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Shakespeare and the Mediterranean • 2

The Tempest

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Part 4

Ecocritical and Postcolonial Readings of *The Tempest*

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Shakespeare's Nature in Time. Contextualising Ecocritical Readings of *The Tempest* (1611)

Magdalena Gabrysiak

Abstract

This article focuses on Shakespeare's portrayal of the marine environment in *The Tempest* (1611). Building on existing ecocritical studies, the paper adapts ecocritical methodologies to examine the significance of the ancient world in Shakespeare's poetic imagination of the ocean. Focusing on *The Tempest*, I contend that Shakespeare's reception of the classics in his portrayal of the ocean is mediated by the essential physicality of his sea, an ecological, non-anthropocentric understanding and poetic portrayal of the marine environment. In this way, the paper seeks to assert the importance of recognising Shakespeare as an example for thinking about a human, cultural past in ecological terms.

Keywords: *The Tempest*; ecocriticism; blue studies; classical reception; ocean

Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Curtsied when you have, and kiss'd
the wild waves whist.
Foot it featly here and there,
and sweet Sprights bear the burthen . . .
Full fathom five thy Father lies
Of his bones are Corrall made:
Those are pearls that were his eyes,
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a Sea-change
Into something rich & strange:
Sea Nymphs hourly ring his knell.
(2.1.438-44; 460-6)[1]

1 All following citations from *The Tempest* refer to Bate and Rasmussen's

"What does the sea in Ariel's 'sea-change' mean?" – asks Steve Mentz in his ecocritical study of the marine environment in Shakespeare's oeuvre, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (2009, 1). By establishing the physical sea as the *locus* of meaning, Mentz's question controverts a tradition of aesthetic readings that confine the oceanic imagery of Ariel's song to a blanket metaphor for poetry, artistic practice, or theatrical illusion and, in turn, emphasises how specifically these lines engage with the ocean's characteristics. "Poetry that contains the sea leaves a taste in the mouth, a sharp tang of nonhuman immensity" (ibid.), Mentz continues in correspondence with critics such as Dan Brayton, or Joseph Campana who consider Shakespeare's representation of the ocean ecocritically by referring it to the historical realities of mercantile and military seafaring as well as the developing fishing trade of the poet's time (Brayton 2012; Campana 2016). In this way, the ecological perspective on Shakespearean criticism seeks to redress anthropizing readings of the sea as a blank canvas for metaphor and attempts to recognise the ocean's significance to the early modern poetic imagination. And so, Ariel's evoked "sea-change / Into something rich and strange' comes to describe 'salt water's transformative impact on human flesh", harbouring both the threatening vision of Ferdinand's father's death that Ariel aims to unsettle Ferdinand with, as well as hinting at salt's preservative chemical components that enable the magical 'sea-change' and prefigure that the king of Naples is still alive.

Much like the ocean's salty water, which not only prevents food and flesh from rot or infection, but also retains the power to erode the rock of the sea-shore, however, this critical process of excavation erodes and disregards a myriad of specifically poetic meanings layered into Shakespeare's sea (Allaby 2013, 203). In the case of Ariel's song, it glosses over the appropriations of Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1598) and Thomas Lodge's *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1558) that imbed the poetry into both a poetic contemporaneity as well as a classical, epic past, which inform the verse's understanding of the relationship between humanity and the marine environment (Donno 1963, 23, 57). Building on existing ecocritical studies such as the work of Gabriel Egan (2006) or David

2007 edition.

Gray (2020), this paper adapts ecocritical methodologies to examine the wider temporal frameworks and cultural allusions present throughout Shakespeare's marine imagination. Focusing on *The Tempest*, I contend that Shakespeare's reception of the classics in his portrayal of the ocean as well as the referentiality of his oceanic poetics is mediated by the essential physicality of his sea, the, to recall Mentz's words, "real taste of ocean" (2009, 1). In this way, I assert the importance of recognising Shakespeare as a, in Brayton's phrase, "model *for* environmental criticism", an example for thinking about a human, cultural past in ecological terms (2012, 5).

