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The Virginia Company's role in *The Tempest*

Barry R. Clarke

In December 1606, the London Virginia Council succeeded in persuading several merchant companies and noblemen to finance a new settlement in Virginia.¹ Assured of a share in the gold that the Spanish had earlier reported,² the adventurers committed enough money to despatch three ships and 144 planters from Blackwall stairs on the Thames across the Atlantic.³ After being delayed for six weeks by strong winds, Captain James Newport found a long passage past the Canaries and the West Indies, and although his navigation eventually failed him, a storm fortuitously delivered him to the Virginia coastline. As the first wave of colonists sailed into Cape Henry on 26 April 1607, the tide of expectation was high, and after sailing forty miles down the River James they pitched a three-sided fort on the north side. Unfortunately, the marshy ground proved to be unwholesome, and typhoid and dysentery soon struck down the new settlers.⁴ Disease, native attacks, a divided governing body, but mainly famine, eventually brought them to desperation, and only Captain John Smith's ingenuity and persistence in trading for corn with the Indian chief Powhatan saved the colony from extinction.

¹ The voyages sent to Virginia were partly funded by merchant companies such as the Clothworkers Company, the Fishmongers Company, and the Stationer's Company.

² Alexander Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: 1890), 105–6.

³ The ships were the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *The Discovery*.

⁴ William Stith, *The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia* (Williamsburg: 1747), 44–46.

By the time the third supply weighed anchor at Falmouth on 8 June 1609 with 600 men, the second Virginia Charter had replaced Jamestown's ineffective President and Council with a single Governor appointed by the Council in London.⁵ Thomas West (Baron De La Warr and Captain-General) was to be the first incumbent but, until his arrival the following year, Sir Thomas Gates (Lieutenant-General) was to assume command. On 23 July, the nine vessels of the third supply were hit by a hurricane, the *Sea Venture* which carried the colony's main commanders Gates, Somers, and Newport, became separated from the rest of the fleet, and their ship was wrecked at Bermuda with the unprecedented survival of the entire crew. Despite several attempts at mutiny, they managed to use the wreck of the *Sea Venture* and the abundant cedar wood at Bermuda to construct two vessels and continue for Jamestown.⁶ The shipwreck was sensational news when it reached England in 1610 and, as we shall see, it became a source event for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In this respect, the play seems to have relied partly on published Virginia pamphlets such as John Smith's *A true relation* (1608) and Richard Rich's *Newes from Virginia* (1610), as well as on secretary William Strachey's 20,000-word classified company report 'True Reportory' which was sent back from the Virginia Colony in July 1610. Other unpublished information about the Virginia colony also seems to have found its way into the play, facts that later appeared in Ralph Harmor's *A True Discourse* (1615) and John Smith's *The general historie* (1624).

While the private aim of the Virginia Company was to obtain a financial return at the earliest possible opportunity, their promotional sermons and literature framed matters rather differently.⁷ Quinn describes the Virginia Company's *A true*

⁵ In his essay 'Of Plantations' Sir Francis Bacon writes "For Gouernment, let it be in the Hands of one, assisted with some Counsell", Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Covnsels* (London: 1625), 202.

⁶ On 10 May 1610.

⁷ Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 69.

declaration (1610)⁸ as “the most distinguished piece of propaganda for the colony”⁹ and one of its aims was to quell rumours about disorder in the colony, enticing prospective adventurers with the promise of abundant riches. Evidence will be presented that it almost certainly relied on Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’, so that whoever compiled *A true declaration* must have had one of the sources for *The Tempest* in front of him.

It is clear that the oaths of secrecy imposed on Virginia Company members, and the attacks on players in its literature, render it unrealistic to expect a non-member such as Shakespeare to have been allowed access to the Strachey report. Here, it will be argued that it is more likely that information from this document together with other inside information was released by one or more members of the Company in order to write *The Tempest* so that English interest in the New World could be advertised at court to invited European ambassadors. In fact, the first known performance of *The Tempest* was on 1 November 1611 before King James at Whitehall by the “Kings Players”,¹⁰ followed by a performance in February 1612–13 at the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector of Palatine, also by the King’s Men.¹¹

By examining the Early English Books Online (EEBO) database for rare phrases in *A true declaration* and *The Tempest*, it has been shown that a good candidate for compiling the former and supplying information for the latter was the essayist and Solicitor General Sir Francis Bacon who was a leading member of the

⁸ Counseil for Virginia, *A true declaration* (London: 1610). It was entered for publication at Stationers’ Hall on 8 November 1610 by Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Maurice Barkley, Sir George Coppin, and Master Richard Martin, see Brown, *Genesis*, Vol. 1, 427.

⁹ David Quinn, *New American World*, Vol. 5 (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 248.

¹⁰ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), 177.

¹¹ “Item paid to John Heminges upon the Cowncells warrant dated att Whitehall xxo die Maij 1613” lists 14 plays performed at the wedding including *Much Adoe abowte Nothings*, *The Tempest*, *The Winters Tale*, and *The Moore of Venice*, see E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, Vol. 2 (Oxford University Press, 1930), 343.

