into madness” (2.2.14), so does Ariel drive the aristocrats “mad; / And even with such-like valour men hang and drown / Their proper selves” (3.3.58–60). Prospero himself tells us that he wrote the speech delivered by Ariel (3.3.85–86), and it is thus Prospero who encourages his enemies to play the Romans and kill themselves. Presumably some members of Shakespeare’s audience smiled wryly at this encouragement of suicide, especially if they meditated on the officially pronounced “suicides” of “traitors” such as Somervill, Northumberland, and Copinger. Copinger, in fact, is said to have starved himself to death. It is always better for authority, as Elizabeth understood so well in the case of Mary Stuart, if one’s enemies die without seeming to be compelled.

But Ariel’s speech contains more than the suggestion that the three conspirators should “hang and drown” themselves. In the rest of the speech there are ambiguous claims of providential support for Prospero (“ministers of Fate”) complemented by providentially endorsed torture and death for the aristocrats:

\begin{quote}
The powers delaying, not forgetting, have  
Incensed the seas and shores, yea all the creatures  
Against your peace. Thee of thy son, Alonso,  
They have bereft; and do pronounce by me  
\textit{Ling’ring perdition}, worse than any death  
Can be at once, shall step by step attend  
You and your ways. . . .  
\end{quote}

(3.3.73–79, emphasis added)

Retrospective criticism cannot ignore this passage. At this moment the spectator has no reason to anticipate “mercy.” Rather, the audience begins to lick its collective lips in anticipation of blood. Prospero has been reading Senecan tragedy as well as magical books. He has become the classical Senecan tyrant, for whom mere death administered to an enemy is stupidly merciful and thus to be avoided. It is hard to miss the propagandistic quality of this speech. There has been and will be no evidence of providence, but Prospero devises this speech as an exercise in Puttenhamian ambiguity, combining a rhetorical trick with a terrifying visual display.\textsuperscript{48} He seems to want the aristocrats to acquiesce in their death sentence by acknowledging it

as a divine judgment. Such a strategy was employed at the scaffold with predictable frequency, year in and year out, by the henchmen of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean regimes.

Prospero enjoys exercising his new power. If the play is constructed as a series of conspiracies, these conspiracies are stage-managed to produce a bunch of aristocratic Calibans. While Caliban himself is temporarily freed from log-toting duties in order to devise a wholly containable plot, Ferdinand is inserted in his place—imprisoned and compelled to perform manual labor. And just as Ferdinand was unable to hold up his "weapon," so are the aristocrats' swords "too massy" for their "strengths" (3.3.67). Caliban's phallic aggression against Miranda is here recapitulated, and so is Caliban's punishment: all are confined, and the most culpable are additionally hissed into madness. Prospero has robbed them of their swords, and such an exercise of power is pleasurable indeed: "My high charms work, / And these, mine enemies, are all knit up / In their distractions. They now are in my power . . . " (3.3.88–90). In structural terms Prospero always needs a demonic "other."49 Caliban is temporarily released from this role by the substitution of Ferdinand, and at the outset of the next scene Ferdinand is released by the substitution of the aristocrats. But each release is both an illusion and an exercise of power. Ferdinand's "weapon" is restored but remains disabled. Prospero's mild innuendo—"thou / Hast strangely stood the test. . . . she will outstrip all praise" (4.1.6–7, 10)—is immediately negated by injunctions to abstain from sex (4.1.15–22; 51–54). Prospero's reassertion of sexual control is here buttressed by another visual display of power similar in conception and purpose to the frustrated banquet of 3.3. This imitation of the Jacobean court masque has been extensively discussed, and for the sake of my argument it is worth noting only its function of enhancing Prospero's power in the eyes of his future son-in-law. If Prospero's ultimate goal is political rehabilitation, it is useful for him to convince Ferdinand of his mysterious power on a variety of levels, and especially even after Ferdinand has been freed from physical coercion.

The crucial problem for interpretation involves the disruption of the masque by Prospero:

I had forgot that foul conspiracy
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
Against my life. The minute of their plot
Is almost come.