1. "When the Sea Is": Mapping Temporal Tensions onto *The Tempest*'s Sea

Though, as Rachel Carson remarks, "the sea has always been around us", and an anthology of mapping human meaning onto the global ocean would, as she observes, comprise the history of Western culture, in the past two decades Shakespeare has held a particular place in this new vein of marine-focused ecocritical scholarship and *The Tempest*, his last solo-written play and the only one that opens with a staged shipwreck, has remained a core-text for this area of study (Carson 1951; Morrison 2014). Mentz justifies this expressed "need" for "Shakespeare's Ocean" by arguing that post-industrial visions of the maritime environment along with technological advances of the modern era have "frayed our connections to the sea" (2009, ix). Brayton, on the other hand, asserts the importance of Shakespeare to ecocritical scholarship by framing the global environmental crisis as "the product of past ways of seeing", that, inevitably, "leads us to rethink the literary and cultural history of the seas", which Shakespeare, as national poet, had a significant part in shaping (2012, 1). Such ecocritical readings, then, assert their relevance as works of excavation, of critical archaeology driven by a need to remember a pre-modern ocean, and in their focus on a distant past and their interest in memory, they echo key themes of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Akin to Prospero who asks Miranda if she can "remember / A time before we came unto this cell?" (1.2.45-6), the critics call for the excavation of Shakespeare's sea, filling

the gaps of collective cultural memory just as Prospero proceeds to complement his daughter's faint recollections.

Echoing the ecocritical interest in remembering and restoring our past, "frayed" connections to the sea, *The Tempest* is, in its overall dramatic structure and poetry, woven into a similarly complex web of different and frayed memories about a shared past, from its adherence to an Aristotelian temporal unity, to the characters' frequent narration of their shared past and Shakespeare's allusions to the classical world. As Silvia Bigliazzi notes, this play is "an investigation of the limits of knowing through remembering" (2014, 127), – a phrase that might also aptly describe the project that both Brayton and Mentz (amongst others) embark on. The material, Mediterranean Sea, as a central presence in *The Tempest*, is thus also overladen with a complex interplay of temporalities and, as a result, with an amalgamation of different human meanings. It becomes inflected with political connotation (King Alonso's lament over the loss of his daughter as a possible heir to his kingdom, because she is separated from his country by the sea [2.1.91] and the expressed loss of his son Ferdinand who the King believes to be dead [2.1.106-11]), the classical past (Prospero evocation of "the ebbing Neptune" [5.1.40]), as well as a vision of the future, since the play ends with the characters about sail back to Italy on their restored ship.

Shakespeare's reception of the Classics is of particular significance in this respect. In his introduction to the edited collection *Deep Classics*: *Rethinking Classical Reception* (2016), Shane Butler, the editor, illustrates the meaning of the proposed, titular methodology by comparing it to chronostratigraphic units in a body of rock, visual manifestations of geological "deep time". "A basic aim of *Deep Classics*", he goes on, "is to re-propose Classics as an early species, and partial origin, of Deep Time thinking itself. For what is 'antiquity' . . . if not precisely a word for depth of time?" (4-5). Butler's approach proposes the notion that poetic reception of the classical past constitutes a conceptualisation of 'Deep Time'. In this way, Shakespeare's portrayal of the marine environment, composed at a moment in history when science-based ecological discourse did not exist, becomes ecocritically significant. Brayton, therefore, provides an ecocritical framework through which to consider the classical influences present in Shakespeare's Sea in *The*

Tempest. In other words, the perspective of 'Deep Classics' enables an ecocritical reading of Shakespeare's reception of the ancient world in his poetic vision of the ocean – a perspective which, in turn, provides frameworks for relating the poet's presentation of the sea to a contemporary ecological discourse.

In themselves, theorisations of time contemporary to Shakespeare were already infused with classical connotation. As Bigliazzi remarks, sixteenth-century theories of time and memory have pervaded the period's scientific discourse (2014, 129); whereas James E. Robinson notes that "time is involved in the classical design of [*The Tempest*] . . . and a central element of the form and meaning of the play" (1964, 255). In it, time is both inaccessible, as Prospero mentions the "dark . . . abysm of time" to his daughter (1.2.131), and material, when he describes his cell as a "chronicle of day by day" (5.1.180) of the years spent on the island. This dual conception of time appeals to a similarly double understanding of time in the ancient world, consisting of *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos*, indicative of a quantitative, broad-scale passage of time, reflects a distant view of past and future generations. *Kairos*, meanwhile, indicates a dynamic, momentary, and qualitative reception of time (Liddel and Scott 1843).

