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SOME REMARKS ON THE DRAMATIC PRESENTATION OF  
ROMANCE MATERIAL IN "THE TEMPEST"  
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Travellers ne'er did lie, Though  
fools at home condemnem

*The Tempest*, W. Shakespeare

The narrative romance, so importantly present in European literature ever since Heliodorus, Longus, and Tatiush, if not earlier (Wolf, 1912; Wells, 1966), may be defined by its organization of the fictional world, as well as by recurrent motifs and attitudes to its subject matter. The narrative is presented by a narrator who is outside the story and who is omniscient. He tells the story in a linear way, presenting the events in a chronological order. The fictional world is built around a long time span and has no limitations in space. The events are connected only marginally by the cause/effect links; instead, chance and magic are chiefly responsible for what happens. The recurrent motifs are voyages, shipwrecks, separations, reunions, and love between virtuous young people. The attitudes common to romances are delight in the marvellous and ready acceptance of the impossible and the supernatural. Correspondingly, there is no attempt at realistic and psychological presentation of the characters. They are devised as types who fall easily into one of the two categories: the virtuous and the evil. Any change in a character is of a miraculous nature and is hardly psychologically motivated.

Shakespeare's four romance plays are true to the genre in their choice of subject matter where all the characteristic motifs are present. They all treat of miraculous events, include voyages, introduce a variety of places, deal with great distances, and they cover long time. The interesting point for a critic is the translation of an epic narrative into a dramatic presentation. The present paper will investigate certain aspects of the problem in *The Tempest*.

*The Tempest* differs from the other three plays by its dramatic

organization of time and place into unities. This decision jeopardizes the primary characteristics of the romance, and so the question arises how the problems of the length of time and of the distances are solved. We all know that Shakespeare solved them by having Prospero narrate the past twelve years of the story. The distances and voyages are included partly in Prospero's narration and partly in the conversations of the other characters. Such solution brings, however, the narrator onto the stage which is not a purely dramatic device, unless the narrator functions as chorus. Prospero's narration has little in common with a chorus: its function is clearly to tell the past events which lead to the present, not to link the events presented on the stage or comment on them. The problem of the narrator in *The Tempest*, therefore, will be our first concern.

Our second interest will lie in the dramatic presentation of the delight and belief in the marvellous and the magic which is another characteristic of the romance. In a narrative the attitude is created by the narrator: his point of view sets the related events within this or that particular frame of wonder. In a play there cannot be a single point of view: the events are not told by anybody, they must happen. The fictional world is not created on the authority of the narrator, but through the experience of the involved characters. It will be then of interest to look closer at Shakespeare's solutions in this respect.

#### THE NARRATOR AND THE NARRATION

An epic narrator is not infrequent in Renaissance drama. Within Shakespearian romances the example that immediately comes to mind is Gower in *Pericles*. His first words clearly set the type: he stands outside the story as one who repeats a tale of old times: "To sing a song that old was sung". His authority comes from ancient authors. "I tell you what my authors say". Moreover, Gower appears on the stage to tell the story to the audience: at no point in the play does he mix with the characters of his romance. He appears regularly throughout the play at the beginning of each act, in Act V additionally between scenes I and II, and also at the very end of the play. He relates large portions of the story that are not shown and in this way solves partly the problem of time and space. His non-dramatic character is stressed by the distance he keeps from his story and its dramatic rendering. His narration is studded with moralizing generalizations, as, for example,

Bad child; worse father! to entice  
To evil should be done by none. (I.27—28)  
or But, alack,



That monster Envy, oft the wrack  
Of earned praise... (IV.11—13)

The artifice of theatre is alluded to many times: the stage is the place where the story may be shown as it happened. The historical present employed by Gower should not mislead us: his story is old, so the 'here and now' of drama is relegated to the 'then and there' of the epic narrative, with the result that drama becomes an illustration of the story:

And what ensues in this fell storm  
Shall for itself itself perform.  
I will relate, the action may  
Conveniently the rest convey  
Which might not what by me is told. (III.53—60)

The narrative is further foregrounded by being referred to itself, as in,

Marina thus the brothel scapes, and chances  
Into an honest, our story says. (V.1—2)  
or Now our sands are almost run;  
More a little, and then dumb. (V.II.1—2)

As it appears the strategy of unfolding the action on the stage in *Pericles* is dependant on the concept of the narrator who is not involved in the story, but stands outside it, and, fully conscious of his function, either tells it or invites the audience to watch parts of it dramatised.

