

**THE LIAR AND THE  
BARD: DAVID INGRAM,  
WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE AND *THE  
TEMPEST***

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A few of the men that John Hawkins stranded in Mexico in 1568 wrote chronicles of their escape or captivity. By and large they penned unremarkable works most of which were featured in Richard Hakluyt's *Principals of Navigation*. The chronicles are not literary masterpieces by any stretch of the imagination but offer a marvelous opportunity to visit the minds of ordinary Elizabethan seamen.

Besides the inclusions in Hakluyt, two other sources offer up even more unique narratives. Neither story was in the first person: both were oral testimonies. William Collins spoke with officials of the Inquisition regarding the state of religion and other wide-ranging social issues under Elizabeth. Collin's amazing testimony numbers two hundred and fifty pages. The second individual, David Ingram, left a legacy that lives today.

Ingram is still the darling of American historians consumed by the notion of the noble savage. Ingram's quasi travel narrative was delivered before a British Admiralty Commission in 1586 some twenty years after his escape from Mexico. His testimony included descriptions of an ordered society that was technologically and politically superior to that of England. This meaty information, however, is surrounded by beasts as mythical as those conjured up by John Mandeville. It presents those who use his words in support of a utopian Native American culture with a conundrum: was Ingram lying?

By synthesizing the English narratives, whether written or testamentary, a marvelous picture of an Elizabethan lower-echelon subject appears. Granted, their language lacks the wit and erudition of their literary contemporaries, but what they said probably influenced the Elizabethan concept of the New World, Spain, and the glory of discovery. The fact that some of the recollections are flawed—whether intentionally or not— sends a powerful message to those who rely on language to interpret motive or historical truth.

I'll believe both;  
And what else want credit, come to me,  
*And I'll be sworn tis true: travellers ne'er did lie,  
Though fools at home condemn them. (3.3.26-27)*

William Shakespeare's Antonio made this rather startling pronouncement about unicorns, phoenixes, and the veracity of travelers in *The Tempest*. A few

years after Antonio's observation, the Reverend Samuel Purchas took a rather different position:

As for David Ingram's perambulation to the north parts, Master Hakluyt, in his first edition [1589], published the same; but it seemeth some incredibilities of his reports caused him to leave him out in the next impression; the reward for lying being, not to be believed in truths. (Purchas 1905-1907: IV, 179)

Was one of Antonio's fools the most Reverend Purchas? Was the New World traveler David Ingram a liar? (Hakluyt 1589).<sup>1</sup> And, was there a literary bond between Antonio's creator and Purchas's liar? I propose that David Ingram's perambulation was the inspiration for Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

While this idea challenges previous scholarship—some over three hundred years old present here compelling new evidence that has been previously overlooked. Before presenting the information, however, it is essential to place Ingram in context. His story challenges some directions taken in recent analyses of *The Tempest*. Reviewing these should demonstrate the misidentification of some of Shakespeare's literary or historical resources. Finally, a partial line for line analysis between Ingram's *Relation* and Shakespeare's play suggests that David Ingram and William Shakespeare were de facto collaborators of *The Tempest*.

Ingram led one of the groups of survivors which split up after being landed close to Panuco. Some felt their very existence hinged on contacting the Spanish, while others feared reprisal for the recent battle. Ingram's group, which eventually diminished to three men, decided to strike out for Florida. Their destination was a French outpost where the English had been welcomed on previous voyages to the New World (Markham 1878).<sup>2</sup> Little did they know the tiny French sanctuary had been eliminated by Spanish troops that very year. Thus began the incredible journey of David Ingram.

By Ingram's account, he and his companions walked over 3,000 miles. Their path began near Tampico, Mexico and ended, according to Ingram, around Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Ingram's knowledge of Cape Breton was

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<sup>1</sup>The specific chapter that is the subject of this essay is "The Relation of David Ingram" found on pages 557 through 562.

<sup>2</sup>Hawkins provided victuals for the French who were so hard pressed that their leader, identified as Laudonier, sustained a mutiny. He was so impressed by Hawkins aid and assistance that he wrote a laudatory account which was published in Paris in 1586. It was translated by Richard Hakluyt and reprinted in the aforementioned publication (1589: 65).

easy to come by, Hawkins prior voyage focused on that area.<sup>3</sup> It was there, so the story goes, that they were picked up by a French trading vessel and returned to France, hence they made their way back to England. This path would have taken them along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent: a region mostly untouched by Europeans. While Ingram's reappearance in England was somewhat miraculous, his recollection of the odyssey was fraught with problems.