(4.1.139–42)

Prospero's preoccupation with an aesthetic expression of his own potency makes him temporarily oblivious to the dirty business of Realpolitik. It is not useful for political criticism to ask whether poor old Prospero is losing his grip or is self-dazzled by an artistic form that parallels the aesthetic hymns to

49 An impressive article ➔ Meredith Anne Skura, "Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in The Tempest," Shakespeare Quarterly, 40 (1989), 42–69, appeared after I had written this essay. Her comments on the "other" (see especially pp. 60 ff.) would have helped to complicate my use of "other" to describe Caliban as well as Prospero's European enemies. My use of "demonic 'other' " is intended to suggest the characteristic labelling of the regime's opponents as "devils" by governmental apologists in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period.
Jacobean state power. Rather, it is necessary to inquire precisely why Prospero allows this absurd conspiracy to attain near-fruition: why does Prospero not squash the traitors at the outset, i.e., nip the rebellion in the bud? Why does he toy with treason, i.e., for what benefit? Critical willingness to accept Prospero’s version of history in 1.2 often extends to the end of his famous speech to Ferdinand:

Sir, I am vexed.
Bear with my weakness, my old brain is troubled.
Be not disturbed with my infirmity.
If you be pleased, retire into my cell,
And there repose. A turn or two I’ll walk
To still my beating mind.

(4.1.158–63)

Why does Prospero tell Ferdinand one thing and yet perform another? Why does he emphasize “weakness” when he is really hardening to orchestrate the lower-class conspiracy that is utterly harmless yet crucial to his political project? It may be the case that Prospero cannot effectively stage-manage two events at once, and he chooses to deal with Caliban since Ferdinand is already suitably impressed by his power. But the “weakness” excuse is not solved unless we recognize it as mirroring a characteristic strategy of contemporary authority. Critics who accept the deceptive claim that “every third thought” of the Milan-bound Prospero will be his “grave” (5.1.311) overlook a fundamental problem of Renaissance statecraft. Prospero, like Elizabeth and James, relies upon a paradox: the ruler must simultaneously appear vulnerable to assassination while being, as nearly as possible, invulnerable. To have appeared invulnerable would have negated the power of official discourse and rendered questionable the government’s harsh statutes against Roman Catholics and other opponents, while vulnerability alone would have invited assassination attempts and denied the monarch’s almost sacred status as a providentially protected figure. Sustaining this paradox was one of the most difficult tricks of Renaissance English regimes, especially as time wore on and the monarch continued to survive while conspirators were paraded to the scaffold.

When Prospero disrupts the masque, there is no reason to suppose that he must speak aside to the audience. There is value in allowing Ferdinand to hear that there is some conspiracy afoot, as we comprehend when we reach the final scene. The climax of the play is not the revelation of Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess; instead, it is the orchestrated parade of the tortured and humiliated lower-class conspirators as a grim object lesson for Prospero’s upper-class enemies. Regardless of his intentions, Prospero’s seeming oblivion in 4.1 fosters the appearance of vulnerability that will be displaced by one of invulnerability in the final scene. Prospero allows Caliban’s conspiracy to come to a head not because he has forgotten to quell it earlier, nor because it is a replay of Antonio’s conspiracy, whose frustration will be psychologically soothing to the faltering mage. Rather, the conspiracy is a political weapon. Prospero’s preoccupation with the politics of spectacle is shattered when he realizes that the proper stage management of the lower-class conspiracy is

50 For this argument, see Hulme, pp. 119 ff.
much more important to his overall project. Ferdinand, rather than the more culpable aristocrats, is the logical recipient of the vulnerability paradox precisely because he will ultimately become the most powerful of Prospero’s former enemies. Through various strategies Prospero consistently conditions his potentially dangerous son-in-law to acknowledge his superiority. In the context of a real political world that featured the willingness of James Stuart to negotiate with the woman who had ordered the decapitation of his mother, Prospero’s clever negotiations make a great deal of sense.