The concept of the narrator in *The Tempest* is entirely different. First of all, he is placed in the central position in the story; he is the protagonist both of the past and present events. At the moment when he is to function as a narrator, he is not left alone on the stage, but tells the story to his daughter, another character directly involved in the story. The reality of the fictional world is not broken as it is in *Pericles* whenever Gower appears.

The fact that Prospero (belongs) to the story has its important consequences: as a narrator he is never free from the relationships that are imposed on him by the fictional world of which he constitutes a part. Also, he does not create the fictional world by telling the story as Gower does. He creates the fictional world by experiencing it. The dramatic quality of his narrative lies in this that it has a double function in the play: it joins the necessary information of the past events with the present enactment of Prospero's experience.

The enactment of experience is created at the language level. *The Tempest* is, in comparison to other Shakespeare's plays, rich in detailed stage directions. In the sequence of Prospero's narration in Act I, scene II, however, stage directions are absent. The two directions that are usually printed, i.e. "lays down his mantle" after line 24 and "Miranda sleeps" after line 186 were added by Pope and Theobald

respectively. Therefore, whatever we can say about the dramatization of the narrative must be concluded from the way the language is used.

Before we look at the narration proper, we must pay attention to the way in which the immediate context for the narration is created. The relationship between Miranda and Prospero is established in the first line of the scene:

If by your Art, my dearest Father, you have, etc.

The relationship is emphasized as a loving one:

Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter. (17)

Another important aspect of the context between the past and the present. The past is implied as something that Miranda must come to know and is related to the immediately preceding storm, to Prospero's magic art, and to Prospero's and Miranda's identity. When Prospero says,

'Tis time

I should inform thee farther, (22—23).

the meaning of 'farther' can be guessed only by the reference to the context of the previous lines where he does not deny his Art, on the contrary, he ensures Miranda that he has "done nothing but in care of thee", while 'thee' is explained by apposition and a relative as

thee, my daughter, who  
Art ignorant of what thou art; nought knowing  
Of whence I am, nor that I am more better  
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell,  
And thy no greater father. (17—21)

In line 33 Prospero repeats again,

For thou must now know farther.

Again, the link with the present is established in a subtler way than by the mere repetition of (now): what Miranda is to know farther is related to the context of Prospero's preceding words (lines 26—33) which implies the connection with the "Direful spectacle of the wrack". Finally, the ensuing exchange between Miranda and Prospero,

Mir. Concluding "Stay, not yet".

Pro. The hour's now come,

The very minute bids the ope thine ear;

Obey, and be attentive. (35—37)

gives the dramatic 'now' an exceptional strength by referring to the present moment twice, implying the contrast with the previous opportunities, and by use of the imperative demanding attention. In a mere seventeen lines the 'now' is emphatically established as intimately connected with the 'then'.



Another aspect of the context for the narration is created in that part of the conversation between Miranda and Prospero where Miranda's reminiscences of the past are brought up. They come unexpectedly. After Prospero's command "be attentive" and his qualifying of the question

Canst thou remember

A time before we came unto this cell? (39—40)

as rhetorical by the remark "I do not think thou canst", Miranda's simple answer

Certainly, sir, I can, (41)

brings an element of surprise and delays the beginning of the narration. Instead, the past is evoked in a very personal way. "The dark backward and abysm of time" is an experience of being tended by four or five women. This is countered with the next unexpected turn in the conversation: Prospero's disclosure of his identity:

Pro. Thy farther was the Duke of Milan.

Mir. Sir, are not you my father? (54—55)

The clash of past and present expressed in the tenses of the two sentences is the essence of the misunderstanding and surprise, but it also stresses the inseparable character of the past and present.

The sense of wonder and mystery which is prepared by this long preamble to the narration, and by the implications as to the possible meaning of 'farther' comes now to its climax. Prospero's disclosure of his identity and Miranda's right guess that there must have been foul play as well as the blessing of Providence give us a rough outline of the tale of wonders that now will be told.

The immediate context of Prospero's narration is set up dramatically in the dialogue which raises expectation of a story which is mysteriously inseparable from the present moment, which involves both the narrator and his listener, and which promises to bring forward their past experience. The context sets up romance expectations: the story is mysterious, it will explain the wonder of their identity, it will show the working of Fortune.

The core the dramatization of Prospero as the narrator and of his narration comes only at the moment when he begins his tale.

