

SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TEMPEST* REVISITED: NIETZSCHE AND THE  
MYTH OF THE NEW WORLD

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ABSTRACT

*The Tempest* is the only play in the Shakespearean canon that is open to a purely “Americanist” reading. Although Prospero’s island is located somewhere in the Mediterranean, numerous critics claimed that it deals with the New World (Hulme & Sherman 2000: 171). The paper revisits the existing interpretations, focusing on the turbulent relationship between Prospero and other inhabitants of the island: Caliban, Miranda, and Ariel. In the article I propose a rereading of their relation in the spirit of Friedrich Nietzsche’s perspectivism, utilising Nietzsche’s key philosophical concepts like the Apollonian/Dionysian elements and *der Übermensch* (the overman). In his vast canon, Nietzsche refers to Native Americans only once and in passing. However, his call for the revaluation of all values seems to be an apt point of departure for a discussion on early colonial relations. Nietzsche’s perspectivism enables to reread both the early colonial encounters and character relations on Shakespeare’s island. Hence, in an attempt at a “combined analysis”, the paper looks at Prospero as the potential overman and also offers a reading of the English source texts that document early encounters between the English and native inhabitants of North America (Walter Raleigh, Richard Hakluyt, Thomas Harriot, Robert Gray).

Keywords: Shakespeare; Nietzsche; *The Tempest*; colonial relations; the New World; The Overman; Apollonian impulses; Dionysian impulses.

1. Introduction

In *The Gay Science*, published in 1882, Nietzsche wrote: “[t]here is something of the American Indian, something of the savagery peculiar to the Indian blood, in the way the Americans strive for gold; and their breathless haste in working – the true vice of the new world” (Nietzsche 2007 [1882]: 183). The quotation comes from an aphorism 329 entitled *Leisure and Idleness* and it is the only reference to native

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inhabitants of North America and the New World in the vast Nietzschean canon. In this aphorism Nietzsche criticized the hustle and bustle of the modern world, its exuberant consumerism, materialism, and growing disrespect for intellectual pursuits. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century many would applaud Nietzsche's dismay at the cult of the money at the expense of leisure and reflection. Yet there is something uncanny in Nietzsche's argumentation. Apparently, being influenced by the myths of the Gold Rush, he believed that the aforementioned pursuit of gold was a typically American phenomenon, a consequence of flamboyant individualism, itself derived from "native savagery". It is here where Nietzsche was painfully wrong as the pursuit of profit, materialism, and consumerism were brought to the New World from the old one. Despite the controversial nature of Nietzsche's words I would like to make his aphorism a point of departure for a rereading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in the context of the first colonial encounters between the English and the indigenous peoples of America. The analysis focuses on the character dynamics in the play. Using Nietzsche's philosophical ideas I investigate Prospero as a potential overman, looking at his relations with other inhabitants on the island. As Peter Hulme writes, *The Tempest* "has been re-read and re-written more radically, perhaps than any other play" (Hulme & Sherman 2000: xi). This may be so because it has consistently resisted categorization and led us into the worlds where the previously held valuations are questioned, even if only temporarily. It leads us to realities where we can see with our own eyes and "do[th] but mistake the truth totally" (*The Tempest*, 2.1.55). Nietzsche might have erred in his views on Americans, yet, in his philosophy, he was acutely aware of the need for perspectivism and revaluation of values. Famous for his experimental and aphoristic attitude to philosophising, he embraced his own method dubbed "perspectivism". This method of approach to both life and philosophy is best rendered in an aphorism found in his notebooks dated around the end of 1886 or beginning of 1887 that goes: "Gegen den Positivismus, welcher bei dem Phänomen stehen bleibt 'es giebt nur Thatsachen', würde ich sagen: nein, gerade Thatsachen giebt es nicht, nur Interpretationen..." (Nietzsche 2013).<sup>2</sup> Kaufmann in his *Portable Nietzsche* translates the fragment as: "Against that positivism which stops before phenomena, saying 'there are only facts,' I should say: no, it is precisely facts that do not exist, only interpretations..." (Nietzsche, as quoted in: Kaufmann

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2 The quotation comes from *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe – Digitale Fassung der von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari herausgegebenen Referenzausgabe der sämtlichen Werke Nietzsches* [Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe – Digital version of the German Critical Edition of the Complete Works of Nietzsche edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari], in: Paolo D'lorio (ed.), *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe – Digitale Fassung der von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari herausgegebenen Referenzausgabe der sämtlichen Werke Nietzsches*. This quotation can be found here: [https://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1886,7\[60\]](https://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1886,7[60]).

1974: 458). As Nehamas aptly points out Nietzsche sees “the world as a text of which our various practices and modes of life are interpretations” (Nehamas 1985: 62). For this reason his philosophical concepts may serve as a springboard to analyse Shakespeare’s plays as well as inform the clash of the New and Old World in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, his insights into the nature of power relations illuminate the dynamics of the first colonial enterprises as well as their representations in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

## 2. Methodology

As suggested in the introduction, *The Tempest* criticism underwent quite a radical change in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Along with the emergence of new historical and cultural materialist paradigms in Shakespeare studies, *The Tempest* has become an object of postcolonial studies and close readings against a far wider selection of source texts. Stephen Orgel in his introduction to the Oxford edition of the play is one of the first scholars who focuses on the problematic aspects of Prospero’s rule in order to deconstruct conventional and idealistic readings of the play (Orgel 1987: 1–87). He opposes a conventional, rather sentimental view of the play, in which Prospero emerges as an all-wise and all-powerful artist or semi-god whose authority should not or cannot be questioned. His meticulous attention to contradictory details in the protagonist and his relations with others, in a sense, paves the way for the emergence of “the Age of Caliban”, as Harold Bloom heralded modernity (Bloom 1992: 1). However, nowadays more and more critics voice their dissatisfaction with new historical and cultural materialist readings of canonical Shakespearean texts. Hugh Grady in his article “On the Need for a Differentiated Theory of (Early) Modern Subjectivity” (2000) criticizes the cultural materialist vehement rejection of essentialism and modern subjectivity. Grady deprecates cultural materialism and new historicism for its over-reliance on social determinants and political circumstances. He writes:

[t]he great weakness of both Foucault and Althusser is their tendency to make subjectivity a purely passive outcome of determinate social forces, thereby paradoxically replicating positivist social science. Here, I think the Marxist tradition’s own overdetermined blindspots – its reductionist, systematizing tendencies – contribute to the problem, reinforcing Foucault’s and Althusser’s failures adequately to theorize the possibilities of critical rationality, of subaltern communities of resistance, and of utopian thinking and action. Thus it will be necessary for renewed materialist theories of subjectivity to create an account of agency, of the potentially creative, power-resisting activity of the self within the world – without at the same time regressing to myths of complete individual autonomy from the social.

(Grady 2000: 40)

Grady calls for a “differentiated theory of (early) modern subjectivity” that would account for both the determinants of all-too-powerful ideology and human singularity. In other words, what Grady wishes for is a methodological framework that would combine a close reading of source texts along with a philosophy-indebted reflection on Shakespeare’s texts. It seems that, just as a radical materialist or new historical reading, a purely philosophical analysis of literature falls short of its potential. Naturally there is a canonical theoretical body of works in the field of classical philosophical analysis in the vein of Martha Nussbaum or Stanley Cavell.<sup>3</sup> However, classical philosophical analysis seems to be at loggerheads with politically engaged theory.

Thus, the present paper aims at a “combined” reading of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, looking at the source texts and utilising a Nietzschean perspective in the reading of those and the play itself. So, I follow in the footsteps of Nussbaum and Cavell as well as Małgorzata Grzegorzewska, who in her two important books *Kamienny ołtarz. Horyzonty metafizyczne w tragedii antycznej i dramacie Williama Szekspira* [The stone altar. Metaphysical horizons in ancient tragedy and William Shakespeare’s drama] (2007) and *Scena we krwi – Williama Szekspira tragedia zemsty* [The stage in blood – William Shakespeare’s revenge tragedy] (2006) uses Nietzsche’s near contemporary, Søren Kierkegaard, as her philosophical guide in the interpretation of Shakespeare. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are often seen as the precursors of existentialism and philosophers of radical individualism. As much as Kierkegaard has been frequently used in the reading of Shakespeare, Nietzsche has rarely been seen as an interpretative path for Shakespeare’s plays.<sup>4</sup> The aforementioned aphorism from *The Gay Science* is the only direct mention of native inhabitants of America but also a characteristic Nietzschean *Rückschluß*, or as Babette Babich explains “conclusion a posteriori” (1996: 27). Nietzsche’s reasoning is always based on the wider context and is an invitation to further reflection. The

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3 There seems to be a long tradition of philosophising Shakespeare or the early modern. With the publication of the seminal books by Stanley Cavell (*Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare*, 1987) and Martha C. Nussbaum (*Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, 1992) philosophical criticism has been very much energized, with new and important contributions such as Stanley Stewart’s *Shakespeare and Philosophy* (2010) and Colin McGinn’s *Shakespeare’s Philosophy: Discovering the Meaning Behind the Plays* (2006). The recent publication of *The Routledge Companion to Shakespeare and Philosophy* edited by Craig Bourne and Emily Caddick Bourne (2018) seems also to counter the view of philosophy’s engagement in literature as ideologically and politically naïve. Due to the increased “politicization” of criticism in 1980s and 1990s philosophical criticism has been sometimes pushed to the margins of literary analysis (Burzyńska 2016: 29). This stance, however, is slowly changing.

