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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE STAGE HISTORY OF
SHAKESPEARE'S TEMPEST,
1667-1838

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- To my family -

ABSTRACT: THE STAGE HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE'S

TEMPEST, 1667-1838.

After the theatres were re-opened in England at the Restoration, there were many adaptations made of Shakespeare's plays, and this was a common occurrence throughout the eighteenth century, lasting to Victorian times. It was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that Shakespeare began to be appreciated in the original form.

The Tempest was one play that suffered many changes. Sir William Davenant and John Dryden collaborated in the first alteration of 1667, and their version is noteworthy because their changes were to a great extent retained by subsequent adapters. Pandering to a neo-classical desire for artistic symmetry, Davenant, the major contributor, and Dryden paired several of the major characters. To complement the lovers (Miranda and Ferdinand), they added Dorinda (Miranda's younger sister) and Hippolito, who had never seen a woman, to be her mate. Caliban was given a sister, Sycorax, who has eyes for Trinculo (sic), and for Ariel, a female spirit called Milcha was created. Other changes in the dramatis personae are minor. The Restoration Tempest is full of farcical situations which stem from the lovers' naivety and the grotesque antics of the low comedy characters. The masque of Juno, protectress of marriage, in Shakespeare's Act IV has been cut, and altogether the effect of the original vanishes, the new play being much coarser.

In 1674, an operatic version of the Restoration Tempest was published, probably written by Thomas Shadwell. This was basically Dryden and Davenant's play, though many songs were added. An elaborate masque of Neptune and Amphitrite was added towards the end, though it is hard to associate these characters with the ending of the play. Throughout the play there was much opportunity for spectacle and the use of mechanical contrivances.

From 1747, when David Garrick became the manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, many of Shakespeare's plays were given a new look. Shadwell's operatic Tempest had been a long-running success, and in 1756 Garrick turned it into a three-act opera. This incorporated thirty-two songs, only three of which were Shakespeare's, and little regard was paid to the original text. It was a failure and Garrick repudiated authorship of it. In 1757 he reverted to a version that was much closer to Shakespeare's than any other before it. Among the 400 or more lines that Garrick omitted, however, were several intensely poetic passages.

John Philip Kemble's Tempest of 1789, which used just the bare outline of the original plot, was merely a vehicle for the presentation of a number of songs, and was poorly received by critics who had begun to clamour for real Shakespeare, not a hybrid version of him. Kemble's next attempt to produce the play was in 1806, when he tried to combine the original and the Restoration versions.

The last appearance of the Dryden-Davenant Tempest was in 1821 when Frederic Reynolds produced it, but it was greeted with acrid criticism. William Charles Macready restored Shakespeare's original to the stage in 1838; and even though his interpretation catered for the visual impact more than for the poetry, his version was the first serious attempt for over a century and a half to present the unadulterated Tempest to English theatre-goers.

Apart from detailing and commenting on the above changes, I have given several reasons for them, namely the adapters' endeavours to cater for contemporary taste and opinions, the neo-classical desire for symmetry, eighteenth century pragmatism, and the popularity of opera and of spectacle.

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INTRODUCTION

"Shakespeare's Magick could not copied be,
Within that circle none durst walk but he."

- John Dryden, Prologue to The Tempest, 1670.

Shakespeare's Tempest was first performed on November 1st, 1611, and was probably written during that same year. It was staged "by the Kings players: Hallowmas nyght was presented att Whithall before ye kinges Maiestie a play Called the Tempest." (1) Another performance, cited in the Chamber Account, was in 1613, when the play was one of "fowerteene" presented "before the Princes Highnes the Lady Elizabeth and the Prince Pallatyne Elector", (2) to celebrate their marriage. (3)

There is no record of any performance of the play at a public playhouse before the Restoration. Frank Kermode says that "The Tempest has long... been regarded as belonging to that group of plays which, in their sophisticated design and presentation, seem to belong to the more expensive Blackfriars rather than to the Globe. ...The Blackfriars was the natural home of the play", as a private theatre was better suited, because of its more advanced stage facilities, for a play which needed subtle stage effects and which was "impregnated with atmospheric music" (4) Blackfriars as a venue has no substantiation other than Dryden's remark in 1669 that it had been previously acted there. (5) But most of the critics reject the idea that the play was written for performance at the Globe, Shakespeare's usual theatre, and Dryden's comment has gone unchallenged because of the nature of the play. Although one cannot be patronising about Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences, one can well imagine plays such as Measure for Measure, with its licentiousness, A Midsummer Night's Dream, with its farce, and King Lear, with its elemental cruelty, being received enthusiastically by "general" audiences which were composed in the main of a cross-section of society. Most of