Shakespeare's specific use of language in Prospero's narration has long been noticed by the critics, and it gave a lot of trouble to the subsequent editors who tried to make better sense by changing, omitting, or adding words, or by repunctuating lines. Opinions were expressed that sentences are awkward (Kermode, ed., 1962: note on I.II.67—68), that the whole had "tortuous syntax" (Barton, ed., 1968: 10), or that syntax "twists and turns in abrupt, sharp phrases" while "inver-

tions and subordinate clauses pile up" (Brower, 1971:437). Nobody stopped to find out why such syntax is used and how it functions to justify critical interpretations that Prospero is angry and excited.

I propose to study closely only the first twelve lines of the narration, i.e. lines 66—77. If we tried to inspect the language of the whole narration, there would be no end to this paper. Our limitation of the material has also a serious and valid reason: since in most of Prospero's narration the same formal features of language may be found, the interpretation of the stylistic function of the language in one passage may be extended over the whole.

The formal feature of the passage that jumps to eye is broken syntax. Line 66, "My brother, and thy uncle, call'd Antonio", introduces a subject of a sentence that is never finished. We get in turn: an interjected exclamative, "I pray thee, mark me, that a brother should / Be so perfidious"; a relative which consists of two coordinated clauses, "he, whom next thyself / Of all the world I lov'd, and to him put / The manage of my state"; this relative has no main clause; next comes a subordinate with no clear reference to its causative link expressed by "as"; this subordinate consists of two coordinates, the second being elliptic, followed by a participial, again doubled by an elliptic extension:

as at that time  
Through all the signories it was the first,  
And Prospero the prime Duke, being so reputed  
In dignity, and for liberal Arts  
Without a parallel.

Then comes another participial phrase, "those being all my study." Only now comes the first complete sentence, though with inverted word order, "The government I cast upon my brother", followed by an elliptic coordinate, "And to my state grew stranger", followed by yet another participial phrase, "being transported and rapt in secret studies". The whole speech ends with a noun phrase which suggests the subject of a new clause, again left unfinished, as at the beginning: "Thy false uncle —".

Such syntax counters the expectation of an orderly story. Instead, the reader/listener must follow the speaker's sudden changes in information. The opening line promises the beginning of a story about Antonio (cf. Gower's beginning: "This Antioch, then, Antiochus the great / Built up this city, for his chiefest seat," etc.). But the story is discontinued, and instead we get a violent censure of Antonio's character. The expectation of the continuity of the story is raised again with the relative "he, whom". At this point we can refer the relative pronoun either to "my brother" or to "a brother" of the previous lines, an ambiguity which becomes all the more obvious when the relative clause is finished and the verb of the main clause never appears. We



guess by fitting possible references across the broken syntactical pattern that Prospero gave over the management of his state to his brother whom he loved, but who turned out to be perfidious. With the words "as at that time" we come up against another difficulty which we have to solve by finding a possibly meaningful reference, because (as) introduces a causative link which has no precedence and which is not immediately explained. The guess that Prospero gave Antonio the government of his state because it was of first rank is made invalid by the subsequent information which comes in three participials towards the end of the passage. We have then to refer, retrospectively, "as at that time" to the information that Prospero was all transported and rapt in secret studies and therefore passed the government into Antonio's hands.

We get the meaning of the passage by constant correction and adjustment of the received information, using the context of what we have heard, are hearing and will hear. Such procedure is frequent in the so called 'spoken discourse', that is, language as used in speaking spontaneously in distinction to 'written discourse', that is, language in which information comes in an organized way. In 'spoken discourse' the speaker may often organize information as he speaks, often changing his mind about what to say first, and therefore leaving unfinished sentences, using odd phrases, and jumping in his references.

My suggestion is that Prospero is given here language which is ingeniously organized into an imitation of 'spoken discourse'. Therefore his narration is not orderly; it does not develop linearly but comes in "tortuous syntax". Prospero is not meant to *tell* his story as a rehearsed piece; we know from the context that he has never before told it. So he *speaks* of the past to Miranda, picking his way through all the details that together form his memory of the past. Since the context of the moment on the stage informs us of Prospero's involvement in the story, and the story itself was hinted at as containing 'foul play', the result of which is that he is no more the Duke of Milan, we may conclude that Shakespeare employed, language in such a way as to give dramatic scope to Prospero's inner excitement: as he remembers, he re-lives the past. This is what I propose to call the present enactment of the past experience, the core of the dramatization of the narrative material in *The Tempest*.