4 Kierkegaard, through his intense indebtedness to Christianity, seems “a more intuitive first choice in western criticism – that is after all built on the Christian tradition” (Burzyńska 2016: 14). However, Nietzsche haunts modern literary criticism and philosophy from Foucault and Derrida to Irigaray, even if his presence is unacknowledged (Burzyńska 2016: 14–15).

aphorisms should not be taken at their face value but as the first step to a more in-depth analysis of the problem. So, this paper intends to revisit existing “Americanist” or post-colonial interpretations of *The Tempest* in the spirit of Nietzsche’s *a posteriori* reasoning. I argue that Nietzsche’s revaluation of human affects may shed more light on the clash of the New and Old Worlds, where the concept of the will to power comes in handy in the reading of early encounters between the colonists and the colonized.<sup>5</sup> In order to do this I look at the selection of texts which might have been Shakespeare’s sources for *The Tempest*.

### 3. Analysis

In the following sections I proceed to the analysis of Prospero’s relationships with Caliban, Miranda, and Ariel. I follow the anti-sentimental view of the play, which no longer sees Prospero as an all-positive figure. It is Nietzsche’s perspectivism that allows to bring out many subtleties of Prospero as a colonist but also a Renaissance Magus figure, or in Nietzschean terms a potential “overman” (*der Übermensch*).<sup>6</sup> A Nietzschean reading of Prospero capitalizes on numerous contradictions in his character; an intellectual escapism on the one hand, and excessive need for control on the other.

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5 Recently, Paul R. Cantor published a revisioning of Shakespeare’s Roman plays in his *Shakespeare’s Roman Trilogy: The Twilight of the Ancient World* (2017), in which he uses Nietzsche’s concept of the revaluation of values to read Shakespeare’s three Roman tragedies. As he himself acknowledges, “Friedrich Nietzsche’s understanding of what he calls the revaluation of values in ancient Rome provides important clues to how to read Shakespeare’s works, especially *Antony and Cleopatra*” (Cantor 2017: 3). As I try to prove in this article, Nietzsche’s concepts are not only useful for the Roman plays. They, actually, have a bearing on a rereading of moral dilemmas in other Shakespearean texts.

6 Here I would like to provide a relatively brief and useful definition of Nietzschean perspectivism as outlined by Alexander Nehamas in his seminal work *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (1985). Nehamas writes: “Since every inquiry presupposes a particular point of view, it therefore excludes an indefinitely large number of others. We must be clear that this does not imply that we can never reach correct result or that we can never be ‘objective’, since it is impossible to be correct about anything if one tries to be correct about everything. The fact that other points of view are possible does not by itself make them equally legitimate: whether an alternative is worth taking, as we shall see, must be shown independently in each particular case. Perspectivism, as we are in the process of construing it, is not equivalent to relativism, but perspectivism does imply that no particular point of view is privileged in the sense that it affords those who occupy it a better picture of the world as it really is than all others. Some perspectives are, and can be shown to be, better than others. But a perspective that is best of all is not a perspective at all. Perspectivism also implies that our many points of view cannot be smoothly combined into a unified synoptic picture of their common object. In effect it denies that our perspectives are all directed in more than a trivial sense upon a single object” (Nehamas 1985: 49). I strongly believe that Nietzsche’s reasoning, as outlined by Nehamas, helps to bring out as well as combine various incongruities in the character of Prospero.

3.1. “I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated / To the bettering of my mind”  
(*The Tempest*, 1.2.89–90): Prospero and the island

The modern American materialism that Nietzsche was so critical of in *The Gay Science*, actually, found its way to the New World through colonialism. It should be noted that the primary motivation behind the exploitation of America was economic (Aughterson 1998: 485). The source texts documenting the first encounters detail various motivations for the voyages. Yet, despite the multiplicity of spelled-out reasons the economic factor remained one of the key reasons justifying geographical explorations. Peter Martyr, outlining the purpose behind Columbus’ voyage in his *Decades* (1516) wrote: “[a]ffirming that thereby not only the Christian religion might be enlarged, but Spain also enriched by the great plenty of gold, pearls, precious stones and spices which might be found there” (Peter Martyr 1998 [1516]: 485). Thomas Harriot in his *A Brief and True Report of the New-found Land Virginia* (1588) enumerates in detail “merchantable commodities” (Harriot 1998 [1585]: 509–512). One should not forget Walter Raleigh who devoted a couple of years of his life to an almost obsessive search of El Dorado, a legendary land where gold was plentiful.<sup>7</sup> In *The Discoverie of Guiana* (2006 [1596]: 6) he writes: “[m]any years since, I had knowledge by relation, of that mighty, rich, and beautifull Empire of Guiana, and of that great and Golden City, which the Spanyards call El Dorado”. Of course Raleigh failed to find his dream city of gold. Yet his accounts, including also a grand project *The History of the World*, are infused with an almost atavistic longing for it. The motivations behind the Spanish in Mexico, the Puritans in New England, or Raleigh’s dreams of the city of gold should not be all treated on equal footing. Yet the economic factor must have been a crucial aspect.<sup>8</sup>

Judging by Nietzsche’s single comment on the pursuit of gold in the New World and on his general theory of impulses one may suspect that had Nietzsche

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7 Speaking of Raleigh’s account of Guiana it is worth mentioning Kermode’s claim: “it is not unlikely that Shakespeare knew this work, but in fact he had read widely in the voyagers” (1967: xxvii, n.2). As Kermode writes: “[i]t is very likely that he knew the accounts of Raleigh’s voyages, and in his hints of a cannibal theology he may owe something to Harriot’s report on the religion of Virginia ...” (Kermode 1967: xxxiii). Kermode also argues that Shakespeare knew Peter Martyr (Kermode 1967: xxxii). So all the above texts might be read as textual background to the reading of *The Tempest*.

8 Religion was of secondary importance, though it proved many a time a convenient tool of justification for the atrocities of colonialism, e.g., in numerous propagandist texts encouraging further colonisation of Virginia. An apt example would be Robert Gray’s “A Good Speed to Virginia” (1998 [1609]), where the author justifies the theft of native land seeing the English as the children of God, specially selected to take advantage of the land that the natives only let lay waste.



known more about colonialism he would have read the colonists' motivations as expressions of the will to power (*Wille zur Macht*), a primordial instinct to conquer. Neither the pursuit of gold nor religious motivation have anything to do with Prospero's presence on his island. Dethroned by his brother Antonio, Prospero landed on the island a betrayed and defeated man in flight for his and his daughter's life. It is through the immersion in his intellectual pursuits, a self-perfecting study of sacred books and practice of magic, that Prospero carries out his plan of revenge and regains his kingdom. Frank Kermode seems to idealize Prospero when he claims: "[a]s a mage he controls nature; as a prince he conquers the passions which had excluded him from his kingdom and overthrown law; as a scholar he repairs his loss of Eden; as a man he learns to temper his passions, an achievement essential to success in any of the other activities" (Kermode 1967: xlviii). If one were to follow Kermode's vision of a perfect human being that Prospero supposedly is, it would not be wide-off the mark to compare Prospero to a Nietzschean overman, a higher specimen of man in perfect command of his impulses and in control of his passions. Both the concept of the will to power and the conception of the overman can inform Prospero's character, though as it will turn out, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* has limited utility to capture inherent contradictions in Prospero's character. Kuderowicz (1979: 139) claims that Nietzsche's overman is more of an artist, rather than a politician, as he is supposed to be a human being of the greatest creativity. Prospero has been frequently read as an artist who transforms nature through his magic. However, as it seems, it is the understanding of the concept of nature that has divided critics in their evaluation of Prospero. As Kermode writes: "[b]ehind all these observations are the two opposing versions of the natural; on the one hand, that which man corrupts, and on the other that which is defective, and must be mended by cultivation – the less than human, which calls forth man's authoritative power to correct and rule. This latter is the view which suits best the conscience of the colonist" (Kermode 1967: xxxvi). Both of these visions are present in Shakespeare's play and it seems they have been used in the justification or defence of Prospero's behaviour.

