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Shakespeare and the Mediterranean • 2

The Tempest

Edited by Fabio Ciambella



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Shakespeare and the Mediterranean

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Part 1

***The Tempest: Its Genesis* and Its Mediterranean World(s)**

How Did Shakespeare Write *The Tempest*?

PAUL EDMONDSON AND STANLEY WELLS

Abstract

In this article, we want to think about how Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*. The play first appeared in print in 1623 in the First Folio, but is recorded as having been performed in London by the King's Men before King James I and his court at the Palace of Whitehall on Hallowmas night – that is to say, the 1st of November – 1611. It was usual for plays to be given in the public theatres before being performed at court so probably *The Tempest* had already been performed in spring or summer 1610 in one of the company's regular playhouses. It seems likely that Shakespeare had started thinking about it during the later months of 1609 or early in 1610. It was to be the last play he wrote single-handed. The research question we want to answer is “How did Shakespeare set about writing *The Tempest*?” The play is in fact unusual among Shakespeare's plays in that the story it tells is of his own devising, although it draws heavily both on the playwright's reading and on his knowledge of contemporary events. In this sense, it is very similar to *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with which the play shares the Mediterranean setting. In our opinion, the answer to the question must be sought in the relationship between the artist's life and the creations of his art.

KEYWORDS: *The Tempest*; King's Men; source studies; art; Mediterranean Sea

In this article, we want to think about how Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*.¹ The play first appeared in print in 1623, seven years after he died, in the First Folio edition of his complete plays, but is recorded as having been performed in London by Shakespeare's company, the King's Men, before King James I and his court at the Palace of Whitehall, the principal royal residence, on Hallowmas night – that is to say, the 1st of November – 1611. It would have been

1 Quotations from *The Tempest* are from Shakespeare 1987. Quotations from other Shakespearian works are from Shakespeare 2005.

a grand occasion. The King's Men, formerly the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which Shakespeare had helped to found in 1594 and for which he had acted and written ever since, was the leading theatre company of the time. Performances at court before the King and the Royal Family were attended by fashionable audiences that included aristocrats and foreign ambassadors. It was usual for plays to be given in the public theatres before being performed at court so probably *The Tempest* had already been performed in spring or summer 1610 in one of the company's regular playhouses, either the open-air Globe, or the smaller, more exclusive indoor Blackfriars playhouse – or possibly both. It seems likely that Shakespeare had started thinking about it during the later months of 1609 or early in 1610. It was to be the last play he wrote single-handed - that is to say before *Henry VIII*, otherwise known as *All is True*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the lost *Cardenio*, all written in collaboration with his younger colleague John Fletcher. Whether he knew as he wrote *The Tempest* that it was to be his last solo-authored play we cannot tell for certain, but it is natural to see Prospero, the deviser of the play's action, as to some extent a projection of its author, and there is a valedictory air about the play, not least in Prospero's Epilogue as he asks for the audience's applause as a way of liberating him. In his words we hear simultaneously the character Prospero, the actor who is impersonating him, and the playwright Shakespeare, all of whom can call up "spirits to enforce" and "art to enchant":

Gentle breath of yours [that is, the audience's applause] – my sails
 Must fill, or else my project fails,
 Which was to please. Now I want
 Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
 And my ending is despair
 Unless I be relieved by prayer,
 Which pierces so that it assaults
 Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
 As you from crimes would pardoned be,
 Let your indulgence set me free.
 (5.1.329-38)

How, we want to ask, did Shakespeare set about writing *The Tempest*?

In order to write any play, he had first to find or to devise a story to tell – or possibly more than one story, if he wanted to write a play with both a main and a parallel plot, or subplot, as for instance in *King Lear*. And having chosen or devised a basic narrative, he needed to shape it to dramatic form.