Shakespeare's plays deal with universal human themes and were didactic to a greater or lesser degree; but in The Tempest, there is a heavy reliance on white magic, the supernatural, and fantastic situations, and it has its setting on a fictional island. It is very different from Shakespeare's other plays. The masque of Juno, for example, in Act IV, scene i, is in the tradition of court masques, lavish, tremendously expensive, and very popular in the court of James I. Masques, whose nature demanded spectacle and theatricality, combined scenery, poetry, dancing, music, and elaborate lighting. "Whilst the new emphasis on scenery and lighting could have little influence on the popular open-air theatres, it could affect the 'private' theatres and in due course it was to change the whole character of the English theatre when its traditions were finally swept away by the Civil War and a new indoor theatre was born under Charles II". (6)

Several critics are of the opinion that The Tempest is a summary and a final statement of Shakespeare's view of life. Space will not permit me to elaborate on this commonly-held attitude, further than to say that I regard the play as a quintessential work as far as Shakespeare is concerned. Here we find many of the recurring Shakespearean themes, all co-existing with no sign of strain or artificiality on the author's part: love, honour, kingship, nature, usurpation, etc. The central character, the master-mind and omniscient director of events on his island, is Prospero, quite possibly a dramatic projection of the playwright himself. There is an exceptionally wide range of characters: a king, dukes and usurping dukes, various lords, lower-class sailors, an unfortunate savage, an omnipotent "airy spirit", a girl and her lover, and the spirits of the masque. Shakespeare is holding up his mirror to nature, the nature of dream on one plane and reality on the other, as I hope to show later (Chapter III).

Prospero's renunciation of his art corresponds in real life approximately with Shakespeare's own retirement

from dramatic composition. All told, an allegorical interpretation of the play, though regarded by some as fanciful, seems quite sound. Allegory tends to wrap up the truth, to take it one remove from reality; and this could well account for the fact that the whole play emits an indefinable aura of magic, the supernatural, wonder, and a deliberately vague and ethereal quality.

My intention in this essay is to try to show that, by their additions and deletions, and their often injudicious tampering with Shakespeare's play, the adapters of the Restoration and the eighteenth century failed to appreciate the intended qualities of the play, largely ignored its subtlety and nuances, and felt forced to comply with contemporary taste.

Shakespeare's stage had definite limitations as regards scenery and lighting. Shakespeare and his contemporaries relied largely on their creative powers and verbal imagery to put their plays across to their audiences. Later dramatists, even the Jacobean (who were stimulated by the work of Inigo Jones), had numerous advantages over their Elizabethan predecessors in the way of stage facilities, and were able to incorporate visual illusion into their plays. Consequently the language of Shakespeare's plays was made simpler by his adapters, and his poetry became less important.

Sir William Davenant and John Dryden collaborated in a version of The Tempest, published in 1670 after three years of successful presentation, which attempted to satisfy an Augustan desire for artistic symmetry and farce. They paired off most of the original characters and invented many ludicrous situations for them.

In 1674 Thomas Shadwell (we suppose it was he) was responsible for turning this version into an opera, which was so successful that it occupied a prominent place on the London stage for more than eighty years, during which time Shakespeare's own play appeared only a handful of times.

A parody of Shadwell's version was written by Thomas Duffet in 1675, which shows just how popular the other

adaptations were. Several other versions, based on the Dryden-Davenant one, were produced before the end of the (seventeenth) century, and although I do not intend to discuss them here, they too attest to the popularity of adapting this particular play.

In the eighteenth century, David Garrick made The Tempest into a woefully unsuccessful opera in three acts (1756), and in the following year produced a version very similar to the original. John Philip Kemble in 1789 experimented with his own version, relying mainly on Davenant's additions, but with a welter of new songs and music as well. He, like Garrick, reverted to the original (very nearly) in 1806, although his production of July 10, 1815, at Covent Garden appalled Hazlitt, who complained bitterly about the presence of "the commonplace, clap-trap sentiments ... and all the heavy tinsel and affected formality which Dryden had borrowed from the French school".(7)

In 1821, Frederic Reynolds was still producing a version of the play which was basically Davenant's but in 1838 (when, with the end of the adaptations, my survey stops), the original was restored to the stage by William Charles Macready, and it has been ever since performed in toto, the only alterations being very minor (usually the directors' whims) and the words remaining close to Shakespeare's own. (In 1959, at the Old Vic, the Dryden-Davenant version was given an airing, but this was merely to mark the tercentenary of the birth of Henry Purcell, who had composed music for it in 1695. This production was not intended to start a revival of Shakespearean adaptations.)

