

Civilizing Europeans' Criminality in *The Tempest*

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Many important studies on race and colonization in *The Tempest* have focused, for example, on defending Caliban against accusations of malice and monstrosity by Prospero and the broader reception history of the play. Less attention has been paid to the fact that the play gives greater room for Prospero to defend himself from charges of wrongdoing—to autoracialize himself as an innocent. In effect, Prospero's self-identification with criminal blamelessness echoes rhetorical characteristics that appear in Spanish colonial accounts. This defensive rhetoric is further echoed at the outset of well-known Elizabethan compendia of colonial and exploration texts, most of which emerge from Iberia. Although framed in pro- and anti-Spanish ideology respectively, Pietro Martire and Richard Eden's *De orbe novo*, or *Decades of the New World* (1555) and Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1598-1600) follow a pattern in which they open with claims of colonists' supposed blamelessness for violence committed against Indigenous people and connect such apologies to Europeans' affirmative claims for legitimate land tenancy in the Americas. *The Tempest* is similarly arranged. Miranda's innocence foregrounds the introduction of Caliban in act 1. In the same scene, Prospero goes to great lengths to establish his own benevolence when he believed Caliban to be harmless. My exploration is primarily concerned with evaluating how Prospero's own evasions of criminality and charges of tyranny resembles those put forth in Eden and Purchas' essays and in the Spanish texts they present. We might, in effect, critique the colonial ideology surrounding the play by focusing on deconstructing what I show to be a prevailing attitude of European claims to innate blamelessness.

The Reduction of Caliban: Imperialist Ethno-poetics and *The Tempest*

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Whereas critical studies have tended to conceive *The Tempest* as projecting contemporary English colonial desires, predictive of a British imperial future, or as expressing a more universal (post)colonial condition, this paper will explore Shakespeare's romance as a condensation of imperial precedents that had unfolded during the era of Spanish Hapsburg expansion. So as to situate the text within the transoceanic world to which it plainly alludes, I will compare several of the play's dramatic actions with those represented on the ornate plateresque façade of Casa Montejo, an artefact dating to the mid-sixteenth century that remains extant in the colonial center of Mérida, Yucatán. By putting the symbology deployed at Casa Montejo in conversation with *The Tempest*, I hope to reveal aspects of both the monumental façade and the play heretofore underexplored in literary and cultural criticism.

Interracial Relationships and Power in Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion*

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Broadly, this paper is interested in English representations of Spain as a racially intermixed space. It focuses on Thomas Dekker's revenge tragedy *Lust's Dominion*, which locates interracial relationships in the seat of Spanish power. Eleazar, the play's villainous Moor, is married to the

“fair” and noble Maria; he also is involved in an affair with Eugenia, Spain’s Queen. Eleazar’s occupies a liminal position throughout the play – at points in nearly the extremist sense. He enjoys the privileges of nobility but describes himself as “captive” to Spain’s king. He seeks and at points holds immense power, even while his expulsion is threatened from the first Act. More specifically, this paper is interested in how the interracial both secures and threatens to endanger Eleazar’s position – a circumstance both known to Eleazar and exploited by him. In that sense, it is interested in how the early modern English factored interracial relationships as sites where power could be negotiated. Spain’s historical position as al-Andulas as well as its ongoing imperial activity in the Atlantic world looms large in Dekker’s rendering. This paper will thus also consider how *Lust’s Dominion* at once envisions the interracial as a distinctly Iberian problem, even while England’s own imperial ambitions in many ways sought to model the Spanish.

The Fortunate Fidelia in *The Unfortunate Florinda*: Mediating Culture, Race, and Religion in the Mediterranean

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Why did a seventeenth century English woman living on a retired country estate set her historical prose romance in pre-Islamic Spain, and feature a North African heroine? Hester Pulter’s unfinished work, *The Unfortunate Florinda*, purports to fill in the chronicle blanks of how the Spanish king’s rape of the courtly Spanish lady Florinda catalyzed the eighth century North African Muslim invasion of Spain. But the narratively dominant subplot—recounted at the Spanish court-- features the more fortunate Fidelia, a North African heroine who escapes her own would-be rapist ruler, is sold into slavery in England while cross-dressing as a Jewish boy, and eventually marries her true love to become queen of France and Naples.

The text is ambivalent about Fidelia’s skin color, culture, and religion. I argue that these shifting identities are tied to Fidelia’s symbolic purposes in the text, be that standing as Florinda’s double with an alternate destiny, serving as the object of African Muslim or of White Christian European desire, or suffering enslavement in London. Pulter uses Spain as the narrative gateway to engage with the multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-racial exchanges in the Mediterranean. These spaces are equally implicated in rape and human rights abuses, and Pulter explores types of female agency within them as she constructs her authority as a white, Christian, English prose romance author.