The Tempest is unusual among Shakespeare's plays in that the story it tells is of his own devising. He seems to have been assisted in writing the play by accounts of an actual shipwreck – that of a boat called *The Sea Venture* – off the coast of Bermuda in 1609, mentioned in documents written the following year. For most of the 35 or so plays that he had already written, or in which he had at least a main hand, he had relied for his basic plot material on pre-existing sources – on history, whether ancient, as in the Roman plays, or modern, as in the English history plays; on legend, as in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*; on prose fictions, as in the romantic comedies, *Othello*, and *The Winter's Tale* or on pre-existing plays, some classical, as in *The Comedy of Errors*, others modern, as in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

But occasionally he made up a story himself. Such plays are especially revealing about his creative processes. As long ago as 1972 Stanley Wells published an essay called "Shakespeare Without Sources" in which he discussed the three plays – *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest* – in which Shakespeare was not dependent for his overall plot on pre-existing narrative material. He suggested that these plays are especially interesting in that they bring us close to the workings of Shakespeare's own mind and imagination. The fact that their plots are of his own devising does not of course mean that in writing them he did not draw extensively on his reading in, especially, the classical literature that he had studied at school and that continued to fascinate him throughout his creative life. All three plays have a Mediterranean setting – *Love's Labour's Lost* in Navarre, a province of Spain; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Athens (though with very strong reminiscences of Shakespeare's Warwickshire), and *The Tempest* on an unnamed Mediterranean island. And the classical Roman author Ovid is a dominant presence in *The Tempest* to such an extent that one of Prospero's greatest and best-known speeches, the one that begins "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves" (5.1.33), is virtually a direct borrowing from the *Metamorphoses*

(Ovid 1961, 7.197-209) where it is spoken by a sorceress, Medea. But the plots of these three plays are Shakespeare's own, and thus especially revealing of how his mind worked.

Although *The Tempest* does not adapt a pre-existing story, it draws heavily both on Shakespeare's reading and on his knowledge of contemporary events. It is a play of ideas, taking as its basis the story of a bookish and reclusive Duke of the Mediterranean city of Milan, Prospero, who, fifteen years before the action begins, had deputed his powers to his brother, Antonio. Treacherously, Antonio persuaded the King of Naples, Alonso, to support his usurpation of Prospero's powers and to banish Prospero and his three-year-old daughter Miranda. At the humane insistence of the courtier Gonzalo, they are allowed to set out to sea in a small boat provisioned only with Prospero's books. They have come ashore on a small island inhabited only by a semi-human monster, Caliban, son of a deceased witch, Sycorax, whom Prospero has subdued as his slave; and Prospero has somehow acquired a spirit, Ariel, who will carry out his commands. The action begins twelve years after the banishment. Alonso with members of his court and his son Ferdinand are returning to Italy from Antonio's daughter's wedding to the son of the King of Tunis when their ship is wrecked on the coast of the island to which Prospero had been banished.

The opening scene, portraying the shipwreck in graphic detail, is a virtuoso piece of dramatic writing showing astonishing knowledge of seamanship. It opens the play with a bang, introducing us to the members of the Neapolitan court and providing an image of a topsy-turvy situation in which the normal social hierarchy is challenged and disrupted by the powers of nature. "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" says the boatswain (1.1.16-17).

The long scene that follows, in which Prospero recapitulates for his fifteen-year-old daughter Miranda the events that have brought them to the island, is in complete contrast. Miranda manages to remain alert throughout Prospero's thorough narrative account, but eventually falls asleep at the end of it. There is, however, a distinct possibility that members of the audience will have nodded off before she does. Stanley remembers long ago taking his seven-year-old daughter to see the play and feeling her gradually dozing off as Prospero went on and on and on. This is the price that Shakespeare

(and his audiences) have to pay for his decision, to simulate the unity of time, to begin the story at the end.

The composition of a play, as distinct from a prose narrative, makes special demands. The story, however long a period of time it covers, must be one that can be represented on stage within a limited period of time, a period that is determined in part by the staying power of the audience. Elizabethan audiences seem to have had great stamina – Shakespeare’s plays vary in length from fewer than 2000 lines of verse and prose in *The Comedy of Errors* to as many as 4000 or so in *Hamlet*. *The Tempest*, with just over 2200 lines, is his third shortest play. And plays must have stories that can be represented by a limited number of actors according to the size of the company that performs them.

At the time Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, his acting company, the King’s Men, had a basic complement of some fourteen actors, all male, including three or four boys who primarily played the female roles. Shakespeare himself acted with them, though not necessarily in every play. The company had been in existence for some seventeen years – since 1594 – with few changes of the leading personnel. Shakespeare knew the actors intimately, was fully aware of their strengths and their weaknesses. The star actor, Richard Burbage (c.1567-1619), was about Shakespeare’s age and had played major roles with the company since its inception. He was, pretty certainly, the first Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Leontes, and Pericles, and he went on playing these roles long after he first created them. He was undoubtedly a great actor.