The debate on nature vs. civilization traditionally revolves around Gonzalo's famous utopian speech, where he praises the island's bounty and imagines a "natural", unspoilt civilisation and a collaborative commune of men. As Gilles suggests, Gonzalo's vision is characteristic of the early colonial discourse where the novelty and freshness of the new world becomes a springboard for the critique of the Old World (Gillies 2000: 191–192). In a very Nietzschean spirit Gonzalo criticizes the pursuit of material wealth and power, praising "idleness". He exclaims: "All men idle, all; / And women too, but innocent and pure: / No sovereignty" (*The Tempest*, 2.1.150–152). Gonzalo's fantasy, though treated as a jest by other characters, is seemingly subversive as it undermines the foundations

of the Elizabethan and Jacobean power structures. Gonzalo's "Golden Age"<sup>9</sup> dismantles the Great Chain of Being, that neatly extends into a highly hierarchical social structure, where everyone finds his or her place, where overreaching is most unwelcome. Apparently, one is suddenly in the world that welcomes profound relativity, a world "beyond good and evil" that calls for the revaluation of the old world view.<sup>10</sup> However, this atmosphere of relativity is heralded by a supposedly comical exchange between the castaways; Gonzalo, Alonso, Sebastian, and Adrian in Act 2, Scene 1. Each of them has a totally different view of the island while their views also metamorphose depending on an angle they take; e.g., Adrian calls it "uninhabitable, and almost inaccessible", and "subtle, tender and delicate" only a moment later (*The Tempest*, 2.1.36, 41). I would argue that the first conversation introducing Gonzalo's famous and often interpreted utopian fantasy is equally significant as it opens a possibility for a perspectivist reading of the play. As Nehamas aptly interprets: "[t]he apparent world, Nietzsche believes, is not a world that appears to be and is distinct from reality but simply the world as it appears to any being that needs to survive in it and that therefore must arrange it selectively for its own purposes. Reality is not something behind appearance but simply the totality of these various arrangements" (Nehamas 1985: 46). The exchange illustrates a similar dynamics as it allows for a multiplicity of often contradictory perspectives on the island's riches. It provides context for Gonzalo's utopian vision of happiness for all, at the same time subtly signalling its incongruity. Gonzalo's speech is only subversive on surface as he memorably asks: "And were the King on't, what would I do?" (*The Tempest*, 2.1.140). Gonzalo indulges in fantastical wishful thinking that only superficially deconstructs existing power structures, in reality leaving the building block of Elizabethan orthodoxy intact. As Harry Berger Jr. aptly points out: "[t]his kind of pastoral wish fulfilment was a cliché in Shakespeare's time – getting rid of all problems by getting rid of civilization, throwing the baby out with the bath, letting Nature and the gods do with greater ease and certainty what men try to do..." (Berger 1990: 166). This Elizabethan stock-pastoral fantasy is based on the belief in a benevolent, guiding hand that shapes "natural" order and which is only disturbed by the detrimental influence of men, tampering with the pre-existing hierarchy. It is a Neo-Platonic vision of a

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9 Interestingly enough, Richard Hakluyt also describes the life of indigenous peoples of Virginia, using the term "golden age". He writes: "[w]e found the people most gentle, loving and faithful; void of all guile and treason; and such as life after the manner of the golden age" (Hakluyt 1998 [1598–1600]: 509).

10 The phrase "beyond good and evil" is, naturally, a direct reference to Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (2002 [1886]), first published in 1886. Nietzsche's book does not only criticize the divine underpinnings of existing philosophical systems but actually questions the validity and currency of such systems, being one of the first of Nietzsche's works calling for revaluation of values.



better, real world, which the present one is only a dim reflection of. So as Berger posits, there is “some pastoral escapism” inherent to Gonzalo’s vision (Berger 1990: 166). The speech has been frequently read in the context of Thomas Moore’s *Utopia* (1516) and the character of Raphael Hythlodæus, who clearly sees himself within the Platonic tradition.

The other interpretative path for Gonzalo’s introductory speech about Prospero’s island is Montaigne’s essay *Of Cannibals* (available to the English in John Florio’s 1603 translation of the *Essais*). Kermode claims: “[t]he only undisputed source for any part of *The Tempest* is Montaigne’s essay ‘Of Cannibals’; there are unmistakable traces of Florio’s translation in the text” (Kermode 1967: xxxiv). Nietzsche’s aphoristic style and perspectivist method is believed to have been inspired by Montaigne, for whom Nietzsche had a lot of admiration (Burzyńska 2016: 86–91). In *Apology for Raymond Sebond* Montaigne (1990 [1580]: 28) coins one of his most iconic and often quoted comparisons: “When I am playing with my cat, who knows whether she have more sport in dallying with me than I have in gaming with her?” Montaigne’s mental flexibility is in this instance (but not only this) very much in line with Nietzsche’s method. So one could say there is a mental link between Nietzsche, Montaigne, and Shakespeare as Gonzalo’s perfect commune of men and nature is believed to mirror Montaigne’s description of native inhabitants of Brazil. Montaigne writes:

... I find ... there is nothing in that nation that is either barbarous or savage, unless men call barbarism which is not common to them. As indeed, we have no other aim of truth and reason that the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the country we live in. There is ever perfect religion, perfect policy and complete use of all things. They are even savage, as we call those fruits wild which nature of herself and of her ordinary progress hath produced. Whereas indeed they are those which ourselves have altered by our artificial devices and diverted from their common order we should rather term savage.

(Montaigne 1998 [1580]: 523)

Shakespeare uses Montaigne’s idealised vision of Brazilian Indians to imagine a potential social structure for the Old World. Montaigne, similarly to Nietzsche, believed that man moved away from his instincts. For Montaigne that was exactly savagery, while for Nietzsche a path to emasculation. Both Nietzsche and Montaigne demonstrate a lot of scepticism towards the so called “European civilisation” based on unchanging moral axioms. For Montaigne “[t]he diversity of civilisations as well as variety of customs, cultures and moralities of the world, serves his project to unveil the contingency of morality, which is by no means a universal code but rather a mere human construct” (Burzyńska 2016: 88). However, as much as Nietzsche and Montaigne could be said to share the ability to look at phenomena from various perspectives, it seems that Gonzalo’s vision does not reflect the actual situation on the island or Prospero’s attitude towards

its natives. As Kermode writes of Montaigne and Shakespeare, “[t]he essay, like the play, is concerned with the general contrast between natural and artificial societies and men, though Montaigne assumes, in his ‘naturalist’ way, that the New World offers an example of naturally virtuous life uncorrupted by civilization, whereas Shakespeare obviously does not” (Kermode 1967: xxxv). For Prospero following one’s affects emerges as politically subversive and morally suspect, so Gonzalo’s speech is a vision in inverted commas, relegated to the world of fantasy.<sup>11</sup> Gonzalo might see how the world *should* be constructed, but definitely *is not*. Though apparently magical, the island is subject to the old rules, brought from the old world. As Gillies writes: “[i]n the sheer shock of its original novelty, the New World was figured as ontologically ‘other’ and emotionally ambivalent in ways too disturbing to endure” (Gillies 2000: 193). It seems that the only way to “familiarize” the otherness of the New World was to force it into the old systems of values.

