Running Out of Sources (An analysis of Shakespeare's recycling of characters to consciously or unconsciously create a highly evolved final character in Prospero)

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The Tempest

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in itself, but can also be viewed in terms of
previous Shakespearean characters. Thus we see that
Prospero, in addition to possibly being one of Shakespeare's most ad-
canced characters. This superiority is not only seen in terms of
The Tempest in itself, but can also be viewed in terms of
sequences.

One of the most convincing arguments for
pest in general, and Prospero, in particular, being a kaleido-
scope of previous Shakespearean plays and characters, re-
spectively, is seen in the fact that there is no one concrete
source of the plot for this final play: Shakespeare, as
we know, did not lay great emphasis on originality and
often directly lifted plots, characters and themes from ear-
er narratives of other authors. This raises the possibility
that instead of using outside sources, Shakespeare resorted
to using his own plays as a source for his last play, and in
doing so consciously or unconsciously created a character
that was an evolved version of some of his previous char-
acters. As Marjorie Garber said, "With the single exception
of Love's Labor Lost, a very early play, The Tempest
is the only one of Shakespeare's works for which no source
has been found" (46). Thus while we see magical creatures
in A Midsummer Night's Dream, they do not compare to the
supernaturally miraculous Ariel or the hideous cruelty and
spite of Caliban. Further, nowhere do we see a character as
highly evolved as Prospero, who is omnipresent through Ariel,
and who possesses such potent yet benign magical powers.
This uniquely compelling character can thus be
viewed as a progression from the previous Shakespearean
characters, a parallel which can undoubtedly be seen between
King Lear and Prospero. We see that in both cases the pro-
tagonists neglected their duty as monarchs of their kingdom,
and handed over their responsibility to someone else. In King
Lear, the king divides his kingdom between his daughters,
and entrusts them with the responsibility of running it, in an
effort to "unburden" himself. This dividing of his kingdom
is what later leads to his downfall, for he relies on external
power and dignity in order to maintain himself. Similarly,
the Duke in Measure for Measure, with a duty of running kingdoms to his
brother Antonio, and "to him put! The manage of my [his] state"
in order to pursue his interest and education in the
"liberal arts" (1.2.75) and the supernatural. This, just as,
in the case of Lear, is what leads to the usurpation of his throne,
and his exile. Yet as James P. Driscoll points out, "While
Lear vainly invokes the Gods to bring him justice [and exact
his revenge for him], Prospero, through command of the spe-
ts, secures justice for himself" (85). Thus in the lines:
— I have bedimmed
The moon, I have call’d forth the mutinous winds,
And twist the green sea and the azur’ vault
Set roaring war....
(5.1.41-44)

we see the power and control that Prospero had over his
enemies and the engineering of the tempest in order to be
able to repossess his own kingdom, and secure his daughter's
on the other hand, instead of being proactive, relies com-
pletely on the gods to avenge him, and serve justice, without
doing anything to even try and win back his lost status. Even
in cursing his daughter he invokes the god's in "Hear, Na-
ture hear; dear goddess, hear!" (1.4.271). Thus while Prospero
has a need to influence his own destiny and works hard to
exact his means in order to achieve his ends, Lear simply
resigns himself to the circumstances and escapes into insy-
ty at the sign of trouble. Therefore, Prospero can be seen as
achieving the golden mean of active and contemplative,
active in his control of his actions, yet contemplative in care-
fully planning them and trying to predict their consequence.