Many of the changes to Shakespeare's plays in the two-hundred year interval after the Civil War were due to pandering to contemporary taste and the box office, upgrading and refurbishing the text for a greater understanding of a virtual 'ancient', or to a desire to make them fit for presentation to a certain type of audience (which later in the nineteenth century was Bowdler's intention). Nahum Tate's 'happy-ending' versions of the tragedies were meant to obviate too great a shock to the sensibility.

The reason, I think, why The Tempest was altered with such frequency was mainly that contemporary literary and theatrical taste had to be catered for. Dryden, to use an example, saw the need for updating Shakespeare's comedy, and catered for his audience by increasing the number of characters in his adaptations of Shakespeare. His idea was "the more, the merrier":

"As for Comedy, repartee is one of its chiefest graces; the greatest pleasure of the audience is a chace (sic) of wit, kept up on both sides, and swiftly managed." (8)

(In 1789, a review of Kemble's revival of The Tempest was still saying that "The Tempest certainly owes much to the additions of Dryden"). (9)

The reason why the characters in Restoration comedies, including adaptations of Shakespeare, seem so coarse and lascivious compared with those in earlier plays or the Shakespearean originals is illustrated by many critics, like Hugh Hunt, who says that "Restoration ladies of fashion as well as the gallants were flagrantly immodest and boldly provocative; there was no such thing as a man of virtue, nor an innocent woman either". (10) Consequently the broad, lewd farce of the low comedy characters, and the ribald comments of the two pairs of lovers, as well as the addition of Sycorax, the female monster, all appealed to the audiences of the Restoration Tempest, which derived its popularity largely from these innovations.

The power of the audience as important drama 'critics' was heeded throughout the eighteenth century. Though he professed reverence for Shakespeare, and imagined himself his equal, Garrick often showed that he was prepared to take tremendous liberties with Shakespeare's plays, as an example of his writing will illustrate. It is a speech prepared and delivered by him at the opening of the 1750-51 season at Drury Lane:

"Sacred to Shakespeare, was this spot design'd
To pierce the heart, and humanize the mind.
But if an empty house, the actor's curse,
Shews us our Lears, and Hamlets, lose their force;

Unwilling, we must change the nobler scene,
 And, in our turn, present you Harlequin;
 Quit poets, and set carpenters to work,
 Shew gaudy scenes, or mount the vaulting Turk,
 For, tho' we actors, one and all agree
 Boldly to struggle for our - vanity;
 If want comes on, importance must retreat;
 Our first, great ruling passion is - to eat." (11)

In a letter to Somerset Draper in August 1751,
 (concerning his business partner, John Lacy, who had been
 taking liberties with Shakespeare), Garrick stated that
 "nothing but downright starving would induce me to bring
 such defilement and abomination to the house of William
 Shakespeare. What a mean, mistaken creature is this
 partner of mine!" (12)

Of all the adapters of The Tempest, though, Garrick
 was the most prepared, however reluctantly, to make
 substantial changes, and to produce a version which
 contained very little of the original; and the receipts
 quoted by Hogan for the seasons at Drury Lane leading
 up to 1756 show that Garrick was far from "downright
 starving". (13)

Anyway, Garrick's opera was a flop. With the greater
 critical enlightenment in the latter half of the eighteenth
 century, there was less and less need to alter Shakespeare's
 plays, as several stage-managers and producers found out
 the hard way when their receipts plummeted. Indeed, when
 Garrick's 1757 production proved so popular, the end of the
 road for the adaptations had been virtually reached, and apart
 from a few spasmodic attempts to renew public interest in the
 Dryden-Davenant version, the original was becoming firmly
 re-established.

Many authors have already dealt with the various versions
 of The Tempest far more competently than I, and I here
 acknowledge my heavy debt to them. A full list of my sources
 appears in the bibliography, and from time to time I refer
 to them in my text. Often I have done little more than
 recast their words, or cite them more fully. I have also
 drawn on their readier access to old manuscripts and

periodicals, as well as to several other works which I have been unable to acquire.