There are, of course, no witnesses to the actual frustration of Caliban’s conspiracy—a conspiracy so easily overcome that its value as object lesson at the end of the play would perhaps be destroyed if the aristocrats were allowed to grasp its fundamental absurdity. As Prospero asserts, he will “plague them all, / Even to roaring,” and as Caliban realizes, their dalliance with the “trash” of aristocratic clothing will result in “pinches” (4.1.192–93, 223, 233). It is important to understand that Prospero orders their torture:

Go charge my goblins that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps, and more pinch-spotted make them
Than pard or cat o’ mountain. . . .

At this hour
Lies at my mercy all mine enemies.

(4.1.259–62, 263–64)

The final line cited here reiterates Prospero’s two earlier references to “mine enemies,” but now the “enemies” include three lower-class conspirators. At the outset of the final scene, we are thus prepared neither for romantic reconciliation at one extreme nor blood and revenge at the other. The supposed generic markers of young love are offset by the harsh discourse of treason. This does not mean that The Tempest need be categorized as a “tragi-comedy” or a “problem play,” but it does mean that any sense of harmony at the conclusion ought to be read against Realpolitik. The final scene mimics the politics of mercy that Shakespeare had already represented so brilliantly in the conclusion of Measure for Measure.

The opening of 5.1 is said to present an interpretive crux: does Prospero change his mind about revenge on the basis of Ariel’s pity, or has he always intended to spare all his “enemies”? This question is irrelevant to political criticism. Just as Angelo was sentenced to live by Vincentio at the end of Measure for Measure—and thereby rendered a living, humiliated, wretched example of the futility of aristocratic ambition in a “new” Vienna governed by a godlike ruler—so are Prospero’s enemies spared not for sentimental reasons but for reasons of state. It would hardly be auspicious to celebrate the dynastic union of Ferdinand and Miranda by shedding the blood of Miranda’s uncle and future father-in-law. Moreover, although James was willing to tolerate the decollation of his mother, royal management of aristocratic treason in this period was complex and often involved allowing “traitors” to live if pragmatic considerations demanded it. The rarer action may be in virtue than in vengeance, but virtue has its compensations. Such an interpretation is easily countered by reference to Prospero’s seeming abandonment of power through abjuration of magic. But the magic has served its purpose. Prospero is restored, Miranda happily husbanded, and, most importantly, Prospero’s former enemies are never allowed to know the extent nor the source of his
supernatural power. What Prospero has learned and the audience is allowed to see is the art of politics. Prospero—by means of magical power no longer necessary—has become a politician.

The key aspect of the final scene is neither the abjuration nor the bogus reconciliation, but instead Prospero’s continuing manipulation of all his enemies. The entrance of the brain-boiled aristocrats could be theatrically powerful to Renaissance spectators conditioned to acknowledge the privileged status of such aristocrats, since they know that Prospero alone is responsible for reducing his enemies to this wretched state. Prospero taunts them as their brains begin to cool:

Most cruelly
Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter.
Thy brother was a furtherer in the act—
Thou art pinched for’t now, Sebastian! Flesh and blood,
You, brother mine, that entertained ambition,
Expelled remorse and nature, whom, with Sebastian—
Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong—
Would here have killed your king, I do forgive thee,
Unnatural though thou art.

(5.1.71–79)

While Prospero clothes himself with the badges of aristocratic authority—his “hat and rapier”—Gonzalo succinctly expresses the horror of his group’s experience: “All torment, trouble, wonder, and amazement / Inhabits here. Some heavenly power guide us / Out of this fearful country!” (5.1.104–6). Prospero says nothing to demystify the continuing amazement of his enemies: “You do yet taste / Some subtleties o’th’ isle” (5.1.123–24). Even in accusing Sebastian and Antonio of high treason, as I argued before, Prospero does not reveal the source of his knowledge and thus mystifies his knowledge as power. Forgiveness is irrelevant. Prospero tells Antonio that he “must restore” the dukedom “perforce” (5.1.133–34).