The possibility of Prospero, being in part an active
developed version of King Lear is further seen in the
parallel scenes of storms. While the storm in King Lear
serves to emphasize the weakness and helplessness of Lear
and his resignation to his destiny, by his deliberate invitation
to "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!" (5.2.1),
it is actually a show of Prospero's power and his control over
his environment in The Tempest. He himself achieves an al-
most god-like power and omniscience on his island, instead
of resigning himself to the mercy of circumstances, like King
Lear.
Lastly, we see that ultimately Lear fails to serve the
justice that he hopes to serve, when he stages the mock trial
for Goneril and Regan. In the end, Goneril and Regan both
die unrepentant and Lear dies in grief for his banished daugh-
ter, Cordelia. Thus, the sinners go remorseless and Lear dies
in seeing further injustice rather than justice, emphasizing a
failure on his part as not only a king who is supposed to be
an agent of justice, but a father who valued flattery over genu-
ine love. Prospero, on the other hand, succeeds not only in
reestablishing himself as Duke of Milan, but also makes the
King of Naples truly repent. His staging of the fake banquet
and the presence of the harpies is effective unlike Lear's mock
trial, and truly helps to right the wrong and promote justice.
Further we see that where Lear failed as a father, Prospero
succeeded. He instilled in his daughter true virtue and good-
ess, and was able to accept her in the role of both daughter
and Ferdinand's wife. Thus he gives his blessing to Miranda
and Ferdinand, presenting them with fatherly advice and
warnings of Tempest and purity.
Look thou be true; do not give dalliance
Too much the rein. The strongest oaths are straw
To th' fire i' th' blood. Be more abstemious,
Or else good night you vow.
(4.1.51-54)

Lear, on the other hand, fails to accept this change from
dughter to wife, and banishes Cordelia when she says that
though she loves her father dearly, when she gets married
her love will be more focused on her husband, for asks;
Why have my sisters husbands if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall
Abase me. Hell, and forswear all purity.
(1.11.99-101)

Thus we see that in terms of father and ruler Prospero super-
sedes King Lear, in spite of the many parallels and

similarities that are seen between the two, which furthers
the possibility that Prospero, in part, is an advanced King
Lear, in whom we see that Lear's faults of resignation, shun-
ning of duty, and fatherhood are resolved.

Another Shakespearean character who pays a price for
neglecting his kingdom, and then handing over its run-
ning to someone else is Angelo in Measure for Measure. The Duke,
who showed laxness in the running of his

kingdom, hands over control temporarily to one of his
deputies, Angelo, in a hoax to clean up and restore some sort
of moral order in Vienna. Unfortunately while the Duke
represented the extremely negligent end of the spectrum, Angelo
represents the overtly rigid end of the spectrum and what
means is a stiffly strict moral code of conduct. Thus,

though both Prospero and the Duke chose their books over
their kingdoms, we see in the Duke a failure to run his king-

dom, whereas the opportunity for reform and turning of the

kingdom is never given to Prospero, since his throne is

usurped. Yet, we see in both a sort of omniscient presence,
where they are aware of their surroundings and happenings.
The Duke takes on the guise of a Friar to oversee the suc-
cession of events in his absence, and Prospero uses Ariel to
keep him abreast with the events on the Island, seen when Caliban
says "His spirits hear me" (2.2.4). As Hallett Smith

explained, "For a duke who, freed of administrative respon-
sibility, yet presides over events like a kind of God, Prospero
had a model in his own Measure for Measure" (3).

Yet, ironically, another character in Measure for
Measure that could in sort parallel Prospero is the deputy,
Angelo. Prospero contains the action in the plays, yet
while Prospero actually demonstrates this control, we
see that Angelo is unable to do so due to the interference of
the Duke. Further, the Duke takes on an aspiration to be a
perfectly moral and just, almost god-like figure. Angelo is so sure that he will never sin that he is
willing to lay his life on it and says

For I have had such faults, but rather tell me,
When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgement pattern out my death
And nothing come in pairs (2.12.28-31)

These are lines that he very nearly pays the consequences
for at the end of the play. Prospero, on the other hand, does
not leave us with any illusions of grandeur or godliness.
Through his advanced art makes him take up an almost god-
like character, with the power to raise tempests, make music
and control the actions of individuals, Prospero redeems his
humanity by renouncing his magic and confronting his mor-
tality, "where / Every third thought shall be his grave" (5.1.311). Thus, we see elements of both the Duke and
Angelo in Prospero, which gives way to the possibility that

The Tempest...
Prospero might represent the ideal state between the two. Having learnt from his previous mistake of entrusting someone else with his responsibilities, Prospero redeems his wrongs in securing his lost kingdom for his daughter. We also see that Prospero executes and ensures proper governance of his island, which has been his realm of rule since he was ousted from Milan. Further, Prospero, though governed by strict morality, does not let this interfere with his humanity or even sense of justice for that matter. Thus, instead of exacting his revenge, he forgives, affirming his humanity by telling his brother, For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive Thy rankest fault. (5.1.130-133)