In its adherence to Aristotelian dramatic modes, *The Tempest*'s dramaturgy, the action of the play is compressed and concise, already recalling a classical past in its fundamental aspects. The structure of the drama does not defer to the story by enacting the moments most significant to the narrative on stage, but instead allows the characters (most notably Prospero) to contextualise the presently unfolding action within their shared past. In this way, the play's action becomes imbedded within the realm of *kairos*. It constitutes a dynamic enaction of a day in the characters' lives. The players' largely versified speech, however, the poetry of the drama, filled with accounts of narrativized memory and plans made for the far-off future, is enclosed into a wide-ranging *chronos*. The one element that remains a central fixture of both temporal dimensions and that binds them together is the sea.

At once physically present, surrounding the island on which the play's action ensues, and overladen with classical allusion, the sea's dual, interconnected existence in both temporal frameworks

becomes evident in *The Tempest*'s opening scene of shipwreck. Here, the storm constructs the entirety of the play's dramaturgy and is the catalyst of its dramatic action. Before any character is able to speak, the Folio play-text's stage direction calls for "a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning". In other words, the sea momentarily dominates the stage-action, the dramatic *kairos*, putting the characters into an immediate nowness that arrests social protocol and deconstructs political hierarchy amongst the people on board ("What cares these roarers for the name of king?" [1.1.14]) (Mentz 2020).

As it is revealed in the second scene, however, the storm is not a non-human, meteorological occurrence, but the inauguration of Prospero's meticulous plan to restore himself as the Duke of Milan. The delay of this disclosure suspends the acknowledgement of human involvement in the ocean's movements, as if to say that a physical relationship between humanity and the marine environment can only exist in a world that pre-dates human interference into deep time, the geological period known as the Anthropocene. Moreover, this dramatic structure aligns the aforementioned realisation with the development of Shakespeare's classical allusion. The opening image of shipwreck echoes the beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which the Trojan fleet is devastated in a sea-storm stirred up by Aeolius, King of the Winds, on Juno's behalf. As the storm in *The Tempest* is revealed, in the second scene, to be caused by Ariel acting on Prospero's behalf, the classical allusion emerges as, to recall Butler, the deeper, chronostratigraphic layer of the play's narrative.

The reference to an ancient, poetic past (Virgil) becomes part of the play's *chronos* as Prospero, akin to a god of classical epic, reveals his intention to punish those at sea for a past grudge by means of manipulating their present environment. In other words, the logic of a classical mythology is translated onto *The Tempest*'s narrative structure, the evocation of a distant past is made dramatically significant to the events unfolding on stage. Contrary to the referenced epic, however, Shakespeare's work obscures the boundaries of the theatrically witnessed reality, as the tempestuous storm, though it strands the characters on the island and sets of the fulfilment of Prospero's plan, is revealed to be a dream, a magical revelry that does not cause any mortal harm and that leaves the

stranded ship entirely intact. In this way, the classical allusion is mediated by the physical presence of the sea as it allows the text to acknowledge the human involvement in shaping discourses around the marine environment and the tangible consequences thereof (Prospero's plan becomes resolved and he sails home with the expectation to be restored as the Duke of Milan), whilst simultaneously relegating the vision of the human as master of this ecology as mere phantasy and an act of theatrical magic. The crucial role the sea plays in both temporalities, then, fashions its character as both a tangibly physical presence in Shakespeare's poetics, the driving-force of *kairos*, as well as a mediator of the text's ancient past, its central presence within *chronos* (Brayton 2012, 1).

Starting from the play's opening, the sea continues to mediate the text's imagination around its various temporalities. Antonio, Prospero's brother and the usurping duke of Milan, evokes the ocean when employing a dual logic of time for his own private gain as he attempts to convince Sebastian to kill his father, the King of Naples:

> Antonio We all were sea-swallow'd, though some cast again,
> And by that destiny, to perform an act
> Whereof what's past is prologue, what to come
> In yours and my discharge.
> (2.1.253-6)