Prospero continues to enjoy toying with Alonso’s grief in the extended quibble on loss of offspring (5.1.134–71). This is not qualitatively different from the excellent psychological torture of 3.3, in which Ariel needles Alonso about the loss of his son and then immediately pronounces “Ling’ring perdition.” But of course, some critics will retort, Prospero quickly reveals the two young lovers playing chess, wrangling for kingdoms. This is true enough, and joy abounds—at least for some of the aristocrats. The important point is not that a reconciliation which excludes Sebastian and Antonio is false, but that the joy of Prospero’s subordinates is rapidly qualified. The entrance of Master and Boatswain not only recalls the lower-class subversive language of 1.1—especially since Gonzalo refreshes everyone’s memory in a rather nasty way (5.1.216–20)—but also reinforces the discourse of treason. Caliban, Ferdinand, and the aristocrats had all been imprisoned in one way or another yet finally released, and now we learn that even the mariners were “all clapped under hatches, / Where . . . with strange and several noises / Of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains, / And more diversity of sounds, all horrible,” “they were ‘awaked’ and set ‘at liberty’” (5.1.231–35). Some critics might wish to claim that this passage symbolizes a release from hell, but Renaissance spectators probably associated it with the seemingly ubiquitous Tudor/Stuart prison. Contemporary prisons from the late Elizabethan
to the early Jacobean period were not houses of correction but houses of pain: roaring, shrieking, and howling were the results of torture practiced to extract confessions from "traitors" like William Hacket and Robert Southwell, S.J.

As Alonso realizes, "there is in this business more than nature / Was ever conduct of. Some oracle / Must rectify our knowledge" (5.1.243–45); but Prospero quickly moves to quell Alonso's curiosity by promising to narrate what the audience would have grasped as an official or "true relation" of the events (5.1.245–51). Instead of commencing his narrative strategy, however, Prospero directs his final and perhaps most powerfully symbolic scene. He instructs Ariel to bring in the writhing lower-class conspirators in a moment that is far from comic, although some modern directors complicit with hierarchical discourse attempt to represent it comically. Prospero explicitly brings these lower-class conspirators to the attention of the upper-class conspirators:

Mark but the badges of these men, my lords... These three have robbed me, and this demi-devil— For he's a bastard one—had plotted with them To take my life.

(5.1.267, 272–74)

Prospero does not bring them in for the sake of "reconciliation"—since there can be no reconciliation while Sebastian and Antonio are unrepentant—nor does he domineer over these wretches for purely psychological reasons nor simply to replay the Milan conspiracy in order to change its outcome. Prospero exploits these conspirators as negative exempla—as mirrors for the aristocrats. Prospero instructs his aristocratic enemies in the new politics of his own superiority and invulnerability. Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo are beyond rhetoric. They are a tableau, an object lesson, a manifestation of real torture and hence of the futility of conspiracy against a new Prospero mystified as a divinely protected figure. When they return to Italy, Prospero's resumption of political power will rely upon this illusion of divine protection. The late Elizabethan and early Jacobean regimes, controlled by Cecilians, refined and exploited coercive and ideological apparatuses that facilitated their dominance. But when James's post-Cecilian regime failed to exercise sufficient repression, problems seething yet suppressed in the Elizabethan period arose to haunt the Stuart monarchs, arguably leading (at least in part) to the decapitation of Charles I. Prospero produces the lower-class conspirators as a means of intimidating his upper-class enemies and supplements this visual display with ideological conditioning. The representation of Prospero's power could thus be said to comprise a two-fold recommendation for intelligent rule, but, on the other hand, the representation of strategies involving treason, spies, torture, dubious claims of providential support, and manipulated conspiracies could be said to constitute a brilliant and relentless exposure of Renaissance Realpolitik.

