The Tempest and His Travels

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CITRICAL VIEWS

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In the Same Motes

CITRICAL VIEWS
from historical events. Africa's years of doors.

Doors and windows were a priority in western European society, and doors had a special meaning in the context of the European social structure. The concept of enclosure was a fundamental aspect of the European way of life, and the idea of having a private space was essential for maintaining social order.

Encounters:

Editions about the magic of modern worldmaking.

The doors were the symbols of enclosure and identity, and their design and function were closely tied to the social and cultural norms of the time. The doors were not just mere objects, but they were a reflection of the values and beliefs of the society that created them.

Roland Greene

12 Island Logic
ISLANDS

What is an island? Insularity in early modern thought is hardly the literal fact that it has since become – where to a modern observer, something plainly is or is not an island – but an ideologeme, a conceptual formation that proposes an imagined resolution to a social contradiction. While the figurative island goes back to Mandeville and beyond, Thomas More's *Utopia* is perhaps the text that establishes insularity as an early modern vantage: it introduces a way of thinking that is properly called utopian, and opens the prospect of a more dispersed and multifarious phenomenon which I will call island logic.

The dichotomy between islands and continents is a feature of the modern worldview that is so entirely naturalized, it comes to seem inseparable from the world itself – from the way things are. But the profusion of islands in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European fiction, philosophy and natural history suggests that the dichotomy was often actively undone even as it was in the process of formation. Islands make possible the observation of their own constructedness, and the constructedness of other measures of the world, because they enforce a certain clarity: they have definable borders, they are conceptually autonomous from the world at large, and they encourage attention to the conditions of indigeneity and importation. In this last-mentioned dimension especially, islands often undermine some of the mystifications of capital and power. Suddenly, in the light of island logic, the exertions with which capital fashions a world according to its own unquestioned values come to look like exertions; we are encouraged to notice the trail of investment that furnishes the island with people and materials, and – quite simply – those whose power is intractable and natural elsewhere are much more easily questioned. When Shakespeare chooses his first and only island setting for an entire play, then, he is finding his own way through a trope that reliably undoes the world as his audience knows it. He and the play are undertaking an exercise in island logic, a way of thinking that is counterposed to worldmaking.

If More gives island logic its discursive heft, Bartolomeo della Sonetti's *Isolario* gives it scope. This portolan atlas, published at Venice in 1485, founds a short-lived cartographic genre that depicts islands in autoreflexive terms, as self-regulating entities to be represented in discrete blocs of text, whether sonnets or columns, which can either reflect their corresponding islands or surround them with a 'sea' of information. As Tom Conley observes, this cartographic genre – which had disappeared by circa 1570, 'under the advent of the far more voracious shape of the Ortelian atlas that commands the European market' – has a critical project, namely the 'digestion of a world that can never be completely explored or broken down into assimilable units', making feasible a 'modular thinking' according to which 'wholes and parts become coextensive, but endowed with an infinite possibility of difference'. In an age that sees new worlds insistently built up for commercial, imperial, philosophical or poetic purposes, island logic breaks them down again, undoing the entirety from the standpoint of the part. Celebrated in productions such as utopias, romances and *isolarii*, islands are held at a premium in the sixteenth century not merely out of geographical curiosity but because they afford a perspective that can have only an oblique relation to the accumulating and totalizing worldview of the imperial and economic centres. How many fiction-writers from Rabelais to Cervantes have an island book in their repertory? How many historians from Oviedo to Guicciardini to Stow have an island episode in their histories? In this light, *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's island play, and it applies island logic to its contemporaneous world as well as to its own models and procedures.

FROM WORLDVIEW TO ISLAND LOGIC

Drawing on two early modern conventions, then, *The Tempest* is constructed out of a series of encounters in the setting of an island, not only the fictional one but the literal one inhabited by Shakespeare and his audience. Certainly the collaboration of these two dynamic elements is indispensable. In a mainland mise-en-scène, a play dominated by encounters of all sorts may exploit these for dramatic potential while keeping them ideologically in check according to the logic of a worldview whose terms are not seriously in doubt: at the other end of Shakespeare's canon, *The Comedy of Errors* is this kind of play of encounters. In the later play, however, encounters unregulated by a stable world horizon introduce the prospect of something new – radical masque or farce, the play as instigation to island logic.

The leap from the established worldview of the European travellers to a logic conditioned by their island experiences is made in several episodes of the play: the drive toward, and away from, insularity motivates much of the action as well as the outlook of the play. First, the main plot renders literal the resort to island logic. Having been displaced from metropolitan Milan and experienced insularity himself, Prospero is understandably eager to witness his fellow Europeans in the same condition, to see what further displacements ensue. Meanwhile, his purpose for himself is to return to Milan having absorbed the partial vantage of the island for his art, where the contents of a 'full poor cell' overgo the purchase on 'all the world' he had as Duke
Antonio: "When impossible dreams come true..."

Sebastian: "The breath of life, the soul of the world..."

Antonio: "There's some space..."

Sebastian: "Is this the end, the beginning of our story..."

Antonio: "The stars shine brighter when we're together..."

Sebastian: "And so the cycle continues..."

Antonio: "In the dark of night, we find our way..."

Sebastian: "Together, we are..."

Antonio: "The next theory of love..."

Sebastian: "Embrace the unknown..."
FROM ISLAND LOGIC TO WORLDVIEW

Dramatic problem: this is the controlling question.

Is the movement from maining to the grand play of the stage instrumental? If so, what are the consequences of this movement? How does this movement affect the audience's perception of the play? Is the audience engaged? How?

The ethical dimension of Island Logic, of course, is in accepting some

Beppo's advice: (L.97-98)

Antonio: and some were brought off in the sea, bring forth

seastranza, I think we will carry this bag home in his pocket and

Antonio: when impossible makes will the make easy mark

Speak to this question. The end of the exchange seems to accept that this is instrumentality.

The pronoun is intentionally instead of instrumentality.

This expression is insufficient. The following reasons:

Would you believe things occur (V.125-27) and purposes these intentions

But inside the Tempest — and this is the reason that Lacan, in a consultant

Therefore, the Tempest, and this is the reason that Lacan, in a consultant

The pronoun is intentionally instrumentality.

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