Virginia Company, and later had a hand in producing masques at Whitehall.¹²

The ‘True Reportory’ and *The Tempest*

The notion that Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’ is the main influence on the play was first suggested by Luce,¹³ and was echoed in subsequent work by Gayley¹⁴ and Cawley.¹⁵ In 1625, Samuel Purchas published Strachey’s 20,000-word report with the date “July 15, 1610” in the heading,¹⁶ and since it describes no events later than Sir Thomas Gates leaving for England on that date, then it very likely travelled with Gates to England and was delivered to the Virginia Company around 1 September 1610. This position has been challenged by Stritmatter and Kositsky,¹⁷ who argue that it was written later than 1610, after Strachey arrived back in London to lodge at Black Friars around October 1611, so that it was too late to contribute to the first known performance of *The Tempest*. However, Vaughan,¹⁸ Reedy,¹⁹ and Clarke²⁰ have set out persuasive evidence against these objections. William Strachey later wrote a preface to the *Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall* (1612) from his “lodging in the Black Friars” in which he refers to a work of his on Bermuda

¹² Barry R. Clarke, “A linguistic analysis of Francis Bacon’s contribution to three Shakespeare plays: *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, and *The Tempest*”. PhD thesis, Brunel University, UK, 2013, Tables 7.3 and 8.6.

¹³ Morton Luce, editor. *The Tempest* (London: Methuen, 1901), Appendix 1.

¹⁴ Charles M. Gayley, *Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 59–69.

¹⁵ Robert R. Cawley, “Shakespeare’s Use of the Voyages in *The Tempest*”, *PMLA*, 21 (1926): 688–726.

¹⁶ Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimes*, Vol. IV (London: W. Stansby, 1625), 1734–58.

¹⁷ Roger Stritmatter and Lynn Kositsky, “Shakespeare and the Voyagers Revisited.” *Review of English Studies*, 58 (2007): 447–72.

¹⁸ Alden Vaughan, “William Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 59 (Fall 2008): 243–273.

¹⁹ Tom Reedy, “Dating William Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’”, *Review of English Studies*, 61 (2010): 529–552.

²⁰ Barry R. Clarke, “The Virginia Company and *The Tempest*”, *Journal of Drama Studies*, 5 (July 2011): 13–27.

and Virginia which had “many impediments, [and] as yet must detain such my observations in the shadow of darknesse.”²¹ This can only be a reference to the ‘True Reportory’, and surely reveals his frustration that its publication had been thwarted by the Council.²²

In 1901, Luce compared *The Tempest* with ‘True Reportory’ and cautioned:

Before dealing with the subject of parallel passages I may perhaps remind the reader or student that such resemblances will not all of them be equally striking, and that an opinion should be based upon the extracts collectively, not individually.²³

Unfortunately, unless the parallels are rare it makes little difference whether or not they are considered collectively. In EEBO, the 5377 pre-1611 searchable texts have been used to conduct a Rare Collocation Profile (RCP)²⁴ test to examine the extent to which *The Tempest* relied on Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’ (1610). Table 1 shows the most significant results in comparison with the Virginia Company’s *A true declaration* (1610).²⁵

For the first row in Table 1, there is the search ‘the sharp wind(s)’ in the context of being northerly. *The Tempest* has “To run vpon the sharpe winde of the North” (2.2) while the ‘True Reportory’ gives “the sharpe windes blowing Northerly”.²⁶ There are 7/5377 (0.13%) document returns from EEBO for the search string ‘the sharp wind’²⁷ but none in the context of it being a ‘north wind’. Up to 1626, only two returns satisfy this context, these being the ‘True Reportory’ (1610) first published in *Purchas his pilgrimes* (1625), and *The Tempest* (1611) first published in the First Folio

²¹ William Strachey, *For The Colonie in Virginea Britannia* (Oxford, 1612), sig. A2.

²² The manuscript for *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia*, which Strachey wrote in 1612 but failed to publish, covered only Virginia. Its first publication was by the Hakluyt Society in 1849.

²³ Luce, *The Tempest*, 162.

²⁴ See Clarke, “A linguistic analysis”, Chapter 4.

²⁵ For a detailed discussion see *Ibid.*, §7.4.

²⁶ Purchas, *Purchas*, Vol. 4, 1738.

²⁷ Including spelling variations.

(1623). In other words, the Strachey report provides the *only* match with *The Tempest* and it was an unpublished description when the first known performance of the play was given in 1611.

Table 1: Rare collocation comparison of 'True Reportory', A true declaration, and The Tempest

<i>True Reportory</i> (1609)	<i>True Declaration</i> (1610)	<i>The Tempest</i> (1611)
the sharpe windes blowing Northerly (p.1738)		To run vpon the sharpe winde of the North (2.2)
as we condemne not Kent in England, for a small Towne called Plumstead, continually assaulting the dwellers there (especially newcommers) with Agues and Feuers; no more let vs lay scandall, and imputation vpon the Country of Virginia, because the little Quarter wherein we are set downe [...] appears to be vnwholesome, and subiect to many ill ayres, which accompany the like marish [marshy] places (p.1753) ²⁸	No man ought to judge of any Countrie by the fennes and marshes (such as is the place where James towne standeth) except we will condemne all England, for the Wilds and Hundreds of Kent. (p.32) our fort [...] is most part inuironed with an ebbing and flowing salt water, the owze of which sendeth forth an vnwholsome & contagious vapour (p.33)	vnwholesome fen (1.2.322) <i>Adr.</i> The ayre breathes vpon vs here most sweetly. <i>Seb.</i> As if it had Lungs, and rotten ones. <i>Ant.</i> Or, as 'twere perfum'd by a Fen. (2.1.47-9) All the infections that the sun sucks up / From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall and make him / By inch-meal a disease! (2.2.1-2)
euery man from thenceforth commanded to weare his weapon, [...] and euery man aduised to stand vpon his guard		'tis best we stand vpon our guard; / Or that we quit this place: let's draw our weapons (2.1.321-2)

²⁸ This correspondence was pointed out by Gayley, *Shakespeare*, 230.