But what does Prospero hope to gain from all this? Does he not regain Milan only to relinquish it once again to Naples in the person of Ferdinand? Critics who promote this view overlook the Renaissance notion of "dynasty" and do not investigate the significance of Gonzalo's question: "Was Milan thrust from Milan that his issue / Should become kings of Naples?" (5.1.205–6). Real and fictional Renaissance rulers were desperate to establish dynasties. Henry VIII tried every possible dodge to establish a dynasty in the male line,
and the scorpions stinging the mind of Macbeth were due to the intolerable thought that Banquo—not himself—would be "father to a line of kings" (3.1.60). The beauty of Prospero's revenge is that he not only regains Milan but also rests reasonably assured that his "issue" will rule both Naples and Milan. For Prospero, permanent exile on the island would have been a political as well as a personal graveyard, but the marriage alliance is an expansion. Such an interpretation helps to explain the "gold on lasting pillars" (5.1.208), at least partly an oblique reference to Charles V—proto-imperialist and greatest of Renaissance expanders.51

Near the end of the play, Prospero promises to give the aristocrats a "true relation" of his life (5.1.300–6), and this move back to narration recapitulates the tripartite narrative structure in 1.2. Political power is facilitated by control of narrative, especially when the original enabling magic has been (seemingly) renounced. The return to narrative helps to explain something that has puzzled critics since The Tempest first became an object of study. In 1.2 why does Prospero repeatedly ask and command Miranda to pay attention to his "true relation" of the events at Milan even when her responses indicate that she is engrossed in his story? Although theatrical production can overcome this textual problem by emphasizing Prospero's increasing rage, another explanation is activated when we align the scene with official discourse in contemporary culture: apologists who churned out one "true" narrative after another often expressed the anxiety that their stories would be disregarded and/or disbelieved. Official conspiratorial narrative was always questionable precisely because it arose as a site of contestation attempting to mask itself as an elucidation of the truth.

**The Problem of "Euphemization"**

Historical distance from the grim political conditions of this play's production as well as the more insidious process of a modern criticism that seeks to efface its own ideological position have led to an ahistorical view that is only now being challenged by other critical discourses. Perhaps the greatest example of the obscurity occasioned by this distance and by much criticism lies in the words "pinch" and "pinched." Although Orgel comes close to grasping the possibility of real torture in his secondary gloss on the word "barnacles" (4.1.249)—"also an instrument of torture... and thus relevant to Caliban's fear of punishment by pinches and cramps"—he euphemizes the idea of pinching at its first appearance and thereby presents as unproblematic a word that also signifies something rather horrendous in its own time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CALIBAN</th>
<th>A south-west blow on ye</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And blister you all o'er!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSPERO</td>
<td>For this be sure tonight thou shalt have cramps,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up. Urchins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All exercise on thee. Thou shalt be pinched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Than bees that made 'em.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1.2.323–30)

52 p. 186 n.
Orgel’s gloss for lines 328–29 is “‘covered with pinches as thoroughly as the honeycomb has cells; the image perhaps derives from the notion that bees mould their wax by pinching it into shape.’”53 Shakespeare uses “‘pinching’” again at 2.2.4; 4.1.233 and 261; 5.1.74, 77, and 276. In every case the notion of pinching is related to the body, but only in the last act does the image begin to crystallize in grim specificity:

PROSPERO  Thou art pinched for’t now, Sebastian! Flesh and blood, You, brother mine, that entertained ambition, Expelled remorse and nature, whom, with Sebastian— Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong— Would here have killed your king. . . .

CALIBAN  I shall be pinched to death! (5.1.74–78, 276)

Near the beginning of the play, pinching signifies torture, but, more specifically, it reflects the contemporary practice of torturing suspected traitors: “… they were constrained to commit him to such as are usually appointed in the Towre to handle the Racke, by whom he was layde upon the same, and somewhat pinched, although not much.”54 The combination of pinching and the “Racke” is implied by Prospero’s repeated threats against Caliban: some forty lines after the reference to pinching, Prospero threatens to “‘rack’” Caliban “‘with old cramps’” (1.2.368). Contrary to the government’s 1583 propaganda pamphlet, there is no such thing as “charitable” racking.

