

Revisiting The Tempest: The Capacity to Signify. Silvia Bigliuzzi and Lisanna Calvi, eds.

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If one wants an essay collection on *The Tempest* with a defined thematic focus, *Revisiting The Tempest* refuses to be the one. While the essays within each of the four sections of the book are somewhat tightly connected and make deft references to each other, the organizing principle behind the collection is the idea that *The Tempest's* ambiguities and contradictions make for a "potential for signification" (2) that is almost unsurpassed. This idea results in a collection that pays close attention to language and form and that is varied and rich in its offerings.

The introduction describes *The Tempest's* capacity to yield multiple meanings as a sign of its status as "great art" (6). Some readers can be somewhat skeptical about this insistence on the play's apparently inexhaustible ability to signify and its seemingly fantastic suppleness. One could also question the statement that more attention has been paid to the play's themes than its poetics. After all, the best criticism has woven together considerations of what the play says with analysis of language and structure, and, further, discussions of how the play makes meaning almost inevitably overflow into thematics. However, the introduction is still a very interesting consideration of where literary meaning resides. It also very astutely explores the play's structural and stylistic density that simultaneously conceals and reveals meaning. As Andrew Gurr's prologue also says, *The Tempest* recognizes the value of being "reticent" about that which cannot be fully known.

Two of the essays in part 1, "Meaning and Genre," place *The Tempest* in the context of Italian improvised theater and pastoral tragicomedy. Both essays are fine examples of intertextual study that provide readers new frames of reference to better understand and appreciate the play. They also take into account the Italian theatrical tradition, usually ignored by anglocentric criticism. Richard Andrews's essay is convincing in its argument that playwrights were artisans who worked with preexisting material that moved through professional drama circuits. Andrews's essay and Robert Henke's (which links the play to Italian pastoral tragicomedy) remind us that *The Tempest* was already an international play even before it became a postcolonial one, and was influenced by previous texts before it became a source for future reworkings.

Silvia Bigliuzzi's essay in part 2, which focuses on time and space in the play, is on the play's use of narrative, and is perhaps among the finest instances, in recent years, of the study of *The Tempest's* form. Narrative complements and competes with the dramatic mode in the play. It also destabilizes the ontological status of the island, mirrors the instabilities of the world, and draws attention to the limits of knowing and remembering. While part 3 of the collection examines the dialectic between sight and sound in the play, particularly in theatrical productions, part 4 is a consideration of film productions of the play, notably those directed by Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman. Peter Holland's essay stands out as a brilliant exercise in the reading and interpretation of film in general and *The Tempest* on film in particular. Offering close readings of four remakes of the play, Holland demonstrates that cinema as a genre challenges our notion of realism because of the illusionistic dimension of film itself. Alessandra Squeo's essay uses the idea of "remediation," or the tension between various genres and media, as a new way of making meaning, while Eleonora Oggiano's essay makes the interesting connection between magic and digital cinema's ability to create illusions, so recasting and updating the metatheatrical theme of the play.

Kathleen McLuskie's epilogue is a thought-provoking consideration of our insistence on the play's contemporaneity and how real this is and how realizable in productions. Ewan's Fernie's afterword concludes that the play transcends meaning and indeed demonstrates the impossibility or even necessity of knowing, so challenging thematic studies of the play. These last two essays, along with several others, represent what is most valuable about *Revisiting The Tempest*. This fine collection provokes us to rethink the methodologies and assumptions that inform our own reading of the famous last play.

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