Francis Bacon seems to have had the second row entry in mind when in his essay ‘Of Plantations’ he wrote “It hath beene a great Endangering, to the Health of some Plantations, that they haue built along the Sea, and Riuers, in marish and vnwholesome Grounds.”²⁹ The last two entries in Table 1 have been discussed in detail by Clarke in his PhD thesis (2013).³⁰

The rare parallels in Table 1 together with those that are to follow contribute to the evidence that the Bermuda shipwreck of 1609 was a source event. They also assist the case that unpublished inside information about the Virginia colony was used in the play.

Shakespeare’s inaccess to ‘True Reportory’

When Samuel Purchas informed his readers in 1625 that “M. Strachies copious discourse shall feast you with the liuely expression of others miseries”³¹ it became clear why the ‘True Reportory’ could not have been made public in 1610. The company were trying to attract new investment and an unauthorised publication of the ‘True Reportory’ would have been the greatest danger to the Virginia Company.³² So there are two main reasons why Shakespeare could not have gained access to Strachey’s report. First, there was a prohibition on information leaving the colony with the oaths of secrecy that had been imposed on Virginia Company members.³³ Second, the Company literature warned against players who were misrepresenting the colony on the stage and thereby discouraging investment.³⁴ For example, as noted by Cawley,³⁵ on

²⁹ Bacon, *The Essayes or Covnsels*.

³⁰ For a detailed discussion see Clarke, “A linguistic analysis”, §7.4.

³¹ Purchas, *Purchas*, Vol. 4, 1733.

³² For a detailed discussion of the so-called Strachey ‘B’ manuscript, see the footnotes in Clarke, “A linguistic analysis”, §7.5. The conclusion is that it is a poor early nineteenth century transcription of the ‘True Reportory’ from Purchas, *Purchas* (1625). See Hume, “William Strachey’s”, 57–88.

³³ See Kingsbury, *Records*, Vol. 3, Part I, p.20a; Brown, *Genesis*, 398–9; and Swem, “The Three Charters”, 66.

³⁴ See Whitaker, *Good Newes*, sigs A2 and C2; Johnson, *The new life, STC*: 14700, sig. A3^v; and Strachey, *For the colony*, sig. P4^v.

³⁵ Cawley, “Shakespere’s Use”, 700.

21 February 1610, the Reverend William Crashaw delivered a sermon in London “before the right honourable the Lord LaWarre, Lord Governour and Captaine Generall of Virginia, and others of his Majesties Councill for that Kingdome, and the rest of the adventurers in that plantation”.³⁶

As for Plaiers: [...] nothing that is good, excellent or holy can escape them [...] they abuse Virginea [...] and such as for which, if they speedily repent not, I dare say Vengeance waits for them³⁷

In other words, Virginia Council members were informed of the danger that players posed before the ‘True Reportory’ was sent back to England. This surely makes Shakespeare’s access unlikely. Both of these points have recently been examined in considerable detail.³⁸

The Tempest and Virginia Company literature

By examining other notable contemporary shipwreck events, it is clear that apart from the *Sea Venture* at Bermuda, there is no other case that possesses the requisite combination that appears in *The Tempest* of a storm dispersing a fleet on the high sea, only the flagship being shipwrecked, all hands surviving, and the rest of the fleet continuing their voyage.³⁹ The play shares several noteworthy rare parallels with contemporary Virginia Company literature. For example, Prospero’s sprite Ariel sets down the storm-tossed ship safely in the harbour. The fatigued crew were so over-worked that some fell asleep and the hatches were closed:

The Marriners all vnder hatches stowed,
Who, with a Charme ioyned to their suffred labour
I haue left asleep (1.2.230–320)

This circumstance is confirmed by the Boatswain’s “We were dead of sleep, / And – how we know not – all clapp’d under hatches” (5.1.230–231). Silvestor Jourdain who was on board the *Sea Venture*

³⁶ Brown, *Genesis*, 361.

³⁷ Brown, *Genesis*, 366–7.

³⁸ Clarke, “The Virginia Company”, 13–27.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 14–15. The Virginia Company’s *A true declaration*, 17, mentions “the storme that separated the admirall from the fleete”.

when it hit the storm recalled that:

All our men, being vtterly spent, tyred, and disabled for longer labour, were euen resolued, without any hope of their liues, to shut up the hatches, and to haue committed themselues to the mercy of the sea⁴⁰

An EEBO interrogation of the 5377 pre-1611 searchable texts for ‘tired/asleep/sleeping near.20 hatches’ produces no accounts relating to sleeping under hatches in the context of a ship in a storm. Apart from the Jourdain and Hughes accounts of the 1609 Sea Venture wreck,⁴¹ there is a report of the Thomas Cavendish voyage to the South Sea in 1591 which gives “the next day the storme ceased, and most of our young Saylers, which we call men of top a yard, being wearied with their nights worke that was past, were vnder Hatches asleepe”, however, the manuscript was not published until 1625.⁴² So in 1611, this collocation was rare.