Prospero’s obsessive control over other characters on the island demonstrates a radically different attitude than that of Montaigne’s. He encapsulates a dualistic vision of the world that goes back to Plato. Nietzsche believed that dual metaphysics always looks for morality standards beyond actual reality (Kuderowicz 1979: 58). It seems that, in a paradoxical way, Prospero combines Gonzalo’s escapist fantasies with a far harsher view on nature itself. As Berger claims: “[b]oth characters thus share equally in a refusal to look too closely at the

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11 For fear of essentializing Nietzschean concepts I feel it is necessary to explain Nietzsche’s concept of instinct/impulse/affect/drive (the choice of the word depends on the translation). For Nietzsche the only reality of the world and existence is the bodily “being-in-the-world”. The bodily human existence is not a reflection of a “better” world of concepts or ideas but the only one of which experience stems from. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche writes: “Assuming that our world of desires and passions is the only thing “given” as real, that we cannot get down or up to any “reality” except the reality of our drives (since thinking is only a relation between these drives) – aren’t we allowed to make the attempt and pose the question as to whether something like this “given” isn’t *enough* to render the so-called mechanistic (and thus material) world comprehensible as well? I do not mean comprehensible as a deception, a “mere appearance,” a “representation” (in the sense of Berkeley and Schopenhauer); I mean it might allow us to understand the mechanistic world as belonging to the same plane of reality as our affects themselves – as a primitive form of the world of affect, where everything is contained in a powerful unity before branching off and organizing itself in the organic process (and, of course, being softened and weakened – n). We would be able to understand the mechanistic world as a kind of life of the drives, where all the organic functions (self-regulation, assimilation, nutrition, excretion, and metabolism) are still synthetically bound together – as a *pre-form* of life? – In the end, we are not only allowed to make such an attempt: the conscience of *method* demands it” (Nietzsche 2002 [1886]: 35–36). Nietzsche’s insistence on the importance of bodily affects as a driving force for all action will find its full realization in his concept of *the will to power*. The will to power is an all-encompassing force shared by all life on the planet. In humans it manifests itself in a plethora of drives, with sexual libido or *Eros* being just one of them.

actual state of affairs and, more generally, at the world they live in" (Berger 1990: 166). Prospero's escapist nature is demonstrated in his absolute lack of interest in the issues of state while still being the Duke of Milan. In his account of events presented to Miranda, Prospero shapes himself as a victim of his brother's treachery but he does admit his indifference to his duties: "[a]nd Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed / In dignity, and for the liberal Arts / Without a parallel; those being all my study, / The government I cast upon my brother, / And to my state grew stranger, being transported / And rapt in secret studies" (*The Tempest*, 1.2.72–76). By neglecting his worldly existence Prospero failed to see the reality for what it was. Rapt in the study of the other world he underestimated the instincts and longings of those close to him; "I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated / To closeness and the bettering of my mind / With that which, but by being so retired, / O'erprized all popular rate, in my false brother / Awaked an evil nature..." (*The Tempest*, 1.2.89–93). Prospero's attitude towards his brother, to an extent, mirrors his initial treatment of Caliban, whose impulses he also totally ignores. In a Plato-originated morality, so heavily criticized by Nietzsche, moral valuations are based on an imagined, "real world" that exists somewhere beyond earthly reality. In such a view the world of human cares, instincts, and affects is only apparent, while real values are sought beyond the actual, down-to-earth life. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche (2005 [1883–85]: 28) sarcastically claims: "[b]ut the 'other world' is well concealed from humans, that dehumaned unhuman world that is a heavenly nothing; and the Belly of Being does not speak to humans at all, except as a human". When one looks at the all-too-human cares of Shakespeare's characters like Antonio (or Caliban) one sees men of flesh and blood who follow their instincts. In the case of Prospero, his negligence of earthy life leads him to underestimate human passions on the one hand, and mistrust the instincts that Nietzsche would deem only natural. Nietzsche is believed to be the first philosopher not only to acknowledge the animal side of human nature but also to appreciate it (Barrett 1990: 180). Prospero, as a Neo-Platonic scholar looks for true values outside existing reality, repressing his own bodily instincts. In his treatment of Caliban, Miranda, but also Ferdinand and Ariel he manifests a deep distrust of human impulses.

3.2. "What, ho! slave! Caliban! / Thou earth..." (*The Tempest*, 1.2.315–314): Prospero and Caliban

Prospero's and Caliban's problematic relations can be read using Nietzsche's controversial notions of masters' and slaves' moralities. Prospero's treatment of Caliban illustrates blind spots in conventional moralities Nietzsche so ruthlessly unveils in his writings. In the recent years the centrality of Caliban in *The Tempest* has been frequently underscored. Caliban seems to be a measure against which

the protagonist's behaviour is evaluated. Caliban is "the natural man" whose "bestiality" forecloses an idealization in the vein of Gonzalo (or Montaigne). Caliban is described as "a salvage and deformed slave" (*The Tempest*, Dramatis personae). Kermode explains that his "name is usually regarded as a development of some form of the word 'Carib', meaning savage inhabitant of the New World'; 'cannibal' derives from this, and 'Caliban' is possibly a simple anagram of the word" (Kermode 1967: xxxviii). Berger summarizes Caliban's nature by saying: "[c]hildlike in his fears and passions, ingenious in the immediacy of his responses to nature and man, open in the expression of feeling, Caliban at his most evil and traitorous show us a mere puppy, a comic Vice, a crude conspirator in the pointed contrast to Antonio established by their plots" (Berger 1990: 158). From Caliban's first monologue one learns that he is native to the island. His relationship with Prospero was initially warm and loving. Both Prospero and Miranda clearly manifested their sense of superiority, acting as Caliban's teachers, yet they were kind and friendly. Caliban says: "This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first, / Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me / Water with berries in 't, and teach me how / To name the bigger light and how the less, / That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee, / And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle, / The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile. / Cursed be I that did so! (*The Tempest*, 1.2.331–341). In his recollection Caliban reminisces on the moments of closeness with Prospero and Miranda but also on Prospero's ability to tame supposedly wild nature through nurture. Harry Berger translates the name of Caliban as "banned from beauty, beauty is his bane" (Berger 1990: 157). However, when one reads Caliban's blank verse recollections of tender moments with Prospero as well as his intense, poetic discriptions of his subsequent suffering one does not feel Caliban to be a sub-human creature, excluded from the appreciation of beauty. Berger calls Caliban "a first-generation human being", whose "desire apprehends limited forms of beauty – money, wine, woman, and song; his impulses to love and worship are moved by brave and fine appearances when they are not moved by mere alcohol and lust" (Berger 1990: 157). Because of his naiveté, when approached by Stephano and Trinculo, Caliban may appear a lower form of being, who is unable to see past his baser instincts. His ease with finding new masters immediately brings to mind the Nietzschean division into slaves' and masters' morality. If one were to see Prospero as a potential "overman", Caliban may represent the denial of master morality. As Kuderowicz explains, the morality of slaves is always understood as the rebellion of the weak against the strong (Kuderowicz 1979: 116). Caliban's instant trust in appearances may be indicative of his herd instincts as he himself seems to be always in need of a master, whom he can subsequently oppose. Slave morality heralds empathy and altruism only so far as it protects the interests of the weak (Kuderowicz 1979:

116). So Prospero's denial to grant Caliban an outlet to his immediate needs is seen by him as an act of injustice and a reason to rebel. Yet it seems unfair to dub Caliban as pure evil, while the Nietzschean reading of Caliban also requires a more in-depth, perspectivist look. Berger sees Caliban as "a compact symbol of human nature ..." (Berger 1990: 158). Indeed Caliban fuses a whole wealth of human instinctive responses to the surrounding reality. As Berger writes, "[h]is baseness is shot through with gleams of aspiration, though the mixture is unstable and the diverse motives often undifferentiated. He displays the most transcendent, the most poignant, and the most natural urges of man as well as the most foolish and murderous and disloyal" (Berger 1990: 158). Prospero, blind to the instinctive aspects of human nature, can neither see Caliban's bodily urges nor his complex circumstances. Caliban's master – a seemingly benevolent and enlightened scholar – is the source of his suffering and it is Prospero who forces him into a vicious circle of "supposed" evil.

Caliban's plaintive recollection of his early relationship with Prospero mirrors the representations of the first encounters between the indigenous peoples of North America and the colonists. As Seed writes: "[t]ales of initial native hospitality and the sharing of food and resources were the stock-in-trade of English colonizers. Whether composed by Shakespeare in *The Tempest*, William Bradford at Plymouth, Walter Raleigh in Guyana or Francis Drake in South America, English narratives of arrival in the Americas characteristically record their approach to the natives as benevolent and the natives' response as placidly or enthusiastically welcoming" (Seed 2000: 203). Caliban welcomes Prospero on the island by sharing its richness with his guest. He is initially infatuated with the extent of Prospero's knowledge just as the natives in Harriot's text on Virginia. Harriot highlights the technological advantage of the Europeans over native inhabitants. Yet this apparent difference is described in religious terms. Harriot writes:

... and many other things that we had, were so strange unto them and so far exceeded their capacities to comprehend the reason and means how they should be made and done that they thought they were rather the works of gods than men, or at the leastwise they thought they had been given and taught us of the gods.