By the end of the play, “‘pinching’” is still a recognizably English mode of torture, but it also signifies, in one brief moment, the continental practice of torturing a condemned regicide to death. The preferred early modern method for executing regicides so powerfully reproduced by Foucault at the opening of Discipline and Punish55 was not invented in 1757 but practiced with equal or even superior expertise against Balthazar Serack, assassin of William of Orange, in 1584:

The order of the torment, & death of the murtherer, was as followeth, which was foure dayes. He had the 1. day the Strappado, openly in the Market. The second day whipped and salted, and his right hand cut off. The third day, his breasts cut out and salte throwne in, and then his left hand cut off. The last day of his torment . . . he was bound to 2. stakes, standing upright, in such order that he could not shrinke downe nor stirre any way. Thus standing naked, there was a great fire placed some small distaunce from him, wherein was heated pincers of Iron, with which pincers, two men appointed for the same, did pinch and pul his flesh in smal peeces from his bones, throughout moste partes of his body. Then was he unbound from the stakes, and layd uppon the earth, and againe fastened to fowre postes, namely by his feete and armes: then they ripped up his belly at which time he had life and perfect memorey, he had his bowels burned before his face, and his bodie

53 p. 119 n.
54 A discoverie of the treasons practized and attempted against the Queenes Maiestie and the Realme, by Francis Throckmorton . . . (1584), sig. Aii” (emphasis mine). This passage was reproduced in Holinshed, The thirde volume of Chronicles, 1586, 1371/1.
cut in four several quarters. During the whole time of his execution, he remained impenitent and obstinate, rejoicing that he had slain the Prince. 56

In 1610 Francis Ravaillart endured a similar punishment for assassinating Henri IV:

Then was he layed naked upon the Stage, and pinched in divers places with hot Pincers, After which they burned his hand with the knife therein, wherewith he killed the King; Then powred they hot lead into the wounds made with the Pincers, And lastly drew him in pieces with horses. 57

When, on another "Stage," the would-be quasi-regicide Caliban says "I shall be pinched to death!"—it is less likely that Renaissance spectators recalled poor old Falstaff comically pinched by "fairies" at the end of The Merry Wives of Windsor than that they reflected on the horrible fate of contemporary assassins. Indeed, the brilliance of Shakespeare's earlier construction in Act 5—"Thou art pinched for't now, Sebastian! Flesh and blood, / You, brother mine"—is that "flesh and blood" glances backward as well as forward: it is a reference to "brother" but also a physical manifestation of the practice of pinching a traitor with hot pincers—and perhaps even a betrayal of Prospero's half-conscious desire to enact this fierce punishment against the usurpers. Thus the "honeycomb" in 1.2 and the image of the conspirators "pinch-spotted" like leopards in 4.1 double by the end of the play as ghastly images of the body spotted by removal of flesh.

Some critics might reply, "Well, but he doesn't pinch Caliban to death, does he? He simply makes him tidy up the cell." Moreover, one could say that pinching is only applicable to English torture, not to English executions for treason, which featured mere hanging, drawing, and quartering. But this is not the issue. What Paul Brown has brilliantly identified as the "process of 'euphemisation', the effacement of power" is the operative idea here. 58

Throughout the play Prospero has had utter control over all bodies, even Miranda's, which he wakes and puts to sleep at pleasure. This monopoly epitomizes physical subjection to state power regardless of whether such subjection involves bodily punishments in public, the terrors of the torture chamber, or modes of execution for treason that differed from country to country. A version of the traditional sentence pronounced against condemned English traitors captures the totality of this bodily subjection:

To bee conveyed thence to the place from whence they came, and there to be laid upon an hurdle, and so drawne to the place of execution, where they should hang till they were halfe deade, then to have their secrets cut off, and with their intraines throwne into the fire before their faces, their heads to be severd from their bodies, which severally should be devided into four quarters, and afterward disposed at his Maiesties pleasure. 59

For Prospero, nearly all the characters on stage in the final scene are "traitors," and all these are literally brought on in a state of physical

56 The True Report (1584), pp. 12–13, emphasis mine.
57 The Copie (1610), p. 2, emphasis mine.
58 Brown, p. 64.
59 A True Report of the Araignment, tryall, conviction, and condemnation, of a Popish Priest, named Robert Drewrie . . . And lastly the execution of the said Robert Drewry . . . (1607), sig. D2'–D3'.
subjection. There is no need to execute them; they are already under control, already euphemistically "pinched." Prospero's project does not evolve into the kind of bloody revenge that results in tragedy, but the kind of euphemistic revenge that leads to the reposition of secure and legitimate political power.