Most scholars doubt that Ingram and his fellow travelers made it as far as Nova Scotia in the one year which elapsed from their stranding in Mexico (Williamson 1949). I say "most" because a few historians who specialize in Amerindian history seize on Ingram's accounts as gospel to advance the argument for the noble savage and a native society that was just as civilized as that of Europe. However, it is most likely that Ingram and his companions were rescued in Florida. For Ingram and his mates to traverse the land portion, hit the sailing season just right, encounter an eastbound vessel, and return to England are nigh impossible. The route Ingram claimed, even under the best of circumstances, could not have been negotiated in fewer than three years.

While problems with time and distance are enough to challenge Ingram's story that is not what branded him a liar in Samuel Purchas's eyes; it is what Ingram purportedly saw. He claims to have seen creatures every bit as fanciful as those described by Shakespeare's Antonio. Unlike some of his fellow *abandonados*, Ingram did not write an account of his adventure.<sup>4</sup> Instead he was the deponent at a hearing convened by Sir Francis Walsingham in 1582 some thirteen years after the episode. Walsingham, Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, was seeking information that might be helpful to some of the individuals who were proposing to colonize the very regions that Ingram claimed to have visited. His testimony, recorded in Hakluyt's 1589 edition of *Principal*, is the basis of my argument.

The 1589 edition is important in that it was replaced some eleven years later without David Ingram's input. If you recall, Purchas indicated it was left out as a "reward for lying." I propose the 1600 edition became the most commonly used Hakluyt work thereby keeping the 1589 Ingram account hidden from view. Other works of the period, some extrapolated from antiquity, have direct links to the play but none possess the overwhelming connectivity as those found in David Ingram's "Relation."

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<sup>3</sup>The Second Voyage of Sir John Hawkins contains vivid descriptions similar to what Ingram more than likely heard from shipboard chats with the veterans of Hawkins prior ventures (Markham 1878).

<sup>4</sup>Both Miles Phillips and Job Hortop's accounts occur in Hakluyt (1589).

Two relatively recent articles in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, one by Charles Frey (1979) and the other by Meredith Ann Skura (1989), delve into the probability that travel narratives influenced *The Tempest*. Frey convincingly links a god to Caliban. His main source is Richard Eden, who published *The History of Trauayle in the West and East Indies* in 1555.<sup>5</sup> Eden's account was not first hand; his was an abridged and translated version of Antonio Pigafetta's story of Magellan's circumnavigation. Eden (through Magellan and Pigafetta) told of a Setebos who was the god of the natives of Patagonia. Setebos is mentioned—by name, not inference—in Acts I and IV of *The Tempest*. Frey also located a passage describing the nature of the Patagonian natives in a contemporary travel narrative but it is not as compelling as the Setebos reference (Frey 1979: 35).<sup>6</sup> A comparison of Eden and Ingram's Amerindian characterizations follows.

Skura's approach to *The Tempest* differs considerably from Frey's. She emphasizes the language (or, to use her term, "discourse") of colonialism. While Frey attempted to locate the exact passages that Shakespeare appropriated for this play, Skura takes an interpretive approach embracing many travel narratives. But, she sees Purchas's *Pilgrimes* as the primary resource for *The Tempest*. This allows her to connect the English Virginia and Bermuda colonization efforts to the play. This is a pitfall into which many have previously fallen. Since *The Tempest* was first performed in 1611, and Purchas's volumes were not published until 1623, the Virginia and Bermuda episodes she embraces were not yet in print. However, to her credit Skura acknowledges that Shakespeare consulted both Richard Eden's and Richard Hakluyt's anthologies while writing *The Tempest* (Skura 1989: 54). However, she, and most likely anyone else who searched Hakluyt's narratives overlooked, was his 1589 edition which contained David Ingram's testimony. Skura is somewhat dismissive of the travel narratives and laments a certain lack of resources: "In 1611 there were in England no literary portrayals of new world inhabitants and certainly no examples of colonialist discourse"(57).

In the current context, perhaps Skura's point is well taken, especially if one considers one of Stephen Greenblatt's works, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (1992). Greenblatt saw all travel narratives as lies perpetuated by differing world views, wonderment, and an inability to describe new discoveries without using familiar points of reference. However, using the Greenblatt or Skura ideas of fallacious discourse, or as Skura asserts the lack of

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<sup>5</sup>*The Decades of the New World of West India* (1555) is another Eden work that Frey believes may have influenced Shakespeare.

<sup>6</sup>Francis Fletcher, Sir Francis Drake's chaplain wrote lengthy descriptions of the Patagonian Indians and mentioned their god Setebos but Frey feels that Fletcher lifted the term from other sources.

contemporary literary resources, why would Shakespeare even bother to look at the travel narratives?

