

Amanda Di Ponio
Seminar Abstract SAA 2020
New World, New Approaches

‘reserved for her Majestie and the *English* nation’:
Sir Walter Raleigh’s Guiana Projects and the Exploitation of the Other

From 1595, Sir Walter Raleigh launched the first of four ventures to Guiana, the Orinoco basin of what is known today as Venezuela. The first was commanded by Sir Walter Raleigh, Lieutenant Laurence Keymis, whose *Relation of the Second Voyage to Guiana* (1596) was penned thereafter, and Thomas Masham; the second venture, in 1604, was commanded by Charles Leigh, who died in Guiana a year later, and Keymis; a third, in 1608, was led by Robert Harcourt, whose *Relation of a Voyage to Guiana* (1613), written 5 years after he set out to settle his colony, was included in Samuel Purchas’s *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1613), which contained manuscripts left behind by promoter of English colonization, Richard Hakluyt, who wrote the influential *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589), when he passed in 1616; and a fourth venture, in 1617, which ended in Raleigh’s disgrace and eventual execution, and Keymis’s suicide.

John Holmes, in “The Guiana Projects: Imperial and Colonial Ideologies in Raleigh and Purchas” (2005), asserts that these projects are among the least-known of British colonial ventures, in part because they were the least successful. Nonetheless, although motivated by differing ideologies, the two texts “appear as a microcosm of Anglo-Saxon overseas expansion not only in the Renaissance but throughout modern imperial history” (2). Whereas I agree with Holmes’s reading that compared with Purchas, Raleigh’s rhetorical emphasis is less about acquiring gold and more about the expansion of English territory, vying for Renaissance Humanism, and thusly valorizing the English as “‘good’ imperialists, benevolent and progressive” (8) especially when juxtaposed against the brutality of the Spanish – and the French, Belgians, and Portuguese –, ultimately, the narrative is not a means of seeing the subaltern natives as akin to the English, but fundamentally as Other. And while a cursory reading may present Raleigh as more benevolent than racist, his indulgence in difference is fundamentally an example of exploitation through cultural hegemony.

This paper seeks to explore this exploitation narrative – fettered in orientalism while seemingly cloaked in reverence – and its influence in establishing an attitude towards English colonization that is characterized by 1. a salvation narrative to counter the barbarity of the Spanish, and 2. objectification and fetishization of the Other that is examined in both public and private theatre in plays, such as Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and performances, such as Ben Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness*.

‘Discovery of a new region here’: London’s Commercial Foreign Encounters

Liz Fox, UMass Amherst

In early modern plays, audiences were frequently encouraged to image London and its neighborhoods as strange and exotic new worlds. In Ben Jonson’s *Entertainment at Britain’s Bourse* (1609) the Key Keeper greets the audience at the door of the New Exchange as if it were a strange and foreign land: “I think you scarce know where you are now, nor by my troth can I tell you, more than that you may seem to be upon some land discovery of a new region here” (6-9). Upon entering a shop with an abundance of commodities that render the shop a commercial Wunderkammer, the Shop Boy greets the spectators with the familiar London cry, “What do you lack? What is’t you buy?” (50). The commodities in the shop are a cornucopia of luxury goods made available through the England’s global trade networks: Chinese porcelains, trays with Turkish varnishes, “umbrellas made of the wing of the Indian butterfly,” rugs crafted from parakeet feathers, and fans “of flying fishes’ fins” (117-118). In this essay, I investigate the characterization of London’s New Exchange as a strange and exotic land that permeates national boundaries via commercial trade networks and grafts the strange onto the familiar. By examining how this and other performances encourage London audiences to imagine their city anew and position new world commodities to facilitate imaginative expansion, I aim to demonstrate the ways in which performance reflects and participates in the hybridizing effects of the early modern global economy.