Also, the term “freshes” is used in *The Tempest*:

for Ile not shew him
Where the quicke Freshes are. (3.2.66–7)

There are only 2/5377 (0.04%) returned uses before 1611 these being Bernardino de Escalante in *A discourse of the nauigation [China]* (1579), and John Smith in *A true relation [Virginia]* (1608).⁴³ So this is also a rare correspondence that appears in a Virginia Company related publication.

⁴⁰ Jourdain, *A discovery*, 4–5. Lewes Hughes, a preacher on Bermuda, sent a letter to England in 1615 reiterating Jourdain’s account “they so tired and out of hope, as they resolued to shut vp the hatches, and commit themselues to the mercy of God.” in Hughes, *A letter*, sig. A4.

⁴¹ The earliest in this context is Hughes, *A letter*, sig. A4. See also Smith, *The generall historie*, 174.

⁴² Purchas, *Purchas*, Vol. 4, 1205.

⁴³ We have “April, when the great freshes do come” de Escalante, *A discourse*; “and the freshes by reason of the Rockes haue left markes of the inundations” in Smith, *A true relation*.

Due to the storms that engulfed the island, Bermuda was known as the ‘Ile of Diuels’⁴⁴ and the spirit Ariel appears to hint at this with “the kings sonne Ferdinand / With haire vp-staring (then like reeds, not haire) / Was the first man that leapt; cride hell is empty, / And all the Diuels are heere.” Ariel even mentions the ‘Bermoothes’ or Bermuda:

Safely in harbour
Is the Kings shippe, in the deep Nooke, where once
Thou calldst me vp at midnight to fetch dewe
From the still-vext Bermoothes,
there she’s hid (1.2.227–230)

Bermuda was only mentioned in the contemporary literature in the context of exploration and Abrams has pointed out that Richard Rich’s *Newes from Virginia*, registered on 1 October 1610, demonstrates the “first recorded instance of the *ooth*-spelling in English, and Shakespeare’s the second.”⁴⁵

However, the most impressive evidence of the relation between *The Tempest* and the 1609 shipwreck at Bermuda arises from Caliban’s speech on edible items, which has previously been the subject of much debate:⁴⁶

I’ prithe, let me bring thee where Crabs grow;
And I with my long nayles will digge thee pig-nuts;
Show thee a Iayes nest and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble Marmozet; I’le bring thee
To clustring Philbirts [hazelnuts], and sometimes I’le get thee
Young Scamels from the Rocke. (2.2.167–172)

An investigation of EEBO using the search string ‘crab(s) near.40 filberds/filberts/filbirts/philbirts/philberts’ registers no returns before 1611. The earliest is in a book by Ralph Harmor, secretary to the

⁴⁴ Jourdain, *A discovery*, also Thomas Dekker referred to “a voiage to the yland of Hogs and Diuels, (the Barmudas)” in Dekker, *If it be not good*.

⁴⁵ Abrams, “Newes”, 545–47. Rich uses the spelling ‘Bermoothawes’ on the title page in Rich, *Newes from Virginia*. Abrams appears not to have been aware that in 1901 Luce had already identified the “Bermoothawes” spelling in Rich’s pamphlet, see Luce, *The Tempest*, Appendix 1, 159.

⁴⁶ Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 216–7.

colony from 1611–14, published in 1615.⁴⁷ Describing Virginia he reports:

some filberds haue I seene, Crabbes great store, lesse, but not so sower as ours, which grafted with the Siens of English aple trees, without question would beare very goode fruite, and we doubt not but to haue the Siens enough the next yeere, there being in Sir Thomas Gates his garden at Iames town, many forward aple & peare trees come vp.⁴⁸

Sir Thomas Gates was at the colony from 24 May to 20 July 1610 and again from August 1611 to March 1614 when he handed over to Sir Thomas Dale. The point here, and it is one that seems to have passed unnoticed hitherto, is that the only known published use of this combination of ‘Philberts’ and ‘crabs’ from *The Tempest* appears in a contemporary Virginia Company report on the colony which was published after the first known performance of *The Tempest*. So whoever supplied this information about the colony for *The Tempest* knew it before Harmor’s publication.

Caliban’s edible items have an additional role to play in dating parts of *The Tempest*.⁴⁹ Newton⁵⁰ has suggested that the First Folio’s compositor set the word ‘scamel’ erroneously by reading the first ‘e’ in the scrivener’s copy as a ‘c’.⁵¹ He should instead have set it as ‘Seamel’, a rare bird endemic to Bermuda. Caliban hints that the ‘scamel’ is edible, only the young are taken, and it can be found on the rocks. A number of contemporary documents relating to Bermuda discuss a bird called the ‘seamall’ or ‘cahow’ which they

⁴⁷ The second earliest return is Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in the First Folio (1623) followed by Samuel Purchas’ publication of Harmor’s report in 1625..

⁴⁸ Harmor, *A True Discourse*, 23.

⁴⁹ One should not fall into the error here of assuming that a topical allusion dates the entire play text. It only dates the topical allusion.

