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**Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies**

**Title**

Shakespeare and the Spectacles of Strangeness: The Tempest and the Transformation of Renaissance Theatrical Forms (review)

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7q0582ws>

**Journal**

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 30(1)

**ISSN**

0069-6412

**Author**

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**Publication Date**

1999-10-01

Peer reviewed

## REVIEWS

John G. Demaray, *Shakespeare and the Spectacles of Strangeness: The Tempest and the Transformation of Renaissance Theatrical Forms* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press 1998) xvi +174 pp., illustrations.

Demaray undertakes a fresh reconsideration of the *Tempest*, one which downplays the political issues common to most recent discourse about the play. Instead his book focuses on recontextualizing the play's genre, structure, and early staging from a theatrical history perspective, finding that in the *Tempest*, Shakespeare "was not primarily reverting to the 'academic' dramatic structures, themes, and character-types of his early career, but was forging a new kind of experimental drama from altering theatrical traditions" (xiii). Analyzing Revels Office Rolls, stage directions from the 1623 Folio text, and other primary documents, Demaray concludes that the *Tempest* innovatively incorporates forms such as the French *ballets de cour* and the Spectacle Triumphs associated with the masque:

Even a cursory examination of the *Tempest* discloses that—unlike most of the early or late history plays, comedies, tragedies, and so-called final romances . . . —this drama takes place, like court spectacles, in the approximate time needed for performance; and it unfolds within a masque-like iconographic cosmos of the sort Inigo Jones depicted in his court stage designs and carried over from masque to masque. (12)

Demaray offers a "stick to the facts" approach to the issue of the early stage history of the *Tempest*, reminding us that the only two documented performances of the play in Shakespeare's lifetime both took place at Whitehall before King James, and not, as scholars often speculate, at either the Blackfriars or the Globe. This oft-overlooked and essential fact lends credence to Demaray's emphasis on the spectacle, the courtly masque-like nature of many scenes in the *Tempest*.

Demaray devotes a good portion of his first chapter ("Theatrical Forms in Transition") to pointing up the limitations of various critical interpretations of the *Tempest*, beginning with the problem of determining the play's genre. Here Demaray's treatment is cursory and not compelling, as when he claims that Shakespeare was deliberately toying with generic classifications by "creating a 'comedy' beginning with 'tempest' and ending in peace" (19), which seems a quintessential comedic formula rather than a defiance of same. Demaray makes a more trenchant point in identifying the *Tempest*'s symbolism as "open" rather than closed or fixed, a paradigm that allows his convincing rejection of overly restrictive readings of the play, for example, Colin Still's argument that the *Tempest* is essentially a neo-Platonic mystery play, Michael Srigley's alchemical-allegorical reading, Donna B. Hamilton's tying of the play to the romance-epic tradition, and Frank Kermode's reading of the *Tempest* as an academic pastoral drama in which an "oddly pedantic" Shakespeare strains to adhere to a classical Terentian model.<sup>1</sup> Demaray reserves his sharpest criticism for "re-

<sup>1</sup>Colin Still, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play: A Study of the Tempest* (London 1921), revised as *The Timeless Theme* (London 1936); Michael Srigley, *Images of*

ductionist political interpretation,” such as those critics who read Caliban as a model for colonized peoples and Prospero—and often Shakespeare himself as dramatist—as colonists. While not denying that New World allusions exist in the play, Demaray holds that these are not central but “part of the play’s wider antic and ordering symbolism and action” (27); as evidence that the colonialist metaphor does not neatly fit *The Tempest*, Demaray notes that Prospero has arrived on his island not on a designed expedition but by treachery and chance, that Caliban, apparently guilty of attempted rape and betrayal, is hardly a paradigm of the wrongfully oppressed, and that Prospero at play’s end quite freely decides to return to his rightful domain, free Ariel, and surrender control of the island to Caliban.