The most important and comprehensive work that I consulted on the general subject of Shakespeare in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, is Shakespeare - from Betterton to Irving by George Odell. This book treats fully and interestingly theatres, the plays, scenery and costumes, and the actors and managers. I found it most enlightening, and found Odell's approach - a mixture of factual scholarship and subjective and sometimes ironical and cynical comments - most refreshing.

C.B. Hogan's two-volume Shakespeare in the Theatre, 1701-1800 is particularly useful because of its factual information on performances, casts of the various eighteenth century versions, and box-office takings.

For a commentary on the Dryden-Davenant version, possibly the best critic is Hazelton Spencer, whose Shakespeare Improved I found invaluable. Likewise, Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare, by Christopher Spencer, was useful as a starting point in my discussion of the Restoration versions of The Tempest, as Spencer makes mention of many commentaries and critiques. I am aware that my second chapter fairly bristles with excerpts from Christopher Spencer. I have quoted freely from his work for two reasons: the books he cites are mostly unavailable, and I myself have precious little knowledge of seventeenth century music, either in theory or in performance.

There are many books about Garrick. I have mentioned some of these in my bibliography, and have used them for occasional quotations. George W. Stone's article, "Shakespeare's Tempest at Drury Lane During Garrick's Management" (SQ 2, 1953, pp.107), was very helpful in its comments on Garrick's opera.

For John Philip Kemble, Baker's literary biography is unequalled by any other work that I have found. Among the most useful books on Macready is The Eminent Tragedian by Alan S. Downer. J.C. Trewin has written an annotated commentary

on Macready's Journal, and Pollock's one-volume edition of Macready's Reminiscences contains a wealth of material.

These books are the ones I have used most, but each one of those in my bibliography relates closely to my topic. I have not been fortunate enough to acquire a copy of After The Tempest (ed. G.R. Guffey; Los Angeles, Clark Memorial Library, 1969), which is concerned with eighteenth century versions of Shakespeare's play.

Apart from trying to draw together the critical and interpretative comments of the last three hundred years on the topic, I have traced the stage history of The Tempest, something which to the best of my knowledge no-one has previously done at such length. I have not concerned myself with the various editions of the play which appeared in the eighteenth century, though I do make some remarks in my conclusion about the relationship between stage versions and those amendments by Shakespeare's editors. There can never be, of course, definitive answers to many of the questions that I pose, and many things can only be matters of conjecture. Throughout, I have tried to put my own interpretation on topics like the disappearance and revival of the masque at various times, the way in which the play became an opera, the growth of the use of spectacle and extravaganza, and the pairing of the characters. None of my interpretations can be proven, and I hope that none can be refuted.

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NOTES

1. Revels Account. Cited by F.E. Halliday, A Shakespeare Companion, 1564-1964 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964), p.486.
2. ibid.
3. For the controversy surrounding the date of the play, see the New Arden edition, pp. xi-xxiv. The play was registered on November 8th, 1623, one of sixteen registered by Blount and Jaggard before being published by Heminge and Condell in the First Folio, where it occupies first place in the text. It is generally agreed to be one of the most careful in the Folio, and certainly has the most detailed stage directions. It was set up from a transcript by Ralph Crane of foul papers prepared for production.
4. New Arden edition, pp. 151-2.
5. Preface to the 1670 Tempest.
6. Hugh Hunt, The Live Theatre: An Introduction to the History and Practice of the Stage (London, 1962), p.82.
7. William Hazlitt, in The Examiner (July 23rd, 1815). Cited by Harold Child in the Cambridge edition of The Tempest (1921), p.111.
8. Cited by W.P. Ker (ed.), Essays of John Dryden, 2 vols (Oxford, 1926), I, p.72.
9. Cited by C.H. Gray, Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795, (New York, 1964), p.290.
10. Hunt, (Live Theatre), p.99.
11. The Poetical Works of David Garrick Esq., ed. George Kearsley, 2 vols (London, 1785), I, pp.102-3, ll. 25-36. Cited by Leo Hughes, The Drama's Patrons (Austin and London, 1971), p.88.

12. David Garrick, Letters, ed. David Mason Little and George Morrow Kahrl, 3 vols (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), I, p.172. Cited by Hughes, p.109.
13. C.B. Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre, 1701-1800, 2 vols (Oxford, 1957), II, pp.2-15 (passim).