⁵⁰ Newton, *A Dictionary*, 815.

⁵¹ “These four comedies (*The Tempest*, *Two Gentlemen*, *Merry Wives*, and *Measure for Measure*), together with *Winter’s Tale* are generally accepted as set from scribal copies prepared by Ralph Crane”, see Donno, *Twelfth Night*, 166.

emphasise above any other livestock in respect of the simplicity with which it could be captured for consumption.⁵²

Strachey's 'True Reportory' (1610) mentions a "Sea-Meawe": "Our men found a prettie way to take them, which was by standing on the Rockes or Sands by the Sea side."⁵³ In a 1625 marginal note to Strachey's above description of the "Sea-Meawe", the editor Samuel Purchas has added "Web-footed Fowle. They call it of the cry which it maketh a *Cohow*." It was a bird whose behaviour was unknown in England until information about Bermuda reached London with the returning voyagers at the start of September 1610⁵⁴ and reinforces the view that *The Tempest* shipwreck alludes to the one at Bermuda in 1609.⁵⁵ As with the 'Philberds' and 'crabs', this information was unpublished in 1611 but nevertheless found its way into the play.

So there are several examples of contemporary Virginia Company literature — John Smith's *A true relation* (1608), William Strachey's 'True Reportory' (1610, published 1625), Sylvester Jourdain's *A discovery* (1610), Richard Rich's *Newes from Virginia* (1610), Ralph Harmor's, *A True Discourse* (1615), and John Smith's *The generall historie* (1625) — that seem to share rare collocations with the play. In consequence, two main points can be made: (a) the 1609 *Sea Venture* shipwreck at Bermuda was a source event for *The Tempest*; and (b) unpublished information about the colony had been inserted into the play before its first known performance in 1611. The suggestion here is that this could only have been achieved with the assistance from one or more Virginia Company members.

⁵² Hughes, *A letter*, sig. B1^v–B2; Hughes, *A Plaine*, sig. A4^v; Smith, *The generall historie*, STC: 22790a, sig. Z2.

⁵³ Purchas, *Purchas*, Vol. 4, 1740–41.

⁵⁴ "no man was euer heard, to make for the place, but as against their wils" in Jourdain, *A discovery*, 9.

⁵⁵ I am grateful to Lyn Kositsky for pointing out the following reference about an earlier reported bird known as an 'Alcatrazzi' which unlike Caliban's 'scamel' is inedible "These younge ones are so fatte and wel fedde that they can not bee eaten. And are taken for none other intent but only to make grease for candels to burne in the nyght" in d'Anghiera, *The decades*, 191.

‘True Reportory’ and *True Declaration*

Several documents appear to have influenced the Virginia Company’s *A true declaration*: William Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’,⁵⁶ Sylvester Jourdain’s *Discovery*,⁵⁷ and a letter dated 7 July 1610 from the Council of Virginia to the Virginia Company of London signed by Lord de la Warr (and others).⁵⁸ Gayley points out with respect to Jourdain’s *Discovery* that “[*A true declaration*’s compiler] embodies from it some five phrases not found in his other sources”⁵⁹ while Reedy shows that the pamphlet follows the Lord de la Warr letter more closely than other texts when reporting the condition of the colony.⁶⁰ However, *A true declaration*’s main influence was Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’, which was first published in 1625 and very likely arrived in England on 1 September 1610. It contains a detailed account of the July 1609 shipwreck at Bermuda, the survival of the entire crew, the mutinies on the island, and the building of two cedar-wood pinnaces which they used to reach Jamestown in May 1610. The ‘True Reportory’ differs from *A true declaration* in that it openly discusses the disease and hostility of the environment. Strachey’s account was deemed so sensitive that it was withheld from publication until 1625 when it appeared in Samuel Purchas’s *Purchas his pilgrimes*. Nevertheless, several favourable extracts appear *A true declaration*.

For example, with respect to the *Sea Venture* crew’s attempt to save themselves during the storm, the ‘True Reportory’ informs us “how mutually willing they were, yet by labour to keepe each other from drowning, albeit each one drowned whilst he laboured.”⁶¹ *A true declaration* recasts this as “those which laboured to keepe others from drowning were halfe drowned themselues in

⁵⁶ Purchas, *Purchas*, Vol. IV, 1734–58.

⁵⁷ Jourdain, *A discovery*.

⁵⁸ Brown, *Genesis*, 402–413.

⁵⁹ Gayley, *Shakespeare*, 52, 230.

⁶⁰ Reedy, “Dating”, 540; the author of *A true declaration* admits using “the letters of the Lord La Ware” in compiling the document, see Counsel, *A true declaration*, sig. A3^v.

⁶¹ Purchas, *Purchas*, Vol. IV, 1736.

labouring.”⁶² Reedy declares this tightening of Strachey’s antemetabole to be “almost incontrovertible text evidence that the Virginia Company writer follows Strachey.”⁶³ There are also passages in the *A true declaration* relating to rumours about the poor quality of the country and the health of the colonists that have evidently been edited down from ‘True Reportory’.⁶⁴ Given that the Strachey report was first published with the date “July 15, 1610” in the heading and that *A true declaration* was registered at Stationers’ Hall on 8 November 1610, it seems to be beyond reasonable doubt that the latter’s author had the ‘True Reportory’ in front of him when he compiled it.