An early stage in the writing of the play was to think up a story which would form the basis of the plot. Shakespeare was an immensely practical man. As he wrote his play he would undoubtedly have borne in mind the need to provide roles suited to the talents of individual members of the company, including those who specialized in comic roles, and the three or four boy actors who played female roles. Some of the actors would have been required to double as the “strange shapes” that bring in the banquet and “dance about it” in Act Three. Since there is only one human female – Miranda – in the cast list, it seems likely that Ariel too would have been played by a boy, rather than by an adult male. He plays Ceres in the masque, and probably Iris and Juno too were given to boy

actors. The masque also calls for “certain reapers” who may have been played by actors of the company not required in this scene, or possibly by extras brought in especially for the court performance.

Shakespeare knew too that he had musicians in the company, and Stephen Orgel writes that *The Tempest* “calls for more music, and of more various kinds” than any other Shakespeare play (Shakespeare 1987, 220). We know all too little about this side of the company’s work. No instrumental incidental music has survived for any of Shakespeare’s plays but we have music for a few of the songs including an exquisite – and short – setting of Ariel’s “Full Fathom Five” composed by the lutenist Robert Johnson (c.1583-1633). To hear this song – sung for example by Alfred Deller, a counter-tenor, or male soprano, accompanied on a lute – is the closest that we can come nowadays to the experience of the play’s original audiences.

Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights had help in constructing their plays from the practice of the Mediterranean-based classical dramatists. It’s clear that at the Stratford grammar school Shakespeare studied comedies by the Roman dramatists Plautus and Terence which conform to the so-called unities of time, place and action as recommended by Aristotle – that the action of a play should take place in a single location within a single day and that it should have a unified plot. Very few plays by Elizabethan dramatists conform precisely to these criteria, but nevertheless they exerted a huge influence on stage practice from the very beginnings, and one of Shakespeare’s earliest plays, *The Comedy of Errors*, derives its plot from the classical drama, *Menaechmi*, by Plautus; no translation of it existed so he must have read it in the original Latin. It’s interesting that at the end of his career Shakespeare found it convenient to return to the principles of dramatic construction that had helped to shape its beginnings. In *The Tempest* as in *The Comedy of Errors* the action takes place within a single day. Both plays depict the end of a long story, and in both of them this compression necessitates extended passages of retrospective story telling from the father of a participant in the play’s action. In *The Comedy of Errors* Shakespeare places this in the opening scene but in *The Tempest* he delays it, opening the play with the high drama of the wreck of a ship carrying as passengers some of the principal characters of the play. We learn later that the storm that drives the ship onto the coast

of Prospero's island has been conjured up by Prospero himself. The opening stage direction, "*A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard*" reveals Shakespeare drawing on the full resources of the professional theatre of his time, with a thunder-run down which cannon balls were rolled and in which fireworks were set off to simulate lightning. Whether these resources were available for performances at court we cannot tell. Written entirely in prose, this scene is an extraordinarily naturalistic evocation of a storm at sea. Indeed, Orgel reprints an analysis of the seamanship of this scene by A.F. Falconer, a professor of English with exceptional expertise in nautical matters. He wrote a book called *Shakespeare and the Seaman* in which he reveals that in writing the scene "Shakespeare has made exact use of the professional language of seamanship". Intriguingly, Falconer states that "he could not have come by this knowledge from books, for there were no works on seamanship in his day, nor were there any nautical word-lists or glossaries" (Shakespeare 1987, 207-8). This statement has biographical implications. If it is true, then it seems that Shakespeare was either, at some point in his life, a sailor, or that he spoke closely with and listened to sailors.

But what of Shakespeare's wider literary research and thought that contributed to his writing of *The Tempest*? Shakespeare knew his Virgil well, and invites us to think about the *Aeneid* as the play unfolds before us. Yet, as Colin Burrow observes, it "shimmers across the work rather than shaping it" (2013, 82). Shakespeare uses the *Aeneid* to draw attention to aspects of his story, for example in the shipwrecked King Alonso and his courtiers' conversation about "widow Dido" and "widower Aeneas" (2.1.83, 84). Ariel's appearance at the magical banquet in act three seems like Shakespeare's attempt to stage an actual episode from the *Aeneid* (book three) when the travellers are about to partake of a feast only to have it snatched away from them by harpies. Shakespeare's use of Virgil is familiar and playful, drawing the audience in through references to the *Aeneid* but without, as Colin Burrow notes, directing them towards any overt political conclusion as Virgil himself does (2013, 77-83).