Stephen Orgel, however, takes the position that *The Tempest* is “more historically determined than traditional views have allowed” (1987).<sup>7</sup> He sees great merit in Frey’s approach to *The Tempest*. To wit, Orgel is certain of one historical resource: “We know he did in fact turn to Montaigne’s [essays], where he found the other elements of the topos as well: that the natives have a utopian government and sanction adultery” (34). Orgel also attempts to link the Virginia and Bermuda adventures to the play and presents a fairly compelling argument. The problem with his theory, as with the others mentioned previously, revolves around timing. Was there enough time for these writings to influence Shakespeare? There may well have been but remember David Ingram, his account predates all of them. Not only would the publication of Ingram’s account give Shakespeare more than adequate time to ponder the idea of the New World, it gave a solid foundation on which to layer some of the other narratives that began cascading into early modern England. Orgel emphasized the predominant themes of the sixteenth-century travel narrative: “Cannibalism, Utopia, and free love reappear throughout the century as defining elements of New-World societies” (34).

If Orgel’s list of common travel-narrative elements are adopted as a litmus test and applied to *The Tempest*, Ingram’s account has a perfect score. This is evident from just scanning the marginalia. The most striking margin comment is one word: “Tempest” (Hakluyt 1589: 560). Obviously, finding the word “Tempest” alone should not send one rushing to conclusions, but the accompanying marginalia leave little doubt that William Shakespeare read and adopted David Ingram’s ideas. Of the fifty-seven margin subject headings, well over fifty percent relate to topics in Shakespeare’s play, not just tangentially but sometimes in direct paraphrase. What follows are the main and most obvious links to *The Tempest*.

Orgel’s list included cannibalism, Utopia, and free love; Ingram had something to say on all three subjects. Under the margin note “Canibals,” he tells of their physical and social traits, not from first hand knowledge but descriptions provided by the Indians with whom he came into contact:

The people in those Countreys are professed enemies to the Canibals or men eaters: The Canibals doe most inhabite betweene Norumbega, & Bariniah, they have teeth like dogs teeth, and thereby you may know them. (Hakluyt 1589: 558)

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<sup>7</sup>The cited commentary is from the rear cover of Orgel’s book.

Note the spelling of “Canibal,” Orgel, as many before him, are certain that Canibal [*sic*] is nothing more than a Shakespearean anagram for Caliban (1987: 34). In Act II of *The Tempest*, there are many inferences to the monstrous and quite bestial appearance of Caliban. One in particular is worthy of note, Trinculo joins in the ongoing denigration of Caliban by stating:

I shall laugh myself to death at this puppy-headed monster. A most scurvy monster! I could find in my heart to beat him. (2.2.148-150)

Why select a dog’s head when describing cannibals? Was it essential for Shakespeare to have Trinculo make a canine reference? Orgel would have us believe that Shakespeare’s concept of cannibals came from Montaigne’s essay “On Cannibals.” Montaigne’s cannibals did not possess dog-like features.

Furthermore, they [cannibals] live in a country so exceedingly pleasant and temperate situation that, as my testimonies have further assured me, they never saw a man either shaking with palsy, toothless, with eyes drooping, or crooked and stooping through age. (1603: I.100-107, Ch. 30, “On Cannibals”)

Montaigne’s man-eaters bear no resemblance to Ingram’s nor Shakespeare’s, assuming, as many suggest that Caliban was a New World cannibal. Nevertheless, Orgel felt so strongly about Montaigne’s contribution to *The Tempest* that the essay “On Cannibals” was made an appendix to *The Oxford Shakespeare*.

Another item on Orgel’s list is Utopia. He argues that Shakespeare was also partly influenced by Montaigne in this regard. Again, Ingram trumps Montaigne for his Utopian descriptions mirror those in *The Tempest*. Consider, however, the Utopian nature of Ingram’s narrative, to this day he is cited by those who would adopt the Noble Savage and unspoiled land of milk and honey paradigm. Ingram reported “large precious stones, gold, silver, “Iron and Mineral falt,” “pearles,” “fine fures,” “Sweete turfe,” “The fertilitie of the foyle,” great forests of different types, marvelous “Clofes and pastures,” the never-ending uses of the palm, fruits, wines, flowers, and all manner of wild and domesticated animals. All of these represent a mere fraction of Ingram’s account. He was as laudatory of the peoples (except for the cannibals). They were “noble men,” physically attractive, courteous, loyal, excellent city planners, great architects, capable shipwrights, and very wise. Not everything was perfect; Ingram related some disturbing anomalies. He found the people of the New World heretical, adulterous, and polygamous.