Prospero’s surrender of his island domain and his abjuring of his “rough Magicke” is one of the central masque-like spectacles Demaray identifies:

[L]ike a “presenter” in a court masque identifying noble performers at the moment of their unmasking, Prospero dramatically releases Antonio, Alonso, Sebastian, Gonzalo . . . from static enchantment within a drawn magical circle, and “presents” both himself and these characters in their true, underlying but previously concealed social roles. . . . As in a masque in which the unmasked main performers are “released” from theatrical artifice into the immediate social environment of the masquing hall . . . so too the characters in the play are released into their immediate social surroundings, their movement into the wider society of Milan and Naples . . . delayed until the coming day. (45–46)

Though Demaray throughout the book eschews speculation in favor of a more conservative, theatrical-historicist approach, he does offer one addition to the myriad theories as to whom the Magus Prospero might represent: “the sometimes flinty and arbitrary Court Architect Inigo Jones who, out of the fabric of his theatrical art, created visionary stage spectacles that caused wonder in performance and then faded from memory” (106). Though such a musing is interesting, it is of course unverifiable and irrefutable; in his analysis of Jones’s stagecraft, however, Demaray makes some of his most convincing and original points. Chapter 3, titled “Performance Allusions and Whitehall Staging,” briefly recaps the scholarly debate surrounding the issue of whether Shakespeare’s last plays were, as Gerald Eades Bentley suggested in his pivotal 1948 article, written for the Blackfriars rather than the Globe.<sup>2</sup> While acknowledging that both Blackfriars and Globe productions may have been in Shakespeare’s mind, Demaray again emphasizes the essential point that the only two documented performances of the play took place at neither theatre, but rather at Whitehall, and argues in detail that the text reflects an implicit attention to royal staging conventions. Demaray, however, breaks with commentators who have suggested that a court production of *The Tempest* implies a bare stage

*Regeneration: A Study of Shakespeare’s The Tempest and Its Cultural Background* (Uppsala 1985) 116–166; Donna B. Hamilton, *Virgil and the Tempest: The Politics of Imitation* (Columbus, Ohio 1989) 17, and *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (New York 1992); Frank Kermode, ed., *The Tempest*, Arden Shakespeare (Cambridge 1958) lxxiv–lxxvi.

<sup>2</sup>Gerald Eades Bentley, “Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre,” *Shakespeare Survey* 1 (1948) 38–50.

with few or no effects and makes a strong case that, indeed, Jones's stage effects at court were *more* sophisticated than those in use at either playhouse:

[A]s evidence from the Revels Office rolls and masque documents . . . confirms, Whitehall stage effects were far more subtle than those in the public and private theatres. At Whitehall, the changeable scenery, a fly gallery that in fact was in operation in the 1610–1613 period, the regular appearance of masque apparitional figures of drama and fantasy, and the advanced “mechanics” of “descents” and “trapdoors,” were of a kind remarkably well adapted to the spectacle episodes in the *Tempest*. (83)

Weighing in on the textual crux of the “*Juno descends*” stage direction (IV.i), Demaray makes the case that by 1606, Jones

was gracefully and astonishingly levitating large numbers of masquers together . . . without the use of visible ropes or wires or other, crude, visible means of support. . . . To arrange for the seemingly miraculous descent and suspension of Juno that takes place for a total of 30 lines, the Revels Office had only to bring into play the kind of machine regularly used by Jones following his study of court stagecraft in Italy. (84)

In this as throughout most of the book, Demaray's solid theatrical-historical research makes his case more convincing than that of other works founded more in speculation—however plausible or provocative. The book includes ample illustrations of Demaray's primary sources, including scenic designs from English and continental stages, diagrams of levitation machines, and illustrations of masque costuming from the period.

In breaking with the fragmented and often polemical discourse that has characterized the bulk of the *Tempest* scholarship and criticism of recent years, Demaray's book is a well-researched, insightful, and refreshing addition.

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