The Neapolitan crew, like Aeneas and his fellows, have encountered an enchanted island, which encourages Shakespeare to remind us of Homer's *The Odyssey* as well. Although he does not

explicitly mention the sorceress Circe, we might find an echo of the sound of her name in Sycorax. Circe is associated in Shakespeare's mind with a desperate kind of comic confusion. In his earlier tale of a shipwreck and its effects on a community, *The Comedy of Errors*, the Duke of Ephesus in commenting on the apparent enchantment of his exasperated citizens says: "Why, what an intricate impeach is this! / I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup" (5.1.270-1). As *The Tempest* unfolds before us, as we consider the story of Prospero's impeachment, watch the visual clowning of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban, witness the drawing together of confused and possibly traumatised individuals, and follow the intertwining of their island-experiences, we may well be reminded of "Circe's cup" and the enchanted and dangerous transformations that *The Tempest* permits.

Shakespeare makes significant use of John Florio's translation of the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne, published in 1603. Indeed he seems to have had the book open on his writing table as he was writing the play. The clearest evidence of this is in Gonzalo's Act Two, Scene One description of his ideal commonwealth. In his essay "Of the Cannibals", Montaigne wrote:

It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate nor of politic superiority, no use of service, of riches or of poverty, no contracts, no successions, no dividences, no occupation but idle, no respect of kindred but of common, no apparel but natural, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corn, or metal. The very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation, covetousness, envy, detraction, and pardon were never heard of among them. (1965, 1.220)

Shakespeare adopts this vision of a vegetarian, teetotal, egalitarian, pacifist, hippy paradise as Gonzalo speaks his account of what he would do if he "had plantation" of the island on which *The Tempest* is set:

I'th'commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things. For no kind of traffic
Would I admit no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,

And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation, all men idle, all;
And women too – but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty . . .
(2.1.145-54)

Not surprisingly, the cynical Sebastian and Antonio interrupt Gonzalo's idealistic musing with ironical comments, but the old counsellor goes on paraphrasing – or should we say plagiarizing – Montaigne undeterred:

All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavour. Treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine
Would I not have but nature should bring forth
Of it [its] own kind all foison, all abundance
To feed my innocent people.
(2.1.158-62)

Reading Shakespeare's lines, one can watch over his shoulder as he changes Montaigne's third-person description of what the "nation" – "commonwealth" in Gonzalo's revealing change – did into a vision of what the old man imagines might be.

There is a second, shorter but maybe even more significant debt to Florio's Montaigne. It comes at a climactic moment in the play's action, and interestingly was not remarked upon until 1961 by Eleanor Prosser. Speaking to Ariel at the moment when Prospero's enemies lie in his power, Prospero debates with himself and with Ariel whether he should exercise forgiveness. Ariel thinks he should: "Your charm so strongly works 'em / That if you now beheld them your affections / Would become tender". "Dost thou think so, spirit?" asks Prospero. "Mine would, sir, were I human", replies Ariel. To which his master responds:

And mine shall.
Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself.
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply

Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
 Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th'quick,
 Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
 Do I take part. The rarer action is
 In virtue than in vengeance.
 (5.1.20-8)

This is the turning-point of the play's action, and it draws upon another of Montaigne's essays, the one called "Of Cruelty", in which he writes:

He that through a natural facility and genuine mildness should neglect or contemn injuries received should no doubt perform a rare action, and worthy commendation. But he who, being stung and touched to the quick with any wrong or offence received, should arm himself with reason against this furiously-blind desire of revenge, and in the end, after a great conflict, yield himself mastery over it, should doubtless do much more. The first should do well, the other virtuously: the one action might be termed goodness, the other virtue. (1965, 2.108)

Shakespeare adapts Montaigne's "stung and touched to the quick" to "struck to th'quick", alters "rare action" to "rarer action", changes "injuries received" and "wrong or offence received" to "their high wrongs", takes over the idea of arming oneself with reason against vengeance ('revenge' in Montaigne), and adapts the concept of "genuine mildness" to that of becoming "tender". Shakespeare creatively reworks a passage from Montaigne that clearly meant much to him. In fact the entire play seems to have developed in Shakespeare's imagination from just those few words from Montaigne. They provided him with the moral centre of the drama, Ariel's spiritual articulation of forgiveness.