The Brave New World in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "'Tis new to thee'" (5.1.184)

Unlike most of his plays, *The Tempest* has no known single source, though, as has been well documented, it has a richly allusive relationship to the works of, among others, Virgil, Ovid, and Strachey. Claims have been made for the singular importance of each: Virgil (Hamilton), Ovid (Bate), and Strachey (Alden T. Vaughan), but few critics are able to determine how, taken together, they signify. There are, of course, readings of the play that more comprehensively link it to these texts, as colonialist (Hulme) or grotesque (Warner). This paper aims to examine further the intertextual connections between *The Tempest* and allusion to the works of Virgil, Ovid, and Strachey from the perspective of an intertextual *longue durée*, if I may. That is, temporally, Ovid's Virgil and Shakespeare's Strachey, despite each pair's historical distance from the other, are contemporaneous during each performance of the play. And, geographically, Rome's founding and the Virginia's settlement, though half-way round the known world, become proximate New World accounts. In this way, New World traces of the *Aeneid*, *Metamorphosis*, and Strachey's "A True Reportory" alluded to in *The Tempest*—all, successively, become commentaries on each work's New World concerns. Just as Ovid's "little Aeneid" (*Met.* Bks. 13-14) critically engages Virgil's grand epic, so, for example, *The Tempest*'s sea-storm evaluates Strachey's, and Miranda's "little tempest" addresses Prospero's. From this perspective, *The Tempest* presents, in these intertextual associations, a New World with nothing new about it.

John Mucciolo

December 2019

SAA 2020

New Worlds New Approaches

Caro Pirri

ABSTRACT: “Theatricality’s Others”

My paper identifies a period of English history between 1570 and 1620 – bracketed by the search for the Northwest Passage and Jamestown’s Starving Time – when the New World project was popularly regarded as a failed enterprise. It shows how like Anthony Munday’s *Chryso-Thriambos* or *Triumph of Gold* (1611) and Thomas Middleton’s *Triumphs of Truth* (1613), native industry is posed as a solution to settler failure. In these triumphs, indigenous figures – surrounded by spices and fruits – appear as emblematic personations of prosperity and virtue and signal the future success of the colonial enterprise: an English echo of the Spanish plantation model. These festive representations of indigeneity crucially contributed to technologies of racialized personation in drama, where indigenous figures retain an emblematic and festive association – identified more by their properties rather than their persons. More broadly, my talk will consider characters that have been marginal to theatrical knowledge making – theatricality’s others, themselves racialized – seeing them as the source for a new conventional vocabulary. Characters like Ariel in *The Tempest*, and Munday and Middleton’s laboring indigenous figures, are strangers to (and estranged from) the language of English dramatic convention. But their gestures, speech, and stage work help to set the scene, even if they do not speak or act with theatrical authority. Their theatrical labor recasts our understanding of where theatrical knowledge comes from and how new fictional worlds – from *The Tempest*’s placeless archipelago to Jonson’s London – are built.

William Porter
SAA 2020
New Worlds, New Approaches

[My apologies—I accidentally uploaded this so that only I could view it]

The Green World of Empire: *As You Like It* and *Merchant of Venice*

Renaissance primitivism was shaped by the marriage of humanist speculations about the historical origins of human societies with ethnographic descriptions of the New World. The sixteenth-century vogue for pastoral themes involved an imaginative synthesis of these influences, cropping up in literary works from domestic pastoral poetry to far-flung romance. One aspect of what Northrop Frye named the “green world” is the opportunity these alternative spaces provide to imagine novel forms of economic life, understood as historically original, rooted in nature, and glimpsed through the ethnography of cultural difference. Literary pastoralism and New World discourse were mutually constitutive: rural fantasy commingled with colonial fantasy, and both were crucial in shaping cultural understanding of the epochal economic transformations occurring in the early modern Atlantic world. This paper will explore instances of pastoralism that operate according to a primitivist impulse to naturalize economic life, paying particular attention to aspects that have some bearing on the emergence of colonial capitalism in the New World. To this end, I will analyze *As You Like It* and *Merchant of Venice* as plays that employ pastoralism to interrogate the intersection of nature, property, culture, and dispossession, that would come to dominate the European imagination of colonial systems.

M a r i a S h m y g o l

University of Manchester

New Worlds, Old Conflicts: William Davenant's *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1558) and *The History of Sir Francis Drake* (1559)

My paper explores the representations of the New World and Anglo-Spanish conflict in William Davenant's operatic-dramatic entertainments, *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1658) and *The History of Sir Francis Drake* (1659), written and staged during the final years of the Protectorate when public plays were still banned. The anti-Spanish sentiment of these entertainments not only speaks to the Protectorate's foreign policy and colonial ambitions, but was also used by Davenant as a means of bolstering his arguments for the revival of public entertainments. He identifies Spanish violence in the New World as material suitable for 'moral representation', arguing that 'the Spaniard's barbarous conquests in the West Indies and ... their severall cruelties there exercised upon the subject of this nation' could be held up as exemplars of bad colonial practice. In *The Cruelty* Davenant invokes the history of Spanish colonial violence in order to then offer a corrective, nationalistic vision of a future where the English triumph over the Iberian aggressors, placing the English firmly into a salvation narrative as 'good' colonisers.