The unattributed *A true declaration* is a work of about 10800 words and in the opinion of Luce it “was penned with considerable literary skill.”⁶⁵ As it reveals, it is written from the point of view of one main author: “And though it bee not for a theoretticall Schollar, to circumscribe the dominions of Princes, yet a few proofes from antiquity, shall suffice to controwle ignorant or presumptuous follie.”⁶⁶ The compiler also declares that he has been privy to “the secrets of the iudiciall councill of Virginia”.⁶⁷

Three main candidates have been advanced as its principal originator. Fitzmaurice has suggested that it was “probably written by Dudley Digges”⁶⁸ while the American classical scholar Charles Mills Gayley thought it was “probably, Sir Edwyn Sandys”.⁶⁹ Hotson was undecided, choosing “Sir Edwyn Sandys or Sir Dudley Digges”,⁷⁰ but James produces a different candidate:

I have no doubt it was the Solicitor–General [Sir Francis Bacon], incomparably the greatest advocate and orator of the age [...] To read over the first book of *The Advancement of Learning* is to see the same style, ordonnance [sic], and learning at work as show

⁶² Counsel, *A true declaration*, sig. D1^v.

⁶³ Reedy, “Dating”, 539.

⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion see Clarke, “A linguistic analysis”, §8.4.

⁶⁵ Luce, *The Tempest*, 167.

⁶⁶ Counsel, *A true declaration*, sig. C2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. A3^v.

⁶⁸ Fitzmaurice, *Humanism*, 177.

⁶⁹ Gayley, *Shakespeare*, 52.

⁷⁰ Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, 225.

themselves in the *Declarations* [*True and Sincere Declaration* and *A true declaration*]⁷¹

All three were prominent Virginia Council members with previous publications.⁷² Clarke has shown that as far as rhetorical figures are concerned, samples of Bacon's work exhibit a better match with *A true declaration* than equal-size samples of Digges and Sandys's work. More significantly, using EEBO, Bacon's corpus shares six rare collocations with the pamphlet whereas those of Sandys and Digges have none.⁷³ On this evidence, Bacon seems to have contributed to *A true declaration* which means that he must have had access to the 'True Reportory', one of the sources for *The Tempest*. This is not to argue that Bacon originated the play, only that he seems to have been in an ideal position to influence it.

Francis Bacon's interest in the Virginia Company is well documented. Having been held back by Queen Elizabeth and her chief adviser Robert Cecil, after King James came to power he rose to become Solicitor-General (1607), Attorney-General (1613), and Lord Chancellor (1618). He formed a strong interest in the New World and in February 1607, two months after the first planters had left the Thames for Virginia, he made a speech in Parliament pointing out that "the solitude of Virginia was crying out for inhabitants."⁷⁴ In 1609, he composed a tract entitled "Certain considerations touching the plantations in Ireland"⁷⁵ and in the same year the Second Virginia Charter named Bacon as one of 52 Council members, only three of whom were not either a knight or a Lord.

⁷¹ James, *The Dream*, 97–8.

⁷² The members of the central Virginia Council are listed on Lord de la Warr's commission into Virginia dated 28 February 1609–10. It bears the following signatures: Southampton, Pembroke, Philip Montgomerie, Theophilus Howard, Edward Cecill, William Waad, Walter Cope, Edward Conoway, Thomas Smith, Baptist Hicks, Dudlie Diggs, Robart Mansill, Christopher Brook, and William Romney", see Brown, *Genesis*, 384.

⁷³ Clarke, "A linguistic analysis", Tables 8.3 and 8.5.

⁷⁴ "The allusion to Virginia is not in the printed speech but is to be found in the Journals", Gardiner, *History of England*, 333n.

⁷⁵ This date is James Spedding's estimate, see Spedding *et. al.*, *Letters and Life*, Vol. IV, p.116. Michael Kiernan dates it to 1606, Kiernan, *The Essayes*, 239.

Keirnan states that the Charter “may have been prepared in part by Bacon in his capacity as Solicitor General,”⁷⁶ an assertion that seems to have originated with the American colonial historian Alexander Brown.⁷⁷ Several years later, after completing *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia*, William Strachey sent the “Lord High Chancellor of England” Sir Francis Bacon a manuscript copy with the following dedication:

Your Lordship ever approving himself a most noble fautor [supporter] of the Virginia Plantation, being from the beginning (with other lords and earles) of the principal counsell applyed to propagate and guide yt.⁷⁸

The Tempest as a political tool

There is evidence that *The Tempest* was used to impress invited foreign ambassadors at court. The king had an active role in the Virginia colony, putting his signature to three Virginia Charters in 1606, 1609, and 1611. Lucas notes that:

The attention of King James was so favourably directed to the advantages attending the plantation of colonies, in consequence of certain experiments of his in the Highlands [...] that he readily harkened to the applications which were made to him.⁷⁹

However, his interest in the colonies was more than just a sociological experiment. He also realised their political advantage. Nuzum⁸⁰ has suggested that William Strachey’s ‘True Reportory’ was purposely lent to Shakespeare by the Company “as part of a concerted scheme of propaganda to support the London Company in its enterprise.”⁸¹ The present work argues against Shakespeare’s access, but the notion that the play was used as a political tool seems

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Genesis*, 207.