Thus, we see that it is almost as if Prospero has achieved the perfect mean between the laxness of the Duke and the rigidity of Angelo, in learning how to punish, yet forgive. This denying of duty or the lack of responsibility emerges as one of the major flaws in many of Shakespeare's characters, that is resolved in Prospero. Another flaw that seems to repeatedly emerge is the inability to reconcile the male and female and ensure their dual existence either in one individual or harmoniously side by side. Thus we see that King Claudius, in Shakespeare's The Trojan History of Hamlet Prince of Denmark mocks Hamlet's excessive mourning by indicating that it is effeminate and "unmanly grief" (2.1.2350). However, this dichotomy between woman and man and the conflict between the masculine and the feminine is most prominently seen in Twelfth Night. Here we have fraternal twins, Sebastian and Viola, being separated due to a misunderstanding. There is such a deep love and connection between them that it is almost as if they are two halves of one being. Sebastian grieves for his lost sister who is "drowned already, sir, with salt water, though I [he] seem[ed] to drown her remembrance again with more" (2.3.28-29). Further we see that the sanity versus insanity theme is not resolved till the end of the play, when Viola discards her masculine garments and returns to her natural role of a woman, enabling the duke to fall in love with her and releasing Olivia to fall in love with Sebastian. Thus, it is almost as if some sort of balance has been disturbed when Viola takes on a male role, thus contributing to its imbalance. For Viola herself affirms the unline sides, instead of one feminine and one masculine, confounding the entity created by Sebastian and Viola, two masculine, two feminine, two fraternal twins. He plays both the part of father and mother to Miranda, imparting to her his education gained through his birth as a male, "For have [he has] I, thy schoolmaster, made thee [her] more profit" (1.2.172). Yet he also ensures that he gives her some sort of sexual guidance, in staging the masque for her and her husband to be. He confers upon her the womanly blessing of fertility, yet at the same time ensuring that he warns her husband against "breaking[her] virgin-knot before/All sanctimonious ceremonies may/With full and holy right be administered" (4.1.63).

Ironically, we see that the storm that separated Viola and Sebastian can be paralleled with the storm that shipwrecked Prospero and Miranda on the island some twelve years ago. Thus, whereas the storm in Twelfth Night serves to separate the masculine and the feminine whole of Viola and Sebastian, the storm in the tempest actually forced Prospero to fulfill both the maternal and paternal roles towards his daughter, Miranda. Further as William L. Benzon asserts "making amends with the men who exiled him requires the same transcendence of masculine concern with honor and power as, giving his daughter to another man" (273). Thus, we see that Prospero's ability to refrain from avenging his lost kingdom, and the attempt at his life, shows a possible feminine side where forgiveness is valued above honor through death, and honor itself is gained in forgiveness and redemption and not in battle or killing. Further, as pointed out by Benzon, Prospero is aware of his mortality, thus the restoration of his kingdom does not have undertones of power, for "Prospero is returning home to die, he is most emphatically not returning to exercise secular power" (3.4.274), seen once again in the lines, "Every third thought shall be my grave" (5.1.311). Thus, we see that not only does Prospero encompass both man and woman; indeed, I would go so far as to say, Prospero is seeking justice for himself, riding his masculinity, shown in his generosity of spirit, by the virtue of forgiveness.