Shakespeare knew William Thomas's *The Historie of Italie* (1549), which includes an account of Prospero Adorno, a deposed duke of Genoa, and of King Alfonse of Naples who abdicated in favour of his son, Ferdinand, in order to "sail to Sicily where for the time of his short life (that dured scarce one year) he disposed himself to study, solitariness, and religion." (Shaheen 1999, 737). Prospero's magic, like that of Christopher Marlowe's Dr Faustus, is dependent

on books and entirely genuine. Whilst looking back to Marlowe's play, Shakespeare was also writing in stark contrast to his friend and rival Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, first performed in 1610, a year before *The Tempest*. In Jonson's play we encounter only a charlatan magic and its attendant satire. Shakespeare, true to his more romantic interests, powerfully depicts the figure of a genuine magus. The editor of the second Arden edition of *The Tempest*, Frank Kermode, in attempting to characterise the play as a "pastoral tragicomedy", mentions the influences of the popular Elizabethan comedy *Mucedorus* from around 1590, book six of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Shakespeare's collaborator John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*, from around 1608 (Shakespeare 1954, lix).

Shakespeare also drew on his knowledge of the Bible, and, since Prospero's is a spiritual kind of magic, *The Tempest* is easily available to theological readings. In his important study, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays*, first published in 1999, Naseeb Shaheen notes the use of the Bible in one of the accounts of the shipwreck of *The Sea Venture* in 1609 and the apparently miraculous survival of its crew and passengers. In November 1610 there was published *A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia, with a Confutation of Such Scandalous Reports as haue Tended to the Disgrace of so Worthy an Enterprize*. It compares the storm to the one in the Book of Jonah, the darkness of the storm to the plague of darkness in Egypt in the Book of Exodus, and there are mentions of the Garden of Eden, Elijah being fed by the ravens, and Jesus's words from Luke 21:26: "And men's hearts shall fail them for fear and for looking after those things which shall come on the world: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." But, notes Shaheen, Shakespeare uses none of these biblical references; instead those to be found in *The Tempest* are of Shakespeare's own choosing (1999, 763).

Shaheen notes twenty-five biblical allusions in *The Tempest*. But his interest is in direct verbal comparison, rather than a biblical context for Shakespeare's narrative. Shaheen does not, for example, refer to the four mentions of tempests in the Psalms, each evoking the power of God and the human desire for revenge. Shakespeare would have known these verses and mainly through Miles Coverdale's translation in *The Book of Common Prayer*. One of the references especially encapsulates his underlying dramatic

interest: Psalm 83:15, “Persecute them even so with thy tempest and make them afraid with thy storm”. The other three references to “tempest” in the Psalms are: Psalm 11:7 “Upon the ungodly he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be their portion to drink”. Psalm 50:3: “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: there shall go before him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about him”. And Psalm 55:8. “I would make haste to escape: because of the stormy wind and tempest”. Shakespeare alighted on the name “Ariel” from Isaiah 29:1-2. It appeared in the Bishop’s Bible and in the marginalia of the Geneva Bible, apparently Shakespeare’s preferred reading version. It is used twice as an alternative name for the holy city of Jerusalem – but only in Isaiah 29:1-2. But he also knew that “Ariel”, from the Hebrew, means “Lion of God”. His imagination would also have connected the name to the symbol of the great naval power, the dukedom of Venice, and its presiding and famous symbol, the lion of St Mark. Lion-like, it is Ariel who performs the tempest at Prospero’s bidding and puts “the wild waters in this roar” (1.2.2).

Shakespeare made use of biblical allusions throughout his works, but perhaps of all his plays *The Tempest* in performance comes closest to a religious ritual. Its story is almost liturgical. Prospero enacts his stories of enslavement, reunion, relinquishing, forgiveness, freedom, and retirement before an audience who, like a congregation gathered together in a church, are invited to bear witness, to support that which is being enacted, and who are asked to put their hands together for a prayer at the end of Prospero’s confessional epilogue.