⁷⁸ Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, Bacon became Lord Chancellor in January 1618, a date that serves as the *terminus post quem* for the dedication.

⁷⁹ Lucas, *Charters*, 1.

⁸⁰ Nuzum, “The London Company”, 12–23.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

well founded. About eighteen months after the first known performance of *The Tempest* at Whitehall, a masque was devised precisely for this purpose. On the evening of 15 February 1612–13 at the wedding of Princess Elizabeth of England to Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine in Germany, a masque⁸² credited to George Chapman was given by Middle Temple and Lincoln’s Inn.

It proclaimed the English interest in America, and prophesied for the married pair honour and riches such as they believed would come from the great gold mines of Virginia.⁸³

After mentioning Virginian priests and Princes, it refers to “a rich Island lying in the South-Sea”:

In which Island (beeing yet in command of the Virginian continent.) A troupe of the noblest Virginians inhabiting, attended hether the God of Riches, all triumphantly shyning in a Mine of gould.⁸⁴

The intention seems to have been to present the invited ambassadors at the masque with an impression of the riches available to the English in the New World, and riches meant political power. So when *The Tempest* was played at Whitehall in November 1611 and also at the same Elizabeth–Palatine marriage celebrations in February 1612–13,⁸⁵ it seems to have been intended as a message to the invited ambassadors about England’s new financial strength.

Nuzum has also declared that:

Their giving a public dramatist [Shakespeare] access to a confidential report [‘True Reportory’] so dangerous that they were

⁸² Chapman, *The memorable masqve*.

⁸³ Sullivan, “Court masques”, 73, see also 67–81.

⁸⁴ Chapman, *The memorable*, sig. D2^v. The masque has a phrase “flintie-hearted” in the Presentment which appears in Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* as “O! pity, ‘gan she cry, flint-hearted boy”. This was rare in 1593. An EEBO search on ‘flint/flinty hearted’ with spelling variations yields one return before 1593, this being in Marlorat, *A catholicke*.

⁸⁵ The Accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber lists a payment to John Heminge dated “1613, May 20” for playing *The Tempest* at the wedding (MS Rawl. A. 239, Bodleian Library, Oxford).

even then seeking by royal charter to suppress such intelligence implies that no mere chance placed this material in Shakespeare's hands; and indeed the Company would hardly [have] permitted him to use it but for some excellent reason; and no one but the Council of the Company could have put it into his hands.⁸⁶

However, not only does it seem unrealistic that Shakespeare would have had access to it, but there is evidence that not even the secretary of the Virginia Company had seen it. On 14 December 1610, just over three months after Strachey's report had reached the Virginia Company, the company secretary Richard Martin despatched a letter to Strachey in Virginia with the *Hercules* asking questions that the 'True Reportory' had already answered.⁸⁷

This leaves the question as to how material from a sensitive company document such as 'True Reportory' found its way into *The Tempest* which only a select committee of Virginia Company members could have inspected. Shakespeare could not have seen it but the evidence suggests that Francis Bacon did. Furthermore, Bacon is known to have been a producer of masques and devices, having later been commended in print for producing two masques at Whitehall:

20 February 1612–13: Elizabeth–Palatine marriage celebrations, jointly played by Gray's Inn and Inner Temple players, writing credited to Francis Beaumont.⁸⁸

6 January 1613–14: Earl of Somerset–Lady Frances Howard marriage celebrations, played by Gray's Inn members, writing credited to George Chapman.⁸⁹

The first of these was about eighteen months after *The Tempest* was played at Whitehall in November 1611 at a time when Bacon was also a close adviser to King James. Again, this is not to argue for Bacon's origination of *The Tempest*, but only to suggest that he provided information for it. We shall now examine the evidence for

⁸⁶ Nuzum, "The London Company", 19–20.

⁸⁷ Culliford, *William Strachey*, 123–5.

⁸⁸ Beaumont, *The masque*, sig. B.

⁸⁹ Chapman, *The memorable masqve*.

Bacon's influence on the play by citing some of the rare collocations his corpus shares with it.

Francis Bacon's rare parallels with *The Tempest*

When *A True and Sincere Declaration* appeared in 1610,⁹⁰ it became the first pamphlet to be officially endorsed by the London Virginia Council. It gives the three "Principall and Maine Endes" of the plantation as "Religious, Noble, and Feaseable".⁹¹ These relate to the propagation of Christianity,⁹² reducing an expanding English population, and the return of commodities. It concludes with the hope that God might:

nourish this graine of seed, that it may spread till all people of the earth admire the greatnesse, and sucke the shades and fruite thereof⁹³

This is comparable with Bacon's

The Kingdome of heauen is compared not to any great kernel, or nut; but to a graine of Musterd, which is one of the least of grains, but hath in it a propertie and spirit hastily to get vp and spread.⁹⁴

As for the justification for colonisation, William Symond's sermon *Virginia Brittainia* in April 1609, which was addressed to the "Aduenturers and Planters for Virginia", had relied entirely on biblical precedent:

Goe teach (saith he [Christ]) all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Sonne, and the Holy Ghost⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Counsel, *A True and Sincere Declaration*. It was entered in the Stationers' Register on 14 December 1609.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, sig. C1.

⁹² "Virginia which now (by God grace) through our English shal heare news of Christ" in Benson, *A sermon*, 92.