EPILOGUE

In a recent pair of essays extensively concerned with the impact of American new historicism and British cultural materialism, Anthony Dawson has made some powerful statements about the desire of political critics to empower their own discourse: he claims that "critical theory in Britain is a grab for power" among cultural materialists with a homicidal impulse against "the tyrannical father" Leavis; he claims further that new historicists "seeking to restore the Duke" in Measure for Measure "may in fact be seeking an authoritative place for their own discourse."60 Dawson's suspicions and suggestions are compelling, but, to borrow a phrase from The Tempest filtered through the diary of Harrison constructed by Evans: who has chalked forth the way that brought us here?61 Who has created the conditions of modern academic production? Even in Bové's radical critique of a humanism in the service of hegemony, the recommended solution is "to wrest the knowledge-producing apparatus away from the interests it now serves."62 It seems clear that hegemony is dislodged only by another hegemony. The logical corollary of Dawson's argument is that political critics should seek to disempower their discourse. Such a move would be professionally suicidal—at least among the American untenured and young British academics for whom the word "tenure," under the Thatcher regime, is now meaningless.

Dawson's fine discussion of Measure for Measure as a potentially subversive theatrical experience, however, is itself a perfect example of political criticism, just as distinct from traditional treatments as from many new historical studies. He cites the Gramscian concept of "hegemony" as a possible way to "help to free new historicism from some of its most disabling concepts" with regard to power.63 Hegemony, as Dawson argues, is in fact a useful notion for what he calls Renaissance "cultural production" since it would allow us to explain both the seeming toadyism as well as the seeming subversiveness of different playwrights and, in fact, of the same playwright writing at different stages of his career. But although Dawson draws the necessary distinction between Gramscian concepts of hegemony and domination,64 he does not elaborate on his suggestion by distinguishing between cultural production as primarily a realm of fiction and what we might call political production or, perhaps more accurately, Realpolitik.

Why, some historians and literary critics inquire, did oppressed groups in Renaissance England fail to rebel more often against the established order?

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The subject of local revolts has recently been clarified to a great extent by Roger Manning, who claims that "popular disorder became a serious problem only after 1580" in London and that "during the period from about 1586 to 1608 England was troubled by economic crises, political crises, social tension, and popular disorder." Not coincidentally, this same period featured a large number of treason cases and the most extensive engagement in conspiratorial discourse in early modern English history. There are potentially fascinating connections to be made between London revolts, rural enclosure riots, and politico-religious conspiracies on all levels of the social spectrum, and the complexity of such a study would be somewhat simplified by the fact that regimes in this period were remarkably predictable in their responses to various challenges. Although Manning demonstrates that the summer of 1595 featured numerous huge riots, one of his sources, Stow, records the government's reaction with shocking understatement. He reports that five "unruly youths" were executed for high treason during dearth-induced riots. The violent gap between his allusion to youthful unruliness on the one hand and conviction for treason followed by public execution on the other suggests (like so many other cases buried in the archives) something about early modern life and subjection. The danger of applying the Gramscian concept of hegemony to Renaissance "cultural production" lies not in this critical activity itself but in any hint that such a concept should be applied to English politics. Late Elizabethan and early Jacobean government featured no hegemony based on "consensus." It can be described only as "domination" based on "coercion." The effacement of power relations through euphemization in The Tempest should not delude us into believing that Prospero will preside over a kinder, gentler Milan, since a characteristic strategy of state power is to mask subjection of the body with a show of benevolence. The Dutch author whose fierce fantasy about a London filled with dismembered bodies helps to inform us not that successive regimes were engaged in a physical reign of terror but that they were always engaged in a psychological reign of terror. To respond fully to The Tempest, we must learn to read it in non-euphemistic contexts.

65 Village Revolts, pp. 191 and 157.
66 Village Revolts, pp. 208 ff.
67 The Annales, 1605, pp. 1280–81.