Shakespeare wrote this play – as he wrote all his plays – out of his capacity for empathy. As Miranda looks onto the ship caught in the tempest, she, who is herself depicted as possessing a creative and artistic sensibility – and takes after her father – displays the empathy of a serious-minded dramatist: “O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer!” (1.2.5-6). Shakespeare himself might have said the same. The dramatist’s objective is to body forth a story that the audience can believe is real. In *The Winter’s Tale* when the supposed statue of Queen Hermione seems magically to come to life, Paulina speaks words that we might consider to be the dramatist’s creed: “it is required / You do awake your faith” (5.3.95).

In considering the overall impact of *The Tempest*, the critic Margreta de Grazia suggests that “the possibility that men can act in response to what does not touch them personally is the hope held out by the play, the hope present in Prospero’s name. It is also the hope sustaining the entire theatrical enterprise” (1981, 249). For de Grazia, if Prospero’s epilogue allows the audience itself to answer his prayer – and surely we always do with our applause – then, she says, our “response in itself would redeem art and life” (1981, 264). In other words, we, the audience, become god-like not only in restoring Prospero back to Naples but at the same time conferring our validation on Shakespeare’s work of art through the blessing which is ours to bestow – through our applause.

How, to return to the question with which we opened our talk, did Shakespeare write *The Tempest*? He wrote it partly through his own faith in the power of the theatre, that is his faith in his own “art to enchant”. His art was rooted in reading as well as in the practical considerations and contingency of the playhouse. *The Tempest* portrays the power of reading. Prospero’s library is “dukedom large enough” (1.2.110); indeed, he loves his books so much that he prizes them “above [his] dukedom” (1.2.169). His books accompany him in his exile. Reading sustains Prospero, gives him strength, and teaches him magic. This is why Caliban wants Stefano and Trinculo first to seize and then to burn Prospero’s books (3.2.90 and 96). But, as Prospero’s power becomes more and more apparent, it seems that he really needs only one book, the one he says that he himself will drown when he abjures his “rough magic” (5.1.50), and after he has broken and buried his staff.

Peter Greenaway’s 1991 film *Prospero’s Books* is visually compelling in its portrayal of the books from which Prospero has drawn his magical powers. Greenaway cast one of the greatest Shakespearian actors of the twentieth century, Sir John Gielgud, as Prospero. He is omnipresent in the film and speaks almost every single line of *The Tempest*, even those of the other actors whom he appears alongside. Greenaway’s film, through its portrayal of Prospero, thus succeeds in inscribing onto the play the omnipresence of Shakespeare himself, the author, the director of the action. In the story that the film wants to tell us – about where *The Tempest* came from and how Shakespeare-Prospero wrote it – only two of

Prospero's books survive. In the story about them told in the film, these are Book 23, that is *Master William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, from 1623, and Book 24, that is, as hear in the film, "the 36th play, *The Tempest*".

How, to return to the question with which we started, did Shakespeare write *The Tempest*? He did so in part through his own sense of himself as an author. That *The Tempest* somehow bodies forth Shakespeare's self-empowerment as a dramatist especially ignited the English Romantics' imagination: for them, Shakespeare was Prospero; Prospero is Shakespeare. An enabling phrase for this influential critical meme comes in one of the poet John Keats's marvellous letters which gestures towards an autobiographical approach to Shakespeare's works: "a man's life of any worth" wrote Keats on 19 February 1819, "is a continual allegory . . . Shakespeare led a life of Allegory; his works are the comments on it" (2014, 311). For Samuel Taylor Coleridge, when lecturing on the play, Prospero was "the very Shakespeare himself of the tempest" (Bate 1992, 530). The Prospero-Shakespeare equation persists in our cultural reception of the play and supplies the final part of our answer to the question: how did Shakespeare write *The Tempest*?

The image of Prospero's magical book becomes Shakespeare's book: his book of spells, a metaphor for the corpus of works surviving in various states of manuscript and forms of print until his writing of the play. One answer to the often-asked question: "why is *The Tempest* the first play to be printed in the 1623 folio edition if it is among the last plays Shakespeare wrote" is that in it we find a particularly intense example of Shakespeare's artistic sensibility and character. "Shakespeare" is sourced from within Shakespeare's previous works, as surely as Prospero is sourced in his own magic. Shakespeare repeats motifs and moods, and adapts situations and characterizations across the whole of his playwriting career. With *The Tempest* it is almost as though Shakespeare, late in his career, wanted to show himself and his playwrighting and acting peers that he could still produce a play on his own, still make up a story, perfectly crafted, and highly original.