Those sins of heresy, free love, and polygamy complete the conditions set forth by Orgel in his effort to prove the Montaigne connection. While the examples he cited, and the ones I mention above, may seem peripheral on their

face, other passages from Ingram's testimony are far more convincing. Two commentaries in particular virtually jump out of Ingram's narrative straight into the dialog of *The Tempest*. One has to do with a mythical creature, the second to the nature of Prospero's island and Caliban's role as a dispossessed monarch serving a European.

Of the many odd creatures that populate both Ingram's account and Shakespeare's play, one in particular is so outlandish that it defies all rules of coincidence. A long-winded Gonzalo described the beast:

Faith, sir, you need not fear. When we were boys,  
 Who would believe that there were mountaineers  
 Dewlapped like bulls, whose throats had hanging at'em  
 Wallets of flesh? —or that there were such men  
 Whose heads stood in their breasts? (3.3.43-47)

Compare the description with that offered by Ingram: "Hee did also see another strange Beaft bigger then a Beare, *he had neither head nor neck: his eyes and mouth were in his breast.*" (Hakluyt 1589: 560). While fanciful beasts predate the sixteenth century, the similarity of description is too precise to cast aside as circumstantial.

Why did Shakespeare strand his characters on an island? Could there be any connection with the plight of the *abandonados*? After all, Ingram was put ashore without an immediate means to return home. He endured the same type of tribulations and experienced an almost parallel set of circumstances. And what of Caliban as a deposed king? Why portray Caliban as a slave? Are the colonial aspects alluded to in *The Tempest* a polyglot of contemporary travel narratives or contrivances of modern scholars? The final passage of David Ingram's testimony, I believe, virtually sets the stage for Shakespeare:

Also the sayd examine sayth, that there is an Island called Corrafau, and there are in it five or six thousand Indians at the least, and all of those are governed by one onely Negro, who is but a slave to a Spaniard. And moreover the Spaniards will send but one of their slaves with an hundred or two hundred of the Indians, when they goe to gather golde in the Rivers descending from the mountaines. And when they shall be absent by the space of twentie or thirty dayes at the least, every one of the Indians will nevertheless obey all the Slaves commaundments with as great reuerance, as if he were their naturall King, although there be never a Chieftan neere them by the space of a hundred or two hundred miles: which greatly argueth the great obedience of those people, and how easly they may be governed when they be once conquered. (Hakluyt 1589: 562)

Shakespeare made sure that his audience understood Caliban's status as a slave. While attached to Stephano, his servitude is taken advantage of by all

other characters who come in contact with him. Caliban's obedience is unwavering even though he often voices strong opposition to his rather shoddy treatment. Was Caliban modeled after Ingram's "Negro?" Perhaps not, one of Ingram's fellow *abandonados* wrote of the Chichimici Indian nation that was ruled over by a "negroe" (Hakluyt, 310).<sup>8</sup> This account was also in the 1589 edition of Hakluyt. The black chieftain came to his position after escaping from his "cruel spanishe Master" (312).

No matter the color of Caliban, he did have a white master, and have a technically stronger claim on Prospero's usurped domain: the right of succession:

This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,  
Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give Me  
Water with berries in't and teach me how  
To name the bigger light and how the less,  
That burn by day and night; and then I loved thee,  
And showed thee all the qualities o'th' isle,  
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile—  
Cursed be that I did so! All the charms  
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats light on you!  
For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was mine own king, and here you sty me  
In this hard rock, while you do keep from me  
The rest o'th' island. (1.2.331-343)

Was Caliban Ingram's Negro king that was slave to a Spaniard? Perhaps, Ingram also observed that some of the peoples he met had "faces and skins the colour like an olive" (Hakluyt 1589: 558).

Notice the similar language of Ingram and Caliban. This is the colonial discourse that Greenblatt, Skur, and Orgel find so crucial. And they are right: exploitation and subjugation dominate both dialogues. Ingram was shown the "qualities" of the New World by his hosts but sees them, and their land, as a potential English asset. Caliban descriptions are like Ingram's as he explains to his exploiters the bounty of his island and rues the day they came ashore. The relationship of slave and master is clear in both passages, as is the co-option of commodity and personal freedom. David Ingram's words haunt *The Tempest*.