(Harriot 1998 [1585]: 505)

Prospero's "godly" power lies in the knowledge enclosed in his books. He is capable of controlling the island's natural resources as well as its inhabitants through the knowledge acquired from his mysterious and well-guarded books. Harriot recounts the reverence the Indians had for the Bible:

I told them the book materially and of itself was not of any such virtue, as I thought they did conceive, but only the doctrine therein contained, yet would many be glad to touch it, to embrace it, to kiss it, to hold it to their breast and heads, and stroke

all their body with it to show their hungry desire of that knowledge which was spoken of.

(Harriot 1998 [1585]: 515)

When Caliban later plots against Prospero he particularly instructs Stephano and Trinculo: “First to possess his books, for without them / He’s but a sot” (*The Tempest*, 3.2.101–102). Caliban’s admiration for Prospero is grounded in his command of magic. Yet this ability is not an inherent quality of his mind or character but comes from the study of the books he guards and values.

In his philosophy Nietzsche presented radical scepticism even towards science; or to be more precise, anyone who would claim to possess the totality of truth on natural phenomena and the world. As Nehamas outlines: “We could say that Nietzsche believes that the world is not what our most sweeping, most fundamental, or best supported views and theories hold it to be and that he takes it to be something else instead. We would then attribute to him the view that, in itself, the world is characterized by features that all our sciences and disciplines, even at their ideal best, necessarily cannot capture, and that the world, therefore is falsified but by every one of our descriptions” (Nehamas 1985: 45). In this sense Nietzsche’s ideas can inform, and at the same time, be used to critique Prospero as a Renaissance scholar and magician. Though often read as a symbol of the budding English colonialism, Prospero’s command of magic attained through the study of sacred books positions him as a Renaissance Magus figure, more than just a colonist. In the Renaissance culture the Mage or Magus is a scholar who, through the meticulous study of scholarly texts, attains the knowledge of the Universe and comes closer to the divine (Hebron 2016). Magic seems indistinguishable from the pursuit of science as both stem from careful observation of nature and the attempts to harness it. Some critics claim that it is hard to distinguish between the Renaissance occultist practices and those of the previous periods. However, as Borchardt points out: “the sole true distinguishing feature of Renaissance magic is its idealism” (Borchardt 1990: 60). A mage using his powers to conjure up spirits or influence the course of history would not be any different from a black magician of the remote past (Borchardt 1990: 60–61). So the Renaissance Magus was supposed to be a force for good by attaining the totality of truth. Nietzsche would claim that such an aspiration is beyond reach as humans lack “the organ” for truth (Nehamas 1985: 45). Man not only cannot reach the truth but the desperate pursuit of it closes him in the trap of idealism.

It is often pointed out that both Prospero and Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus were inspired by the historical figure of John Dee, Queen Elizabeth’s astrologer.<sup>12</sup> Like

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12 The link between Faustus and John Dee is pointed out by Wilson (2011: 87). The possible connections between Prospero and Dee are acknowledged by Malcolm Hebron in his article “Prospero: A Renaissance Magus” (Hebron 2016) and Emma Smith in “Prospero: Magician and artist” (Smith 2016).



Prospero and Doctor Faustus, Dee was an ambiguous figure “about whom all sorts of wild stories circulated from his earliest years” (Wilson 2011: 87). Dee was an owner of an unprecedentedly large collection of books at his Mortlake library. In his passion for collecting old manuscripts he indeed resembles characters supposedly modelled on him. For both Prospero and Faustus, the key to knowledge and, thus, power and control lies in books. Quite ironically, it was John Dee who was the first to coin the phrase “British Empire” and use his influence with the Queen to promote geographical expansion (Wilson 2011: 91). Prospero’s unperturbed, hostile takeover of the island is “an early exemplar of ‘the British empire’” (Wilson 2011: 91). Nevertheless, numerous critics defend Prospero’s actions and read them as a restoration of the previously disrupted order. Unlike Faustus, who eventually uses his powers to indulge his and his spectators’ fancies, Prospero is often read as a white magician in critical accounts. Kermode, contrasting Prospero with Caliban’s mother Sycorax, writes: “[s]he is a practitioner of ‘natural’ magic, a goetist who exploited the universal sympathies, but whose power is limited by the fact that she could command, as a rule, only devils and the lowest orders of spirit. Prospero, on the other hand, is a theurgist, whose Art is to achieve supremacy over the natural world by holy magic. The Neo-Platonic mage studies the harmonic relationship of the elementary, celestial, and intellectual worlds ...” (Kermode 1967: xl). Stephen Orgel rejects Kermode’s elaboration on white versus black magic (Orgel 1987: 19–23). The distinction does not seem to matter as, in practice, Prospero’s magic serves to attain control and supremacy over the island and its inhabitants. When chastised by Prospero, Caliban admits: “I must obey. His art is of such power / It would control my dam’s god, Setebos” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.374–375). Caliban is defenceless in the face of Prospero’s magic though he himself is a son of a powerful witch. Kermode tries to attribute Prospero’s magic with ‘sacred’ qualities when he insists: “... the point here is that his Art, being the Art of supernatural virtue which belongs to the redeemed world of civility and learning, is the antithesis of the black magic of Sycorax” (Kermode 1967: xli). Yet, as mentioned before, it is this obsessive focus on the perfect world, the return to the golden age, that leads Prospero to underestimate the characters surrounding him. It seems that the distinction between “white” or “black” magic, or, in other words, “good” and “bad” seems superficial at best. Such clear-cut valuations are an object of scorn for Nietzsche in his philosophy. It seems that Prospero not only underestimates human potential for evil but also fails to see that what may be good or evil wholly depends on the perspective one takes. However, it seems that Kermode is right in seeing Sycorax as a “natural” magician, as it is the world of Sycorax that accommodates both low as well as high impulses of human nature.

2.3. “Till thou didst seek to violate / The honour of my child” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.349–350): Prospero, Caliban, and Miranda

Nietzschean division into Apollonian and Dionysian elements seems more than tempting in the description of Prospero's character and his relations with other characters, fully outlined in *The Tempest* or mentioned only in passing. In the recent years many critics have pointed out the importance of Sycorax, the mother of Caliban, whose voice was silenced in Shakespeare's play.<sup>13</sup> Marina Warner believes that the contrast between Sycorax and Prospero "lies rather in the difference between metamorphosis and stasis, between a condition of continuing somatic, elemental and unruly mutation and a steady-state identity" (Warner 2000: 98). This conflict indeed infuses Shakespeare's play as it predominantly treats on the fixed, almost fossilized identity suddenly shaken to the core by difference and otherness. The mind of an Elizabethan colonist is disturbed by the multifaceted richness of the New World and thrown out of balance. Also, it seems to be the mind of a scholar fixated on the stars above, who cannot bring himself to embrace human nature in its fullness, accepting its baser elements as well. The only way in which shattered illusions can be glued together is by stripping the new world of its humanity – by shifting one's own uneasiness and fear onto the other. In his first philosophical work *The Birth of Tragedy* (2000 [1872]), Nietzsche outlined the development of the Greek tragedy as a fusion of two opposing elements; the Apollonian element, encapsulating order and harmony, as well as the Dionysian, standing for the chaotic and ecstatic. *The Birth of Tragedy* heralds Nietzsche's wider understanding of creativity and greatness that are born out of conflict and struggle.<sup>14</sup> As Nietzsche writes himself: "the continuing development of art is tied to the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian: just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, which are engaged in a continual struggle interrupted only by temporary periods of reconciliation" (Nietzsche 2000 [1872]: 19). In Shakespeare's *Tempest* it is the Apollonian Prospero that embodies a fixed identity of the old world with his focus on control and order, while Sycorax encapsulates the Dionysian world of constant shape-shifting. Caliban, then, unwillingly becomes a victim of this strife between conflicting impulses.

The early accounts of the so called first encounters mirror Shakespeare's Prospero/Caliban dynamics. Interestingly enough, the souring of their relationship

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13 For instance, Marina Warner (2000) wrote extensively on Sycorax, e.g., in "'The Foul Witch' and Her 'Freckled Whelp': Circean Mutations in the New World". She has also given voice to Sycorax in her novel *Indigo* (1992). Patricia Seed also underscores the importance of Sycorax (Seed 2000: 98).