I situate the uses of national myth, history, and the revival of historical national figures such as Drake in these entertainments within the larger context of the Anglo-Spanish conflict of 1554-1660 and the failures of Oliver Cromwell's 'Western Design' in the Caribbean. Likewise, I attend to the fact that it is largely a preoccupation with the New World as a space to be 'liberated' from the Spanish that provided fertile ground for Davenant to 'excuse' the creation of his entertainments. My paper will also briefly consider Davenant's entertainments as precursors of John Dryden and Robert Howard's *The Indian Queen* (1664) and sources for Dryden's *The Indian Emperor* (1665). These plays were written in a very different theatrical and political climate that followed the restoration of the monarchy, and I am interested in exploring how they adapt Davenant's operatic material for the professional stage in light of changing political relations with Spain and how they make use of New World conflict to reflect upon challenges to legitimate monarchical power.

Noah and *the Admiral's Lost New World's Tragedy* (1596/97): An Exercise in Speculation

Paul Whitfield White

In searching for potential storylines of the lost Elizabethan drama, *The New World's Tragedy*, the focus of this paper is primarily topical, but my concern with narrow and potentially anachronistic readings of "the new world" in drama has implications for approaching research in New World Studies more generally. Critics have long suspected that the entries in *Henslowe's Diary* to "the World's Tragedy" and "The New World's Tragedy" (1595-96) refer to the same play and constitute the few surviving traces of the Elizabethan theatre's dramatization of the Americas, possibly based on a calamitous event--e.g., the disappearance of the Roanoke Island colony--or a fictional source, perhaps Lodge's *Margarite of America* (1596). However, without discounting these hypotheses, I want to suggest that the tragedy, possibly in two parts, may depict the "old world/new world" paradigm commonplace in Elizabethan biblical exegesis and applied in contemporary narrative poems, notably *The Old World's Tragedy* and *A Bible in Briefe* (both contemporaneous with the play in 1596). Noah is portrayed in these sources as a preacher to "the old world" destined for destruction by deluge and father and colonizer of the second "new world" 1,656 years after Adam. Indeed, in a direct linking of biblical and early modern "new worlds" in *The Colonies* (1598), Noah was the world's first overseas explorer and colonizer, and in his line of descent were the Amerindians who arrived in the western hemispheres possibly by shipwreck. Noah's final days in his "new world" were darkened by drunkenness, body shaming, and the cursing of Ham, great-grandparent to Nimrod, the world's first tyrant who built the failed Tower of Babel, all ingredients for (*maybe!*) *The New World's Tragedy*.

David H. Wood, Ph.D.
2020 SAA Abstract

**“Placing the Slave Market
in John Fletcher and Philip Massinger’s *A Very Woman*”**

In 1833, Samuel Taylor Coleridge observed that *A Very Woman* (c.1619) “is one of the most perfect plays we have.” In a similar vein, William Gifford, editor of *The Plays of Philip Massinger*, wrote in 1813 that the play is surely “one of the most delightful compositions in the English language.”¹ While this comedy from two luminary Renaissance playwrights certainly has its aesthetic merits, its value centers, for me, on the many identity differences it depicts: from physical disability and depressive “madness,” to English cultural anxieties within a multicultural Mediterranean environment; from the foibles of an habituated female alcoholic, to the frank portrayal of a Sicilian slave market. The play offers one of the few examples of Renaissance drama to feature the realistic workings of a slave market: in which middle-class burghers mock two “cole-black” children for sale; in which an auctioneer prompts dancing and bell-ringing as vendible behaviors for those on the auction block. In doing so, it also provides us valuable insight into the origins of the Atlantic slave trade. Staged in London in the very year Africans were first brought to the American colonies (*The New York Times: 1619 Project*), the play bears scrutiny as a foundational pedagogical tool for an Atlantic slave-trade that would surge over the subsequent 250 years.

¹ See *The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. T. Ashe, ed. London: George Bell, 1888. (April 5, 1833): 201. See also Gifford, ed., *The Plays of Philip Massinger, in four volumes*, 2nd ed. (London, G. and W. Nicol, 1813), 10.