We have already mentioned *The Comedy of Errors*. Its divisive storm and its family reunions forecast situations present in other works which precede *The Tempest*, for example *Twelfth Night*, or

what you will, *Pericles*, and *The Winter's Tale*. The coups-de-théâtre whereby the supposedly dead in those storm-at-sea plays are resurrected and reunited hark back to the appearance of the Abbess to Egeon and Egeon to the Abbess in *The Comedy of Errors* and to the coming together of Hero and Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, of Isabella and Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, and of Prince Posthumus, Princess Innogen and the long-lost royal family in *Cymbeline*. Prospero's relationship with Ariel harks back to King Oberon's with Robin Goodfellow in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Prospero's manipulation of events and people seems reminiscent of the Machiavel Richard III. Prospero as a taming patriarch harks back to Petruccio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. A head of state usurped by his brother links *The Tempest* to *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*. The relationship between Prospero and his brother, the supposed Duke of Milan, resembles that between the rightful Duke Vincentio and his deputy, the Lord Angelo in *Measure for Measure*. Miranda and Prince Ferdinand's love-at-first-sight, in spite of familial division, harks back to *Romeo and Juliet*. The interrupted feasting in *The Tempest* recalls the banquet scenes in *Macbeth* and *Timon of Athens*. The wedding masque bears comparison with the appearance of Hymen in *As You Like It* and the apparitions conjured by the three Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*. The forming and development of the castigated outsider, Caliban, by a prevailing foreign culture recalls Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Othello, Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus*. Prospero, like his magician antecedent, Owen Glyndwr in *Henry IV Part One* can "call spirits from the vasty deep" (3.1.51-3), but they really do come when Prospero calls them. King Alonso and his court are castaways, King Lear-like, in the storm. His son, Prince Ferdinand, is thought to be lost at sea in the "ooze" (3.2.100), like Pericles's Queen Thaisa. As King Pericles buries his supposedly dead wife at sea, he laments over her in the following words:

. . . scarcely coffin'd, in the ooze;
 Where, for a monument upon thy bones,
 And e'er-remaining lamps, the belching whale
 And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse,
 Lying with simple shells.

(Scene 11, 59-63)

Or, as Ariel sings, to Ferdinand of his supposedly dead father:

Of his bones are coral made;
 Those are pearls that were his eyes;
 Nothing of him that doth fade
 But doth suffer a sea-change
 Into something rich and strange.
 (1.2.400-4)

In thinking of *The Tempest* as a self-empowered, self-sourced, and self-determining drama on Shakespeare's part it is important *not* to read the play as merely half-disguised autobiography. This kind of reading, which took root in the Romantic period, reached through the nineteenth century – for example in Edward Dowden's influential *Shakespeare: a Critical Study of his Mind and Art* (1875) – and into the twentieth century, reaching its apotheosis in Morton Luce's first Arden edition of the play in 1902. Luce writes that “the great artist puts into his work the best part of him; and in a long series of his creations the spirit of his life will consciously or unconsciously become manifest” (1902, l). Luce then spends the next twenty pages of his introduction illustrating the “high moral tone of *The Tempest*” (ibid.) and claiming it all for Shakespeare's own, personal, political and religious outlook. In 1906, within four years of Luce's edition, the great essayist and biographer Lytton Strachey would find nothing especially attractive in Prospero and even make the claim in his essay “Shakespeare's Final Period” that Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* out of boredom:

bored with people, bored with real life, bored with drama, bored, in fact, with everything except poetry and poetical dreams. He is no longer interested, one often feels, in what happens, or who says what, so long as he can find place for a faultless lyric, or a new, unimagined rhythmical effect, or a grand and mystic speech. (1906, 52)

Strachey is wrong. He is being characteristically playful and waspish, he himself was a descendent of the William Strachey whose eye-witness account of the shipwreck in 1609 in part inspired

The Tempest. In his essay he set out to undercut the kind of moral autobiography that underpinned Luce's literary criticism.

But *The Tempest* continues to seek a conversation about the relationship between the artist's life and the creations of his art. So to conclude this talk, we should like briefly to make three connections between *The Tempest* and Stratford-upon-Avon. These are made possible in part by biographical accounts of Shakespeare as well as by the afterlives of the play itself.