Here, the experience of shipwreck, of being "sea-swallow'd" suspends and transforms established cycles of time that determine a line of succession to the throne of Naples and shape the potential 'destiny,' the dynamically changing present (*kairos*) of those surrounding the king. The marine environment remains here a nonhuman entity that creates different opportunities for human action (regicide) without shaping narrative outcomes (the decision whether to illegally ascend the throne remains to be made by Sebastian). The only thing, then, that can turn this catastrophic past into a 'prologue' for, in Antonio's words, "yours and my discharge", is not nature itself, but the performance of an 'act' of regicide. Once again, the power of the ecological environment within the human realm is confined to the immediate, momentary *kairos*, offering the potential for calculated human action to influence a broad-scale, generational *chronos*, to turn the destruction of shipwreck

into the creation of a new royal lineage for Naples. By enabling two potential, contradictory narratives (both Prospero's plan and Antonio's scheme), Shakespeare's ocean lies beyond the play's socio-political themes of proper governance and justice, thereby maintaining Mentz's declared 'nonhuman immensity.' Thus, the temporal tensions at work within *The Tempest*'s duality of the sea as both nonhuman, physical presence and the mediator of the play's classical heritage are revealed as interconnected in the poet's imagination around human existence within and around the marine environment.

2. Seeing and Reading 'Nature' in *The Tempest*

"In his vividly imagined depictions of the marine environment as spaces in which humans partially belong, Shakespeare imagines a profound ontological relationship between humanity and the sea that is not merely metaphorical but material" writes Dan Brayton in his recent book on *Shakespeare's Ocean* (2012). The critic's use of the word 'metaphorical' refers to the tradition of aesthetic readings, also discussed by Mentz, in which the sea is transformed into a formless, fluid, and all-encompassing symbol for the unpredictability and mystery of human endeavour. The term 'material,' in turn, opposes this anthropocentric mode of criticism and describes an approach that, to recall Mentz's words, maintains the sea's "nonhuman immensity" present in Shakespeare's verse. For Brayton, then, the excavation of this 'material' ocean in Shakespeare creates "a profound ontological relationship between humanity and the sea", which informs and enriches contemporary models for human engagement with the ecological environment. Brayton justifies his turn towards Shakespeare in this critical project by noting that contemporary modes of human engagement in ecology are most strongly influenced by a modern, post-industrial and post-Romantic literary imagination, that envisions an ecology, creates a 'nature', that is entirely conducive to human processes of identity making. By looking to Shakespeare, Brayton seeks to uncover a pre-modern portrayal of the ecological that is distant from these modern conceptions of individuality. A comprehensive discussion

of the word 'nature', however, is conspicuously missing throughout Brayton's (and Mentz's) analysis of Shakespeare's 'material' ocean, leaving implicit a recognition of the ways in which Shakespeare's ecology and the human existence within is different from a post-Romantic 'nature' (2012, 4).

In one of the foundational text of ecocriticism, Timothy Morton's *Ecology without Nature* (2007), the word 'nature' becomes, as the title suggests, crucial to the critic's argument that an ecological environment infused with just human meaning cannot formulate an environmental aesthetic, a 'material' vision of ecology, that might harbour the potential to construct an, in Brayton's words, "ontological relationship" between humanity and the environment. For Brayton, then, Shakespeare's marine aesthetic maintains this potential precisely because it pre-dates a Romantic mode of mapping human meaning onto ecology, a 'nature' created by Romanticism and, as a result, the critic himself states that the word 'nature' itself does not interest him (2012, 7). There is reason for Brayton's omission, since Shakespeare does not employ the word 'nature' as ubiquitously as the Romantic poets. Ironically, however, it is only by examining the ways in which Shakespeare's use of this word both differs from and resembles a Romantic poetics, that the 'material' power (as well as its limits) to create an ecological ontology of the human can be revealed.

The eight times that 'nature' does appear in the Folio text of *The Tempest*, it is largely in reference to a *human* nature associated with ideas of education and discipline that do not have a clearly stated connection with ecology and emerge as Prospero talks of Caliban "on whose nature / nurture can never stick" (4.1.204-5). Unsurprisingly perhaps, it is Prospero who most frequently employs the word in this context, when he criticises his 'false brother' in whom ambition "Awak'd an evil nature" (1.2.109), later expelling "remorse and nature" (5.1.81), or to discipline Caliban whose "vile race . . . had that in't which good natures / Could not abide to be with" (1.2.419-20). The decidedly human 'nature' of these utterances begins to function as a reference point for describing a character that does not adhere to it, either because they have succumbed to excessive ambition (Antonio), or because their 'vile race' makes it impossible to become "good natured" (Caliban) – the latter utterance further

layers the word with ethical connotations that additionally alienate the word from a 'material,' nonhuman ecology. Prospero's use of this vocabulary, which semantically references a humanist conception of human disposition, emphasises his authoritative position as the one person who delineates the boundaries of a good, human nature. It also creates an intriguing parallel between Caliban and Antonio as the two characters in reference to whom the word is used, which is complicated even further once Miranda, trying to comfort Ferdinand, tells him that her father is "of a better nature . . . / Than he appears in speech" (1.2.584-5) than he might seem. In this moment, it is Prospero whose 'nature' suffers critique as he treats Ferdinand with the same indignation he has inflicted upon Caliban, ultimately elaborating on the colonial discourses that the play participates in.