Ingram was not the only *abandonado* that left a holographic legacy. Three others did as well. Two left written accounts and the other gave testimony somewhat similar to Ingram's. The published accounts, one by Miles Phillips and the other by Job Hortop, appeared in various editions of the Hakluyt

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<sup>8</sup>This is Philips's account.



volumes. Phillips's account appeared in the same 1589 edition as Ingram's, but it would appear that Shakespeare found nothing in Phillips memoirs worthy of use in *The Tempest* with the possible exception of the "Negroe king." Phillips told mainly of his captivity and escape from Mexico, nothing fanciful or marvelous. Hortop's recollections were just as mundane, at least from a literary perspective. However, both chronicles offer a wealth of valuable information for historians. The other account, that of William Collins, was completely unavailable to Shakespeare. It is a lengthy trial record of Collins' prosecution by the Mexican Inquisition.

Phillips, Hortop, and Collins provide records of great historical value, most of what they said can be corroborated and explained. Ingram, on the other hand, left a rather questionable legacy. While Shakespeare found his "relation" useful, how could a historian take Ingram seriously? This is the man who reported elephants and "a Monftrous beaft twife as big as an Horfe... Thefe Beafth hath two teeth or hornes of a foote long growing ftraight foorth by their nofethrilles" (560). Ingram also saw the devil, not the Biblical Satan, but the Amerindian God "Colluchio" who "[s]peaketh unto them [the Indians] fometimes in the likeneffe of a blacke Dogge, and fometimes in the likeneffe of a blacke Calfe" (561). Shakespeare's probable fascination with Ingram is easy to understand, but Ingram's historiographical clout is incomprehensible.

Purchas recognized Ingram as a liar more than four hundred years ago. More recent challenges to Ingram's veracity exist. Frank Aydelotte recognized that Hakluyt "came to consider it so improbable that he omitted it [Ingram's account] from the final edition of 1599-1600" (1942: 5). Rayner Unwin was even more derisive: "As leader they chose David Ingram, a common sailor whose gifts of fortitude and resolution were only exceeded by his erratic imagination" (1960: 234). Why, then, do some historians insist upon using Ingram's testimony?

Ingram well serves those historians who adhere to the concept of the noble savage, a Utopian Amerindian society, and a people destroyed by European exploiters. Ingram shows up in *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Jennings 1975). Another title in which Ingram makes an appearance is *American Slavery American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (Morgan 1975). While neither author endorses Ingram as entirely credible, both give his testimony the power to have moved the likes of Sir Humphrey Gilbert.

Gilbert, if not known by, was surely acquainted with Shakespeare for he was well known in court circles. There is no question that Gilbert knew members of the Virginia Company, men such as the Lords Southampton and Pembroke, Christopher Brooke, or Dudley Digges (Orgel 1987: 32). These men

were so familiar to Shakespeare that two of them show up in dedications of his work (32).<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to believe that Shakespeare's familiarity with so many explorers of the New World, that he would be unfamiliar with Ingram's tendency to exaggerate.

While sixteenth-century historians —and would be explorers— debunked Ingram, their twentieth-century counterparts saw fit to resurrect him. Ingram is to North American colonial historians what Bartolomé de las Casas is to those who endorse the Black Legend: a spoiler. In other words, an individual whose existence becomes the foundation of legends or propaganda. In the case of las Casas, the unshakeable concept of the cruel and genocidal Spaniard as an exploiter and waster of all he touched became a truism. In a like manner, some twentieth-century historians surgically removed specific passages of Ingram's testimony to argue popular views: that Amerindians led a Utopian existence before the Europeans spoiled their world, or that travel narratives —such as Ingram's— drove people like Gilbert to consider the Amerindians as savages ripe for conquest. A historian, telling a story from either standpoint is sure to be controversial.

And so the question becomes, was Shakespeare a social commentator or an imaginative playwright who saw in David Ingram's story nothing more than a basis for a marvelous play? That we may never know. Ingram's island, an enslaved king, Utopia, mythic beasts, and other unique descriptions live in Shakespeare's play. Yes, there are shadows of Ovid, Montaigne, Richard Eden, and others in *The Tempest*, but nothing that comes close to the overwhelming influence of Ingram the *abandonado*.<sup>10</sup> I would argue that those who seek historical connections to the play as late as 1610 are misguided. David Ingram inspired William Shakespeare's *Tempest*. However, that being said, the words of Charles Frey are worth remembering when considering *The Tempest*: “and as I have tried to suggest, in order to explore the meanings implicit in the play's peculiar merger of history and romance, interpreters must travel and labor still onward.”

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<sup>9</sup>The works were *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, and *The Folio*. The dedicatees were Southampton and Pembroke respectively.

<sup>10</sup>Orgel suggests (as others he cites) that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was the source of Caliban's mother's name and character (1987: 19).

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