14 As Douglas Smith explains: "For Nietzsche, the alleged 'serenity' of Greek culture is not some happy prelapsarian state, and so the product of an original innocence which has since been lost, but rather the end result of a difficult and protracted struggle to come to terms with the suffering caused by life, the hard-won triumph of Apollonian form over Dionysian insight" (Smith 2000: xii). In Nietzsche's later philosophy, in which Nietzsche writes more extensively of Dionysus, the Greek god becomes more of "the synthesis of the two forces" (Kaufmann 1974: 129).

also follows a pattern found in some source texts. As Seed writes: “initial hospitality is followed by a ‘wicked deed’ of the native (Caliban), resulting in the expected punishment” (Seed 2000: 204). Prospero rationalizes and justifies the cruelty with which he treats Caliban, when he exclaims: “Thou most lying slave, / Whom stripes may move, not kindness, I have used thee, / Filth as thou art, with humane care, and lodged thee / In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate / The honour of my child” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.346–350). Critics have been unanimous throughout the centuries in the unequivocal assessment of this event: Prospero prevented Caliban from raping Miranda. However, what is interesting is the fact the words “rape”, “to rape” or “to ravish” are never used once in the text of the play. Instead, one only learns that Caliban sought to “violate” Miranda’s honour. The extent of Miranda’s fury that is levelled at Caliban could suggest that he indeed had assaulted her. After all, she calls him a “savage”, that had no language at all, “a thing most brutish” from “vile race” that was “deservedly confin’d into this rock” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.357–364). Yet, none of the characters mention any coercion or use of force. In a patriarchal society, which Elizabethan England definitely was, a woman’s chastity was of utmost importance.<sup>15</sup> Although Prospero’s choice of a husband for Miranda is Ferdinand, the father makes sure that they cannot consummate their love before the marriage actually takes place. Hence, a violation of a woman’s honour may very well refer to consensual sex. Tentative as this idea may be, on the basis of the play alone, it is possible to construe that Caliban’s attempt at an intercourse with Miranda was no rape attempt at all.

The disgust both Prospero and Miranda feel at the notion is rather indicative of colonial relations. As Seed explains:

[t]he theme of dangerous sexual relations between colonizer and colonized reflects a final distinctively English colonial anxiety – one that stretches across several continents and several centuries. This preoccupation with preventing sexual connections (or even the threat of such contact) between English women and native men ... has remained an enduring and often frightening characteristic of former British colonies where it has continued to justify displays of violence.

(Seed 2000: 211)

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15 The statistical data on pre-marital pregnancies in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries convincingly illustrate that young girls’ chastity was well-guarded. As Lawrence Stone points out: “the level of recorded pre-nuptial pregnancies in England was low in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and declined lower still in the 17<sup>th</sup> century ...” (Stone 1977: 609). Moreover, Antonia Fraser in the chapter “Unlearned Virgins” of her classic book on the condition of women in the 17<sup>th</sup> century describes a sharp contrast between the education of brothers and sisters, in which boys would be let free to do far more in contrast to girls who “were kept confined at home” (Fraser 2011 [1984]: loc. 2975). Miranda’s situation seems very similar to the circumstances of numerous young girls of the 17<sup>th</sup> century whose fathers valued their daughter’s chastity more than their education.

Interestingly, Caliban comments on his own motivation by saying: “O ho, O ho! Would ’t had been done! / Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.351–353). He admits that part of his wish was to “people” the island with creatures of his race. This seems to be an interesting paradox as numerous pamphlets and source texts from the period show that it was the primary ambition of the English to populate the lands across the Atlantic (Seed 2000: 205). As Seed claims: “Shakespeare therefore imputed to Caliban a motive for the attempted rape that reflects the specifically English colonial desire for ‘peopling’”. Caliban is rendered guilty of what were in reality English colonial ambitions” (Seed 2000: 205). This is indeed a very common procedure that can be also found in numerous texts that found its way into the American literary canon. For instance, hugely popular captivity narratives often record the ordeals of women captured by Native Americans. Such accounts were popular between the late 17<sup>th</sup> century up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of them were actually written by women like Mary Rowlandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), while others by male ministers, like Cotton Mather’s *The Captivity of Hannah Dustan* (1696–97). Though presented as records of true events, captivity narratives included fictional elements.<sup>16</sup> They also quickly became tools of anti-Indian propaganda, thanks to which the theft of land could be justified in the name of religion as well as the protection of women against the “savages”. In numerous captivity narratives women found themselves unable to perform their “natural” roles that, in reality, were proscribed to them by patriarchal society, such as being dressed modestly or guarding their chastity against “inappropriate” sexual conduct (Lewis 2016). Captivity narratives did not only inspire anti-Indian sentiment but also reinforced the patriarchal grasp on female narratives that were supposed to present female obedience and absolute chastity.<sup>17</sup> In this light the turbulent relation between Miranda and Caliban may be seen as the first fictional presentation of such an encounter between a white

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16 Interestingly, also much later historical accounts of women kidnappings seem to lack sufficient objectivity. For instance, the accounts of The Pequot War (1634–1638) that detail the abduction of two girls from Wethersfield on 23 April 1637 differ in the presentation of the treatment of the girls by the natives. Gardener writes that the girls were “almost naked” when rescued by the Dutch, thus implying that they had been abused (Gardener 1901: 147). On the other hand, Winthrop writes that: “no instance of the worst violence to women has ever been told of our aborigines” (Winthrop 1972 [1853]: 199). Gardener’s description seems to be purposefully vague in order to suggest a rather different interpretation of the events. The difference in the interpretation of events seems to stem from purely ideological reasons though. Gardener tried to defend the Pequot war, while Winthrop was a promoter of the Puritans.

17 I owe my acknowledgments to Dr Elżbieta Wilczyńska who pointed out to me the affinity between the portrayal of women in captivity narratives and the possible interpretation of Miranda/Caliban encounter.

woman and a native. In *The Tempest*, Miranda is clearly commodified as Prospero's property, while Caliban is the one who dares to try and take it without permission. As Lewis aptly points out, in a patriarchal society, kidnapping of a woman is a personal attack on males in society, which calls for retaliation (Lewis 2016). By accusing Caliban of an attempt at her honour, Prospero purposefully animalizes and dehumanizes Caliban. As already mentioned, the play does not unequivocally speak of "rape", but it is clear that Caliban is guilty of a theft attempt. He is also guilty of his sensuality and desire of Miranda.

Therefore, it is Caliban's desire that becomes a justification for Prospero not only to punish him, but to take away his island, turn him into a slave, and torment him on a daily basis. Prospero's logic follows the argumentation one can find in the 17<sup>th</sup> century propaganda texts, encouraging the English to move to Virginia. Robert Gray in his *A Good Speed to Virginia* (1609) outlines:

... although the Lord hath given the earth to the children of men, yet this earth which is man's fee simple by deed of gift from God, is the greater part of it possessed and wrongfully usurped by wild beasts, and unreasonable creatures, or by brutish savages which by reason of their godless ignorance and blasphemous idolatry are worse than those beasts which are of most wild and savage nature.

(Gray 1998 [1609]: 529)

One can see that Gray's rhetoric sounds very much like Miranda's chastisement of Caliban. Even the choice of words is the same; "savage", "brutish", "beasts". Gray also writes: "these savages ... wander up and down the country, without any law or government, being led only by their own lusts and sensuality..." (Gray 1998 [1609]: 531). Prospero's argumentation, in which the following of one's instincts is seen as a grave sin that relegates native inhabitants of America to the position of beasts, clearly mirrors Gray's text.<sup>18</sup> Gray uses Christianity to justify the theft of native lands. It seems that it is a Nietzschean framework that helps to read a similar message in between the lines of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Nietzsche, a vehement critic of Christianity, deeply believed that Christian morality, in its insistence on the division between the saved and the damned, is a far cry from the discourse of love and empathy. Kaufmann writes of Nietzsche's revaluation that it all about the "discovery that our morality is, *by its own standards*, poisonously immoral: that Christian love is the mimicry of impotent hatred; that most unselfishness is but a particularly vicious form of selfishness; and that *ressentiment* is at the core of our morals" (Kaufmann 1974: 113). This is

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<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to remember that Ariel is also Prospero's slave, though he is not "guilty" of any crime. Here the gratitude for freeing Ariel from the spell of Sycorax becomes a justification for a different form of enslavement. Ariel demands his liberty, having performed duties towards Prospero, who deludes him over the course of the play.

definitely true for Prospero, who takes advantage of Caliban's hospitality and later on sadistically demonstrates petty wickedness towards him. In one of his monologues Caliban describes his daily suffering:

His spirits hear me,  
And yet I needs must curse. But they'll nor pinch,  
Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me i' th' mire,  
Nor lead me like a firebrand in the dark  
Out of my way, unless he bid 'em. But  
For every trifle are they set upon me,  
Sometimes like apes, that mow and chatter at me  
And after bite me; then like hedgehogs, which  
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount  
Their pricks at my footfall. Sometime am I  
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues  
Do hiss me into madness.