The first comes from an account by a devoted friend of Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, who on visiting the site of Shakespeare's family home, New Place, on 9 May 1934 was captivated by what a man said to her there: "That was where his study windows looked out when he wrote *The Tempest*" (1982, 209), and Woolf later reflected: "to think of writing *The Tempest* looking out onto that garden: what a rage and storm of thought to have gone over any mind. No doubt the solidity of the place was comfortable. No doubt he saw the cellars with serenity" (210). That *The Tempest* formed part of Shakespeare's life at New Place is a creative and critical meme that continues. On the entrance to New Place are engraved Prospero's words "To thee and to thy company / I bid a hearty welcome" (5.1.110-11). Visitors to the site today can see a beautiful sculpture of a Renaissance galleon, representing the sea in Shakespeare's imagination – even though Stratford-upon-Avon is one of the places furthest from the coast in England. In the great garden of New Place there is a sculpture by Greg Wyatt inspired by Prospero's epilogue.

The second connection is about Shakespeare's depictions of fathers and daughters in his late plays. In 2004, in his biography *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt suggested that "the woman who most intensely appealed to Shakespeare in his life was twenty years younger than he: his daughter Susanna" (2004, 389). In the film *Prospero's Books* there is mention of the name of Prospero's deceased wife, a character entirely absent from Shakespeare's play: the film tells us she was named Susanna. But René Weis in his 2007 book *Shakespeare Revealed*, a biography of Shakespeare's inner life, looks in a different direction and considers:

the daughter behind Miranda, Marina, and Perdita was probably

Judith rather than Susanna, married mother of three-year-old Elizabeth Hall. And if the literary magician from New Place is Prospero on his island, who might Ariel, Caliban, Ferdinand and Antonio be? Clearly Shakespeare did more than just import his own household into his archly self-conscious play, which almost from the first was seen as his most personal work. (2007, 337)

But what about Miranda when she is depicted playing chess with her new husband, Ferdinand, the future King of Naples? Does the as-yet-unmarried Judith as Miranda turn into the married Susanna as Miranda by the end? In light of Susanna Hall's biography, the novelist Margaret Drabble has noted of this scene "you need a good education to be able to play chess" (2015, 337). But we might suppose both of the Shakespeare's daughters to have been well educated. The game of chess reveals not only an educated daughter, but also one keen to learn the habits of her new husband, Ferdinand, the future King of Naples: Naples was considered to be the centre of chess-playing (Shakespeare 1999, 274). Prospero, too, has been playing his own game of chess in assembling the courtiers around him from different directions and by different moves.

The third and final connection we should like to make takes us back to Prospero's epilogue. It is metrically distinctive, being written in iambic tetrameter. If we seek Prospero in Stratford-upon-Avon then we might find him not only in New Place, but also in Holy Trinity Church. The recent, ground-breaking research of Lena Orlin suggests that Shakespeare oversaw the making and modelling of his own funerary monument above his grave. Perhaps he also authorised his own epitaph, which is not only cast in the same meter as Prospero's epilogue, but also is written in rhyming couplets:

And my ending is despair
 Unless I be relieved by prayer,
 Which pierces so, that it assaults
 Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
 As you from crimes would pardoned be,
 Let your indulgence set me free.

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
 To dig the dust enclosed here.

Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves these bones.

Or, let's say this: that whoever chose those lines to be engraved on Shakespeare's gravestone might well have had the magician Prospero in mind. When the novelist Sir Walter Scott visited Shakespeare's grave on 8 April 1828 he referred to it as "the tomb of the mighty wizard" (1998, 509).

How did Shakespeare write *The Tempest*? Through his belief in the power of narrative driven by empathy, his own experience, his own profound reading, his theatrical entrepreneurship, and his imagination; he wrote it through his self-determination not only to entertain and to make money but also to open and possibly to change the minds and hearts of his audiences; and he wrote it through his own self-trust. As a mature artist he was confident enough to body forth a drama that – like its predecessor *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – presented a public and creative discussion on what the art that he practised meant to him. His faith in the redemptive power of art was his inspiration, his guiding spirit, his Ariel-muse. There is nothing "rough" about Shakespeare's "potent" and self-empowered magic in *The Tempest*.

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