⁹³ Counsel, *True and Sincere Declaration*, sig. D2.

⁹⁴ Bacon, *The Essaies*, sig. Q3^v.

⁹⁵ Symonds, *A Sermon*, sig. C. It was entered in the Stationers' Register on 4 May 1609.

However, *A true declaration* did not see this as sufficient reason:

To preach the Gospell to a nation conquered, and to set their
soules at liberty, when we haue brought their bodies to slauerie;
It may be a matter sacred in the Preachers, but I know not how
justifiable in the rulers. Who for their meere ambition, doe set
vpon it, the glosse of religion.⁹⁶

In fact, this was precisely Bacon's position which he expressed in a letter to Sir George Villiers (1616) "To make no extirpation of the natives under pretence of planting religion: God surely will no way be pleased with such sacrifices."⁹⁷

As for *The Tempest*, it has several notable rare parallels with Bacon's work. We first examine two examples that occur prior to 1611, the assumed date of the play. There are only 2/5377 (0.04%) appearances of "print of goodnesse" (1.2.352) before 1611 when searching EEBO for 'good' or 'goodnesse'. One is John Jewel's *A replie* (1565)⁹⁸ and the other is Bacon's "hath the print of good" in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605).⁹⁹ Also, "The Mistris which I serue, quickens what's dead" (3.1.6) yields 5/5377 (0.09%) returns from the search 'quickens near.4 dead/life/alive'. Bacon has three uses, his earliest appearing in 'Of Sutes' (1597) where we find "voicing them [sutes] to bee in forwardness may discourage some kind of sutes, but doth quicken and awake others."¹⁰⁰

However, the strongest rare parallels post-date the play. The idea of self-deception by repetition of a fabricated tale appears in *The Tempest* as follows:

Like one
Who hauing into truth, by telling of it,
Made such a synner of his memorie
To credite his owne lie, he did beleuee
He was indeed the Duke, out o' th' Substitution

⁹⁶ Counseil, *A true declaration*, sig. B2^v.

⁹⁷ Spedding *et. al.*, *Letters and Life*, Vol. 6, 21.

⁹⁸ John Jewel, STC: 14606.

⁹⁹ Francis Bacon, STC: 1164.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Bacon, STC: 1137. For better but later examples by Bacon, see Clarke, "A linguistic analysis", §7.2.

And executing th' outward face of Roialtie
With all prerogatiue" (1.2.99–105).

Only Bacon in *The historie of the reigne of King Henry the Seuenth* (1629) has anything resembling this when discussing the impostor Perkin Warbeck

Insomuch as it was generally beleueed (aswell amongst great Persons, as amongst the *Vulgar*) that he was indeed *Duke* Richard. Nay, himselfe, with long and continuall countefeiting, and with oft telling a Lye, was turned by habit almost into the thing heesee med to bee; and from a *Lyer* to a *Beleeuer*.”¹⁰¹

Quiller–Couch sees the above lines from *The Tempest* (“Like one ...”) as counterfeit coining metaphors¹⁰² and Bacon also made use of a similar device in *Henry the Seuenth* “To counterfeit the dead image of a King in his coyne, is an high Offence by all Lawes: But to counterfeit the liuing image of a King in his Person, exceedeth all Falsification.”

Another correspondence arises from the following lines in *The Tempest*:

Thy bankes with pioned, and twilled brims
Which spungie *Aprill*, at thy hest betrimis;
To make cold Nymphs chast crownes” (4.1)

Searches in EEBO for ‘pioned’, ‘piony’, and ‘april near.30 piony’ produce no results before 1611. However, noting Shakespeare’s “Nymphs chast crownes”, there is Rembert Dodoens’s *A niewwe herball* (1578) with “his flowers and leaues are much smaller [than the usual female piony], and the stalkes shorter, the whiche some call Mayden or Virgin Peonie” as well as “Pionie floureth at the beginning of May, and deliuereth his seed in June.”¹⁰³ However, only two examples occur that mention ‘piony’ in April: one is *The Tempest*, and the other is Bacon’s essay ‘Of Gardens’ (1625) in

¹⁰¹ Francis Bacon, STC: 1161. For a detailed treatment, see Clarke, “A linguistic analysis”, Table 7.1, No. 18 and footnote.

¹⁰² Quiller–Couch and Dover Wilson, *The Tempest*, 91.

¹⁰³ Dodoens, *A niewwe herball*, 244–5.

which we find “In *Aprill* follow, The Double white Violet; [list of flowers] The Tulippa; The Double Piony.”¹⁰⁴

In summary, the argument developed here is that in 1611, unpublished information about the Virginia colony appeared in *The Tempest* that Shakespeare was unlikely to have had access to. This was in addition to facts that had already appeared in Virginia Company publications. This suggests that one or more Virginia colony specialists assisted in providing material about the colony for the play. With rare parallels both before and after the first known performance of *The Tempest*,¹⁰⁵ and with his access to ‘True Reportory’ (one of the play’s sources) through his work on the Virginia Company’s *A true declaration*, there is a strong case here that one of these company members was Francis Bacon.

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¹⁰⁴Bacon, *The Essayes*, 267. This is not keyed text so is unavailable to an automated EEBO search.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of all 13 rare parallels between Bacon’s work and *The Tempest* see Clarke, ‘A linguistic analysis’, Table 7.3.

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