The broken syntax functions also on the phonetic level, which is another aspect of the dramatic functioning of the language here. A reader cannot imagine, and an actor cannot interpret, such language with an indifferent intonation because the broken syntactic pattern suggests broken phonetic realization. As there are few finished, complete sentences, and as the direction of the information changes so often, the indifferent high fall bringing a clause to an end would simply find no

room there, and, if used, would make nonsense of both the existing syntactic patterns and of the sense. The amount of the excitement, anger, indignation, must be left to individual interpretation of the scene, of the character of Prospero, and of the whole play. But that those emotions are contained in the narration is ascertained by the language.

The dramatization of the narrator and his narration by means of language as shown above is coupled with implications of scenic action accompanying the story: Prospero tells his story continually breaking it by questions and exclamations demanding Miranda's attention. This device in itself would not be enough to change the narrative into 'actable' material, so it should be looked at as a secondary means of dramatization, the primary being the function of the language.

We can conclude by saying that the dramatization of the entire sequence of narration in the *Tempest* goes well beyond the crude device of placing a character on the stage to let him tell a story to another. The translation of the epic into the dramatic in respect of narration is a complex artistic design, which introduced reorganization of the fictional world (the narrator inside his own story), careful structuring of the situational context (Miranda and Prospero on the stage, the storm, etc.), and organization of the language narration ('spoken discourse' instead of 'written discourse').

## 2. THE PRESENTATION OF THE MARVELLOUS

Coleridge in his lecture on *The Tempest* states that "in this play Shakespeare has appealed to the imagination" which is true enough, as all romance appeals to it. But he misconstrues this appeal when he says that "the scheme of his drama did not appeal to any sensuous impression [...] of time and space, but to imagination, and it would be recollected that his works were rather recited than acted". (Foakes, ed., 1971:106). One does not have to recur to Elizabethan staging practices to prove that Coleridge was wrong. Although there is a lot of poetry for the imagination to feed on, the scheme of the play is emphatically based on the spectacular which depends to a large extent on "the sensuous impression of time and space". Spectacle as such is an outstandingly important component in the desing of *The Tempest*.

*The Tempest* as a true romance, abounds in strange and marvellous events. The shipwreck which turns out to be no shipwreck at all, the clothes of the travellers which after being drenched in the sea hold their "freshness and glosses, being rather new-dyed than stain'd with salt water", the music of the Island, sudden weariness and sleep, strange inhabitants — "what have we here? a man or a fish?" — a banquet



which appears suddenly and with equal suddenness disappears, strange voices, sudden and miraculous love, equally miraculous reunion. The strangeness and marvel are in the hands of Prospero who creates them with his magic art and who is helped by obedient Ariel.

The "improbable fiction" becomes a part of the fictional world because it is created by the techniques well settled in the traditions of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre; they are a play-within-a-play, a dumb show, a masque, and an anti-masque. All of them have an important trait in common: they add an additional distance, a further removal away from the reality, and therefore lend themselves admirably to the presentation of fiction within fiction. They also provide a dramatic solution to the problem of the point of view. In the narrative romance it would be that of the narrator. Here the narrator disappears, his place is taken by a presenter who organizes a series of spectacles. His point of view is necessarily different from his actors/spectators within the play, i.e. the rest of the characters who take the shows for a real experience. The awareness of the real audience/readers is so manipulated that initially we accept the point of view of the people manipulated by Prospero, and only in the second scene are we permitted to share Prospero's point of view.

The initial storm is presented with exceptional care for verisimilitude: stage directions dictate the business of the scene as precisely as the language. Wet mariners do their best to save the sinking ship. No poetic lines describing the storm in a series of effective images are spoken. Instead, there is professional language of the seamen which accompanies their equally professional activities (c.f. note on lines 5—55 of I.I. in Kermode, ed., 1962). The passengers voice in different ways their fear which grows to despair with the off-stage cries "We split, we split!". Nothing in this scene suggests that this is Prospero's spectacle. The passengers go through the experience of the shipwreck with all its terror. They will keep this perspective to the end of the play.

Another such play-within-a-play is the presentation of the miraculous love of Ferdinand and Miranda. They go through a real experience, unaware that Prospero devises for them a plot where the paths of true love never do run smooth, whereas we are invited to watch this play with Prospero.

The moment of Alonso's reunion with Ferdinand is also staged: Prospero "discovers Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess". In the sequence of the miraculous adventures on the Island this is a climax which is set off from the rest by an ironic touch: Alonso and his companions are offered for the first time the perspective of Prospero and refuse to believe it. What is real they take for "a most high miracle", Miranda is "the goddess".