(*The Tempest*, 2.2.3–14)

Caliban may be a savage in a Nietzschean understanding of the word, namely “a beast of prey”.<sup>19</sup> However, in this case Prospero is far from Nietzsche's overman. In the Nietzsche's vision only embracing human nature in its fullness can be a step to self-overcoming and the development of the overman. For Nietzsche those who embrace their beastly nature are “these healthiest of all-tropical monsters” and are infinitely better than those who would hypocritically veil or try to expel their impulses (Nietzsche 2002 [1886]: 84–85). The terms “beast of prey” and “men of prey” describe human beings that follow their natural affects instead of repressing their impulses, veiling them as “morality”. Caliban follows his natural instincts and is capable of identifying them. Unfortunately, he is denied any possibility for a creative sublimation of these instincts. Greenblatt suggests that Caliban is a representation of the Wild Man that can be found in medieval and Renaissance literature. The Wild Man, a human being that had been lost in the forest as an infant, represents humanity untouched by civilisation. The Wild Man of the Woods, or in classical Latin *silvaticus* is both a natural man of the forest (sylvan, salvage man) and a wild beast (savage). He encapsulates “the specific anxieties underlying the three securities supposedly provided by the specifically Christian institutions of civilized life: the securities of sex (as organized by the institution of the family), sustenance (as provided by the political, social, and economic institutions), and salvation (as provided by the Church)” (Greenblatt 1990: 28). Caliban seems to disrupt this triptych of the Elizabethan orthodoxy in his embrace of instincts without the securities of organized social life.

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19 The terms “beasts of prey” and “men of prey” come from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*.



3.4. “If thou dost break her virgin-knot before...” (*The Tempest*, 4.1.15): Prospero, Miranda, and Ferdinand

Caliban seems, then, to be a symbolic representation of the Dionysian world of “intoxication” and chaos, unbridled by social constraints. Prospero’s disgust at a free outpour of instincts can be clearly visible in his treatment of Caliban. However, his distrust of Ferdinand also demonstrates Prospero’s scorn for the “all-too-human” aspects of existence.<sup>20</sup> Berger points out that Prospero is “more vindictive than he needs to be” (1990: 151). This statement is true for both Caliban and Ferdinand. As the author claims, Prospero “seems to have an ethical as well as a practical and social aversion to labour: Caliban and Ferdinand do not simply do his chores for him; he makes it clear that they do them as punishment and as an ordeal of degradation. Work is the evil man’s burden, a cavalier attitude I find consonant with Prospero’s general lack of interest in the active and common life, consonant also with his Neoplatonic preference for more refined labours of the contemplative life” (Berger 1990: 155). It appears that Prospero finds day-to-day cares of existence beyond his interests but he is also determined to nip in the bud any dangerous desires Ferdinand might harbour for Miranda. He does that through hard and physical labour of transporting wooden logs. Ferdinand admits to himself that it is a “mean task” that “[w]ould be as heavy ... as odious” if it was not for the prospect of seeing Miranda afterwards (*The Tempest*, 3.1.4–5). The task is supposed to humiliate and degrade Ferdinand, but, paradoxically, the baseness of physical work mirrors the baseness of the desires Prospero means to expel from Ferdinand’s mind. Berger mocks the extreme lengths to which Prospero is ready to go to protect Miranda’s chastity when he claims that: “... his ‘trials’ of Ferdinand’s love and his warning about temperance seem excessive and unnecessary” (Berger 1990: 179). Indeed Prospero’s hyperdefensiveness against Dionysian impulses can be seen in his warning directed at Ferdinand when he “magnanimously” offers his daughter to him as wife:

Then, as my gift and thine own acquisition  
Worthily purchased, take my daughter. But  
If thou dost break her virgin-knot before  
All sanctimonious ceremonies may  
With full and holy rite be ministered,  
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall  
To make this contract grow; but barren hate,

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20 The use of the adjective “all-too-human” is a direct reference to the title of Nietzsche’s book. Nietzsche was anti-essentialist and he understood human subjectivity within the frame of conflicting physiological drives and instincts for which he proposed an umbrella term “will to power”.

Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew  
 The union of your bed with weeds so loathly  
 That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed,  
 As Hymen's lamps shall light you.

(*The Tempest*, 4.1.13–23)

Apparently the prospect of pre-nuptial sex is so unacceptable for him that he does not hesitate to threaten Ferdinand and bluntly wish him (and his daughter too) unhappy married life if the intercourse should take place before the ceremony. Nietzsche has a lot to say about “the diabolizing of Eros” and he blames Christianity for its outward rejection of physical passions. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche writes:

[t]he passions become evil and malicious if they are regarded as evil and malicious. Thus Christianity has succeeded in transforming Eros and Aphrodite great powers capable of idealisation into diabolical kobolds and phantoms by means of the torments it introduces into the consciences of believers whenever they are excited sexually.<sup>21</sup>

(Nietzsche 2006 [1881]: 45)

Prospero's ominous threats levelled at Ferdinand seem to illustrate Nietzsche's argument. Prospero interprets the passions as evil and he plainly wants Ferdinand to feel tormented and guilty just like Caliban. There is no middle ground here; even desire sublimated into the guise of love appears to Prospero as equally suspect. As Berger aptly points out, Prospero “sees only untampered chastity or intemperate lust, one or another kind of nunnery, possible in the actual world; the extremes may be tempered nowhere but on the magic island and in the masque where love is guided by gods” (Berger 1990: 175). In it is, in fact, the masque that even further illustrates Prospero's Apollonian outlook on existence.

The masque, staged for the lovers by Ariel, seems to be a further warning against intemperance and passion. It features the God's messenger Iris who summons Juno, here clearly the goddess of home and hearth as well as the guarantor of healthy birth. Juno, in turn, summons Ceres, the goddess of fertility. The goddesses are to bless “a contract of true love” (*The Tempest*, 4.1.84). However, Venus, the goddess of sexual passion, and Cupid, her son are excluded from the gathering on purpose. As Ceres explains: “[s]ince they plot/ The means that dusky Dis my daughter got, / Her and her blind boy's scandal's company / I have forsworn” (*The Tempest*, 4.1.88–91). The marriage of Miranda and

21 Interestingly enough, the quotation comes from Nietzsche's aphorism 76 “To think a thing evil means to make it evil” from *Daybreak Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (1881), in which Nietzsche refers to the example of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in order to praise Shakespeare's courage in praising love and opposing “Christian gloominess” (Nietzsche 2006 [1881]: 45).

Ferdinand serves Prospero's political interests and, in this sense, it is a business arrangement. The instant attraction the young people feel is useful in the carrying out of Prospero's plan. Yet, the natural lust they might feel seems an unnecessary obstacle or as Iris dubs it "wanton charm" (*The Tempest*, 4.1.95). Berger summarizes the message of the masque in saying: "[m]arried fertility is praised on the model of the securely determined round of nature" (Berger 1990: 175). So in the pastoral masque the natural consequences of marital life can only be palatable in the form of honourable love within the bounds of marriage, while love needs to be cooled by restraint and devoid of lust. Nietzsche mockingly exclaims: "[m]ust everything that one has to combat, that one has to keep within bounds or on occasion banish totally from one's mind, always have to be called evil! Is it not the way of common souls always to think an enemy must be evil! And ought one to call Eros an enemy?" (Nietzsche 2006 [1881]: 45). Nietzsche's irony perfectly captures Prospero's aversion towards nature devoid of any social constraints (Caliban) or even a tiny departure in the socially-secured rules of conduct (Ferdinand). Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* compares the development of great art to "the duality of the sexes" (Nietzsche 2000 [1872]: 19). It is no coincidence that he uses the metaphor of intercourse to illustrate the war in which greatness can be forged. Just like great art is born out of conflict so is human nature a seat of constant struggle. Prospero's incessant denial of the bodily aspect of existence does not only illustrate the Neo-Platonic chasm between the idealized world of dreamy fancy and the crude actuality, but also his inability to fuse the Apollonian world of dream with the Dionysian chaos of the passions.