The island's native inhabitants, Ariel and Caliban, do not employ the word in any context and the two times the word 'nature' may be read as connoting the ecological environment, it has a distinct contextual resonance. At the close of the play, Alonso describes "this business" of Prospero's as a "strange maze" and something "more than nature", suggesting that only "some oracle" can "rectify our knowledge" (5.1.275-8). The whole of Prospero's and Ariel's magic is here figured as belonging to a decidedly human realm, a "business", something "more than nature". It is the human spheres of myth and magic, then, which become the domain of meaning and 'knowledge,' as it remains ambiguous whether the word 'nature' in this context refers to the ecology of the island, or a general set of human abilities, that do not habitually include Prospero's magical practices.

Gonzalo is the second character to refer to 'nature' in the context of ecological environment, when he imagines a utopian society after being stranded on the island:

> GONZALO 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 own kind, all foison, all abundance,
> To feed my innocent people.

(2.1.148-53)

The first mention of 'nature' connotes a collective communality and refers to custom. These are imagined to reproduce and function in a society "[w]ithout sweat or endeavour; treason, felony" etc. The second referral to 'nature', connotes an ecological environment that "should bring forth . . . all abundance". As Charlotte Scott observes, this is an anthropocentric nature that is defined in terms of the possibilities for human cultivation that it offers, its value lies in the 'abundance' it can bring forth "to feed . . . innocent people" (2014, 191). This is the one instance in The Tempest in which the word is unambiguously used to connote the ecological environment and it is significant that, as various critics acknowledge, the fragment of Gonzalo's speech constitutes a poetic appropriation of John Florio's translation of Montaigne's "Of Cannibals". The one-time Shakespeare employs the term in Morton's Romantic sense, then, is when he echoes the way in which Montaigne employs 'nature' in his text. As in the opening scene of shipwreck caused by Prospero, the imposition of an anthropological perception of ecology once again converges with the practice of poetic allusion – the ecological environment is appropriated by a human 'nature' as the poetry reveals its own constructed-ness and referentiality.

In this context, it becomes further significant to consider the aspects of Montaigne's vision that Shakespeare omits in his appropriation. As Montaigne writes: "All things (as saith Plato) are produced either by nature, by fortune, or by art", and he continues to extensively employ ideas of a "original naturalitie" and "the lawes of nature" (Montaigne 1998, 867). Shakespeare, in contrast, limits the use of the word and omits completely Montaigne's ideas about a 'law of nature' in Gonzalo's vision. Though Gonzalo's utopia is, like Montaigne's, a society where "letters should not be known" (2.1.139) nature is not as explicitly figured as the *locus* of all wisdom and knowledge as it is in "Of Cannibals". Montaigne's perfect nation is a society whose illiterate "experience" exceeds "all the pictures wherewith licentious Poesie hath proudly imbellished the golden age" (1998, 867). This is a rhetoric in which nature and knowledge become synonymous. Akin to a Romantic poetics, all spirituality and 'art' come to be expressed by a 'pure' and 'original'

natural world – an image that Shakespeare rejects even in Gonzalo's utopian vision, in which a 'nature' that provides the means to "feed . . . innocent people" (ibid.) is part of a constructed, consciously poetic vision that has little baring on the play's further action.

Moreover, the extended enumeration on which Gonzalo's utopian vision is structured, but is endemic of the focus on the spatial dimension throughout utopian thinking. As Brayton argues, the island of *The Tempest* is a "poetic geography", a "projection of familiar ways of seeing onto the unknown in order to give alterity recognizable shape and meaning" (2012, 170). From this perspective, both Shakespeare's and Gonzalo's vision of the island are equally real, and the utopian narrative becomes just as empirically founded as Caliban's vividly poetic descriptions of the island – also marked by a frequency of enumeration and a focus on space-relations. The key difference between Caliban's and Gonzalo's descriptions, however, is in their temporal dimensions. Where the growing "crabs", "pig-nuts", and "clustering filberts" (3.1.128-30) of the former's landscape are composed into the present tense, the latter projects future expectations onto the natural environment, onto a cultivated 'nature', saying that it "should bring forth . . . all abundance".