The other wonders that befall the travellers are also staged as spectacles. The key scene is III.III — the banquet scene. It begins with a dumb show which is described in detail in the stage directions: "Enter several strange Shapes, bringing in a banquet; and dance about it with gentle salutations; inviting the King & c., to eat, they depart". This is immediately accepted by the onlookers as the reality of the unknown land:

Seb. Now I will believe

That there are unicorns; (21—26)

Ant. And I'll be sworn 'tis true: travellers ne'er did lie

Though fools at home condemn'em. (26—27).

The onlookers become actors, and the dumb show becomes a masque, of a distinctly moral character when they decide to eat: Ariel as Harpy appears, delivers his exhortation and punishes them for drawing their swords. It is a masque observed by Prospero and the audience; for the King's party it is reality they never question, no matter how strange it is.

Similarly, the anti-masque in Act IV, Scene 1, 194, ff, is never questioned as a reality by Stephano and Trinculo who at the sound and sight of the dogs run away.

The marvellous and the magic, as we can see, is to a large degree taken away from the language and delegated to the visual element of the play: much of what happens on the stage is indicated in the stage directions, which means that things are not told but shown. Another important consequence of the use of these techniques is that the romance world of *The Tempest* is organized at two levels. One is the level of Prospero and Ariel who by magic create the other level, that of the shipwrecked party. The shift in the awareness of the audience allows it to accept Prospero's magic reality as a 'real' one and watch the adventures of the others as a spectacle. The marvellous is doubled and the delight in the marvellous is doubled without being far-fetched: the audience can enjoy the art of Prospero with the satisfaction of the initiated. The delight in the impossible adventures of the king and his party is transferred into the delight in the spectacular. At the same time the double perspective offers an ambiguity of vision: things are not only magic and wonderful, but true and real at the same time: "Travellers ne'er did lie...".

To conclude: *The Tempest* is a rich, complex, and suggestive play. Here I have tried to examine only, a single aspect, that of its romance quality. The romance material is treated in the play in a thoroughly dramatic way, that is true to the literary kind. It is not an *adaptation* of a narrative material, it is a romance *play*. This goes to say more than just to mention the unities of time and place. The play is devised



as a series of spectacles within its own frame, all of them showing the magical and the marvellous in a double perspective, marrying the reality of experience with the delight in wonder. The function of the language is as important as that of the visual material: the realism of the storm and the dramatic character of Prospero's narration both depend heavily upon the way the language is used.

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# NIEKTÓRE ASPEKTY DRAMATYZACJI MATERIAŁU ROMANSOWEGO W „BURZY” WILLIAMA SZEKSPIRA

## STRESZCZENIE

Romans jest tradycyjnym gatunkiem epicznym sięgającym do starożytnych autorów (Heliodorus, Tatiusz) i cieszący się powodzeniem, choć w różnych odmianach, w literaturze europejskiej doby Średniowiecza i Renesansu. Definicja gatunku jest płynna, ale zdecydowanie podkreśla obecność fabuły pełnej niezwykłych przygód i cudów, dziejących się w trakcie podróży i obejmujących wielość miejsc oraz dużą rozciągłość w czasie. Tak konstruowanej fabule towarzyszy fascynacja tym co cudowne i magiczne i wymóg naiwnej wiary w prawdziwość narratora, stojącego zawsze na zewnątrz swej opowieści.

*Perykles*, *Cymbelin*, *Opowieść zimowa* i *Burza* charakteryzują się taką właśnie fabułą i aksjomatycznym założeniem, że wszystko jest możliwe. Artykuł przedstawia dwa problemy dramatyzacji tradycyjnie epickiego romansu: 1) dramatyzacja narratora i narracji. Omawiany materiał to opowieść Prospera w scenie II pierwszego aktu, częściowo w kontraście do narratora w *Peryklesie*. Szczególnie podkreślona zostaje rola języka jako elementu przetwarzającego narrację w 'dzianie się'. 2) dramatyczne ujęcie aspektu 'cudowności'. Podkreśla się zastosowanie tradycyjnych technik 'teatru w teatrze'. Takie rozwiązanie eliminuje narratora, seria spektakli zastępuje opisy przygód, oferuje dramatycznie istotne różne punkty widzenia, pozwala na manipulacje różnymi poziomami recepcji świata przedstawionego i zapewnia w ten sposób utrzymanie romansowej fascynacji niezwykłością świata, w którym wszystko może się zdarzyć.