### 3.5. "I fear'd / Lest I might anger thee" (*The Tempest*, 4.1.169): Prospero and Ariel

Finally, to round off the discussion on Prospero and his relationships with other characters on the island it seems necessary to cast a glance at his relationship with Ariel, "an airy spirit". I believe that Ariel's presence is the key to reading Prospero's Apollonian nature. Berger believes that just like Lear's fool, Ariel best "reflects his master's mind" (Berger 1990: 154). Ariel frequently manifests honest enthusiasm when dealing with Prospero's tasks. In the opening of the play, when asked; "Hast thou, spirit, / Performed to point the tempest that I bade thee?", he joyfully answers "To every article" (*The Tempest* 1.2.194–195). Ariel seems to genuinely boast of his enterprises and take pride in the command of magic, even if the tasks are given to him by Prospero. Ariel appears to delight in art for art's sake, while his existence is solely justified by his investment in magic. In this sense he encapsulates the Nietzschean vision of art and life. Nietzsche states frequently in *The Birth of Tragedy* that "only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* are

existence and the world *justified* to eternity”<sup>22</sup> (Nietzsche 2000 [1872]: 38). Ariel stands for the world of magic and art that Prospero is so deeply invested in, too. The airy spirit symbolizes, then, the Apollonian world of dream. When Prospero delivers his speech rounded off by famous words; “[w]e are such stuff / As dreams are made on; / and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep”, he visualizes the spiritual world of Ariel he himself so longs for, too (*The Tempest*, 4.4.156–158). Berger imagines Ariel as a creature isolated from tangible reality of life and only momentarily suspended in the world of human affairs through the indebtedness to Prospero. He claims that: “[Ariel] acknowledges as his own no things of darkness but owls and bats” (Berger 1990: 152). Because he seems to be so excluded from human cares he lacks the understanding and, above all, interest in human passions or impulses. Berger aptly summarizes his character by saying: “Ariel, then, is a recreative and self-delighting spirit whose art and magic are forms of play, a spirit freed by a magician whose presence on the island owes not a little to his own self-delighting recreative impulse, his own playing with arts and magic. Spirit and master have much in common: each has both a histrionic and a rhetorical bent which he delights to indulge, and each savours his performances to the full” (Berger 1990: 152). Ariel and Prospero may indeed share the delight in art as well as their total ignorance of human actual affairs. However, Ariel insistence on his liberation cannot and should not be overlooked.

Ariel reminds Prospero of his promised freedom, while Prospero dismisses his plea by brushing it aside: “How now? Moody?” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.244). In this exchange Ariel presents Prospero’s logical argumentation in favour of his freedom and reminds him of a promise he had made. As a retort to Ariel’s sound argument, Prospero refers to the traumatic events of his previous captivity by Sycorax. Berger dismisses this exchange as insignificant, capitalizing on Ariel’s genuine delight in performing “magical” duties for Prospero. Nevertheless, acknowledging Ariel’s need of freedom, he believes his delight in the art itself far exceeds his actual longing for liberty. He states: “[n]o doubt, as we learn a moment later, Ariel’s enthusiasm owes something to his eagerness to get out from under Prospero and be free. Yet at the same time we respond to his gratuitous delight in putting on a good show and describing it in brave rhetoric” (Berger 1990: 153). I would argue that, despite the shared love for art, there is a double standard here. Prospero demands that Ariel appreciate the lesser form of slavery he offers to the spirit. By administering tasks Ariel may revel in, he alleviates the situation, creating a veneer of smooth cooperation. Nevertheless, this does not change the essence of Ariel’s circumstances, namely his condition of a slave.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Emphasis here is Nietzsche’s.

23 Ariel’s condition could also be compared to the position of an indentured servant as Prospero does not totally deny him his freedom but rather keeps on postponing the date of his liberation.

Caliban is administered the tasks he himself finds hard and tedious, while Ariel is offered an illusion of freedom in the form of an escape into art and magic.<sup>24</sup> However, whatever their past or present needs are, the fact is that they are both denied freedom they long for. I would argue that, as much as cruelty towards Caliban is evident, there is also a certain calculated wickedness in Prospero's treatment of Ariel. Prospero shares Ariel's "escapist" leanings and lack of interest in the baser aspects of life. He is characterized by the Apollonian obsession with appearances, rather than the harsh actuality of life. Nietzsche, a keen observer of human nature and precursor of modern psychology, perfectly understands that one cannot exist without the other and the combat with bodily passions is not only futile but also dangerous. It is Prospero's outward denial of the body, the fear of the Dionysian ecstasy that results in his studied defensiveness.

#### 4. Conclusion: The Overman?

On the surface, if one were to follow a more conventional reading of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Prospero emerges as a first-hand candidate for a Nietzschean *Übermensch*. He is an intellectual, a man of books who loves knowledge more than his earthly power. It is the meticulous study that helps him to possess the command of magic, positioning him as a Renaissance Mage. As such he seems to organize the chaos of his passions into an ordered system of ideas. Taking advantage of his magic, he is capable of regaining power after his dethroning, pardoning his villain brother and bringing about a necessary reconciliation. However, *The Tempest*, when read against numerous source texts, presents not only a Magus figure but also a colonist, subtle in his calculated cruelty and obsessive control. It is the re-visioning in the light of Nietzsche's key philosophical ideas that paradoxically brings out the worst in Prospero. Prospero has often been interpreted as a lover of art but, when confronted with Nietzsche's revaluation of art's origin and essence, the Mage emerges as a hater of human nature in its fullness. Prospero is more than just a Neo-Platonic escapist, who professes classic dichotomy of body and spirit, favouring the latter. Prospero's attitude towards Ariel illustrates his longing for "the Golden Age", a pastoral and ultimately escapist vision. However, it is his treatment of Caliban that captures Prospero's deeply ingrained disgust at the earthly and lowly aspects of human nature that he himself tries so desperately to expel from his and his daughter's life. It seems that all Prospero's frustrations and repressed passions burst into his

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I am grateful to one of the reviewers of this paper for pointing out this idea to me.

24 A reference to Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête* ("A Tempest") from 1969 is hard to avoid here. The play, being probably the first postcolonial rewriting of Shakespeare's *Tempest* draws a sharp contrast between Ariel (presented as a non-violent mulatto) and Caliban (a black slave, outwardly complaining about his plight).

outward cruelty towards Caliban. According to Nietzsche, a truly powerful man is the one who is passionate and capable of organizing the tumult of his passions into a creative power in the process of self-overcoming (Kaufmann 1974: 312).<sup>25</sup> A truly powerful man would never stoop to petty violence. The suffering of others may be incidental in the process of self-overcoming but it may never be calculated (Kaufmann 1974: 194). Nietzsche's life project was all about demasking and unveiling hypocrisy. It is thus no wonder that his texts help to unpack meanings hidden behind traditionally-conceived moral frameworks. Therefore, in a Nietzschean framework Prospero emerges as a weak, emasculated man, burdened by a morality only veiled as love, while the brutality of the colonial enterprise speaks to us through Caliban's penetrating and powerful poetry. At the close of the play Prospero says of Caliban: "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (*The Tempest*, 5.1.330). Some critics have interpreted this ambiguous admission of Prospero's as an act of taking responsibility for Caliban (Warner 2000: 99). However, one may also give free rein to one's imagination and assume that, in this acceptance of darkness, Prospero acknowledges the darkness of his own passions. In Nietzsche's view, only by embracing one's natural impulses and inclinations can one ever start the project of one's self-overcoming. Though it is Prospero who is the protagonist of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, he departs the island, leaving Caliban behind. It seems that this act on the part of Shakespeare, metaphorically, laid the foundations for the aforementioned "Age of Caliban" (Bloom 1992: 1). Against Bloom's apparent dissatisfaction at such a development, one may only applaud that nowadays the voice of Caliban resonates as loudly as Prospero's. Nehamas writes that Nietzsche's perspectivism "is both something that must be understood and something that suggests that understanding may be impossible" (Nehamas 1985: 2). I believe that Shakespeare's play is forever suspended in the realm of Nietzschean perspectivism. One feels strangely amazed that this English play coinciding with the dawn of English colonialism presents us an island where the grass is both "lush and lusty" as well as "tawny" and nothing is what it is (*The Tempest*, 2.1.51–52).

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25 Against numerous critics of Walter Kaufmann's readings of Nietzsche, his succinct definition of an otherwise very complex idea of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* ("overman" is the translation proposed by Kaufmann himself and the only one that stuck long enough to be an accepted and "official" translation into English) seems most appropriate for the needs of the present article. In the recent years many influential re-readings of Nietzsche's philosophy emerged such as Hollingdale (2001 [1999]), Nehamas (1985), Young (2010), or a selection of detailed studies of Nietzsche's philosophy by Richard Schacht. Nevertheless, despite the growing body of scholarly works on Nietzsche, Kaufmann's classic work remains authoritative and provides a neat summary of the key Nietzschean ideas. Nietzsche, being an anti-systemic thinker, is notoriously hard to unpack. Kaufmann's comprehensive outline best suits the needs of the present article.



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