In this way, *The Tempest's* utopia differs from both the English translation of Montaigne's "Of Cannibals", who (in Florio's translation) writes of his ideal society in the present tense ("It is a nation that hath no kind of traffic" [Montaigne 1998, 866]); and bears closer resemblance to Plato's *Republic* written in the Greek future tense. Familiar with the echoes of Plato that Shakespeare absorbed through Florio's translation of Montaigne, the classical world once again emerges out of the text revealing another one of its chronostratigraphic layers. The embellishment of an ecological, in Brayton's words, 'material' nature with the vision of anthropocentric cultivation, then, is paralleled in the process of the poetry becoming layered with a tissue of different temporalities that are at once latently present and yet elusive. To read this fragment of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* ecocritcally through the lens of Butler's model of deep classics, then, is to recognise the text's consciousness of the different, converging temporalities in the human understanding of environment – a consciousness that is, as Butler observes, realised in the century-long process of the play's reception.

The deep time of classical allusion further manifests itself into Shakespeare's utopian vision through the permeating presence of Plato in Montaigne. The aforementioned Greek notions of time, *chronos* and *kairos*, are distinctly at play in Gonzalo's speech. As Frank Kermode notes in his book *The Sense of an Ending* (2000), the interval between the two temporal realities "must be purged of simple chronicity" because it is the end, the final destination of *chronos* that "will bestow upon the whole duration and meaning" (46). In Gonzalo's speech, this final locus of meaning is found within a quantitative *chronos*, the domain of a human 'nature'. Whereas the kind of 'nature' that connotes an ecological environment is enclosed into the context of *kairos*, an area of non-meaning for Kermode, that solidifies the immediacy of the connection between human and its environment that Brayton's oceanic ontology implies. This utopia, then, is one constructed not on the 'laws of nature' but a 'common' condition of humankind which organises and determines its surrounding environment, much like it is now in the Anthropocene era of human intervention into geological deep time.

The fact that neither Ariel, nor Caliban employ the word 'nature', even though the latter especially frequently describes the island's environment, is particularly telling. The latter is arguably the character whose ontological as well as genealogical connection to the island's environment and the marine ecology is made most explicit in *The Tempest* – from the island being his birthplace, to Trinculo's vivid comparison of Caliban to a fish ("What have we here? A Man or a fish? . . . A fish, he smells like a fish, a very ancient and fish-like smell" [2.2.22-3]) it becomes clear that it is a 'nature' beyond human understanding and language that nourished and brought Caliban into existence. Moreover, Caliban himself gives clear expression to Brayton's oceanic ontology. His description of nature is untainted by metaphor and suffused with a keen understanding of the ecological processes at work in the island's environment: "All the infections that the sun sucks up / From bogs, fens, flats" (2.2.1-2). His connection to this nature is immediate and he employs faunal imagery to communicate a pure phenomenology of experience rather than fashion a poetic emotion: "lead me like a firebrand in the dark . . . like hedgehogs, which / Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount / Their pricks at my footfall" (2.2.1-12). This, in turn, creates

the distinct feeling that, whilst ontologically linked, ecology and the human provide for Shakespeare very different poetic possibilities and interact very differently with language. Human nature and ecological nature, then, are distinct and contextually separated in *The Tempest*, creating a sense of Shakespeare's awareness of the anthropomorphic bias of those speakers who employ the word in reference to ecological environment. It is important to remember, however, that this anthropomorphic bias prevails, for Shakespeare, as the location of civilizational progress and the development of a humanist, to return to Brayton, 'transhistorical' nature as the character's eventually set out to return to the mainland.

3. Shakespeare's 'Nature' as Distant Past – *The Tempest*'s 'Material' Sea Today

In recent ecocriticism, the significance of recognising in Shakespeare the existence of a pre-Romantic poetics of nature has inspired a celebration of the dramatic poet's writing as having the potential to liberate our current ecological discourse from its anthropocentric bias. This, in turn, sparked a renewed interest in both cinematic (Julie Taymor's *Tempest* from 2010) (Sibley-Esposito 2011) and theatrical adaptations (Krzysztof Warlikowski's 2008 *Burza*) that looks towards Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a countermeasure against Romantic models for human engagement with the environment. With Shakespeare's growing status in contemporary ecocriticism and theatrical discourse, it is all the more important to contextualise Shakespeare's marine ontology and identify the wider philosophical implications at work in his anthropocentric 'nature'-poetics in order to avoid falling into an unquestioning enthusiasm about this newly rediscovered vision of nature.

Julie Taymor's 2010 cinematic adaptation of *The Tempest* with Helen Mirren in the role of Prospera, a female Prospero, sparked conversations about the text's relevance to a contemporary ecological discourse (Ebert 2012). Partially shot on-location, the film is set amongst a vast and open landscape – the island often resembling a dead and threatening, rocky wasteland, destroyed and apocalyptic. The magic of Prospera, visually represented by

fire and intense wind, harms the limited greenery even further, providing a powerful commentary of the character's exploitation of ecology and Ariel himself, whose connection to the island's nature is emphasised with the work of special effects. What is inevitably lost in this adaptation, however, is the poetic resonance of Caliban's descriptions of the abundance of the island's environment. It becomes clear, that the main function of a Shakespearean nature here is to contradict a utopian vision of tranquillity nature, to emphasise the human destruction of the environment and, with the example of Ariel, emphasise its subjectivity as a character. Consequently, the sense of an anthropomorphic nature throughout *The Tempest* is hyperbolised, yet, the delicate and potent ontological connection between the human and the sea that Brayton identifies in the ocean's 'material' presence throughout the poetry, is lost, as the sea in this film remains in a constantly tempestuous state. There is no sense that, in the process of destroying her inhabited environment, Prospera is consequently destroying herself and the possibility of a comfortable home for her and Miranda's descendants.

The Polish director, Krzysztof Warlikowski's internationally acclaimed *Burza* (2008), on the other hand, adapts a very different approach. Limited by the close space of the theatre, Warlikowski makes no specific visual reference to a natural environment. The opening scene of shipwreck is performed in audio only with distinguishable sounds of a plane crash, rather than a shipwreck, present in the background, providing material for direct and explicit ecological commentary. The production's limited lighting, surrenders the island's ecological abundance entirely to the audience's imagination. In rare moments when the stage is visible, it is revealed to be a hall of mirrors, reflecting and multiplying the characters on stage. This, once again, amplifies the anthropologic awareness of the original text's poetics of 'nature' and emphasises the patina of classical references constructed onto the sea in the original play- text, as they sharply stand out amongst the modern costuming and modernised translation Warlikowski used. Once again, however, Brayton's ontological connection between the human and the marine is entirely lost. Caliban's speeches are veiled into a child-like innocence that not only glosses over his plots against Prospero as well as the violence of his attempted

rape, but equally diminishes his affection for a material, ecological environment. In consequence, whilst Warlikowski masterfully adapts *The Tempest* as a poetic space for a contemporarily relevant ecocritical commentary (the shipwreck of the original text is here transformed into a plane crash, introducing a further critique of the destructive environmental impact of air travel), he does recognise in it any possibility for establishing a coherent pre-Romantic model for human engagement in the 'natural' environment.

4. Conclusion

Recent ecocriticism of Shakespearean poetics embarks on a wide-ranging and productive project of excavation, which has re-discovered, in Shakespeare's writing, a maritime ontology providing models for human engagement in a 'material' oceanic environment. The next step of this remembering, however, must be a search for established frameworks that will enable us to relate Shakespeare's ecological poetics to our contemporary understanding of the global ocean and, indeed, the global environment. Looking to ecocritical methodologies in reception studies like Shane Butler's conception of 'deep classics' provides frameworks for analysing Shakespeare's source-material ecocritically – a framework that ultimately allows us to recognise Shakespeare's full potential as providing a model, in Brayton's words, 'for environmental criticism.' In this way, an analysis of the sea's temporal dimensions in *The Tempest* alongside a close-reading of Shakespeare's use of the word 'nature' identifies the ways in which his vision of ecological environment differs from post-Romantic 'natures' and provides historicized models for making Shakespeare's 'material' poetics of the sea relevant to twenty-first century discourses of climate change. Thus, Brayton's asserted 'material' presence of the sea in Shakespeare can only be fully realised into an ontology once it interacts with the ocean's, inevitable, 'metaphoric' presence and is situated within time, the time of Shakespeare's classically influenced poetics as well as a more contemporary temporality which has, by virtue of the looming climate catastrophe, brought ecocriticism into existence.

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