This need to exact revenge that Prospero overcomes is seen as the downfall of many Shakespearean characters. A prominent example of this need for revenge that results in downfall is Prince Hamlet. Hamlet tries to avenge the death of his father, who is murdered by his brother. Here there is a parallel in plot with the evil brothers, Claudius and Antonio, but while Hamlet is seeking revenge for his kingdom, in part, but mainly to avenge his father's death, Prospero is seeking justice for himself. Here the main difference between the two protagonists lies in the fact that Hamlet has actual intent for revenge and lets blind emotion and even insanity in part dictate the course of his actions, seen in his rash killing of Polonius, which subsequently causes the death of Ophelia. Hamlet lets his sadness control his actions and emotions, eventually falling into a state of despair where even "To be, or not to be— that is the question" (3.2.55). If Hamlet had played by the rules of revenge and only sought to avenge himself against Claudius, the play would, probably not have had such a tragic ending but, by involving Laertes and Ophelia, two seemingly innocent bystanders, Hamlet now becomes more of a villain than a heroic champion of his father's honor, eventually dying with a wish for time on his lips, "Had I but time" (5.2.319). On the other hand, Prospero, though obviously angered by the usurpation of his throne, keeps his emotions in check. He has a plan and he will execute it. Further, we see that while Prospero had the ability to kill Antonio, what he was seeking was not revenge but simply the reinstatement of what was rightfully his, "My dukedom of thee, which perforce I know/ Thou must restore" (5.1.133-134). In not letting his sense of smirched honor get the way, he is able to serve justice not only for himself, but also for the people around him. Thus, we see that while both Hamlet and Prospero had similar agendas of revenge, they both went about attaining it in very different ways. Prospero's plan of revenge eventually led to forgiveness while Hamlet's led to death. Yet, we should not forget that while Hamlet had a few weeks to plan his revenge, Prospero had twelve years, which could in a sense contribute to Prospero's being an evolved, older and wiser Hamlet, where time states the desire for vengeance and increases self-knowledge.

Therefore, we see that Prospero, by breaking the conventional need of avenging male honor, comes across as a highly evolved character, who, in a sense, is above base human desires for revenge, or even power, for that matter. What is fascinating about his character is that although he obviously possesses a great deal of power and even comes very close to achieving the power of God, he redeems himself by renouncing his magic and forgiving his enemies. Omnipotent on his island with the power to "riffed [rif] Jove's sacred temple" (5.1.45), Prospero oversteps his mortal limits. Yet he establishes his mortality and humanity, ironically by giving up the source of his power: I'll break my staff. Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, And deeper than did ever plummet sound I'll drown my book. (4.1.54-57)

Thus, we see that Prospero's character had the potential to go either way. As Conso Cortfield emphasizes, "It is possible to see his state as one suspended not just between beast and angel [Caliban and Ariel] but also between good and evil" (34). Thus, what is so remarkable about Prospero's character is that he voluntarily chooses the path of good, making the decision solely based on his own reasoning and acceptance of his mortality. Thus, in him we see an acceptance of death, that King Lear violently resisted, a transcendence over the need for revenge, that was absent in Hamlet, the ability to serve justice and yet retain humanity, that Angelo and Duke Vincentio lacked, and finally the integration of the masculine and the feminine reflected in the fraternal twins, Viola and Sebastian. Finally, in addition to the resolution of faults seen in these characters, Prospero manages to transcend human instinct itself by giving way to forgiveness over revenge, and peaceful humanity and mortality over the lure of power.
Thematic Vacuums: Excising History and Politics in Captain Corelli's Mandolin

Rachel Wise '06

"It would be impossible for a parent to be happy about its baby's ears being put on backwards."

—Louis de Bernières

Few in adaptation studies would continue to argue for strict fidelity to the source text. Thankfully, the past twenty years have provided many useful paradigms through which one might approach the study of film adaptation. Positioned in Palimpsestes (1982), Gerard Genette's concept of transtextuality—all that puts one text in relation to other texts—remains one of the most useful and comprehensive. He introduces five areas of transtextuality. Intertextuality involves framing a text inside another through quotation, plagiarism, and allusion. Paratextuality includes all accessory messages and commentary that surround a text and, in some way, lend themselves to the way in which we approach this text. Metafiction deals with the critical relation between one text and another, including things like the critic, the literary essay, and bibliographical commentary. Architextuality identifies the re-elaboration of a text in a different genre, language, or medium and the generic taxonomies suggested or refused by the title of a text. The fifth area, hypertextuality, examines the relationship between the hyper text to an anterior hypotext and the ways in which the hypertext transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends the hypotext (Stam 65-6).

Genette's model provides a useful analytical lens through which one might look at a text and its adaptation; it encompasses much of the discursive practices of our culture, realizing that artistic endeavors aren't conceived in a vacuum, but are shaped by discourse around them. Yet, however comprehensive, even Genette's paradigm does not make allowances for sociopolitical factors. Adaptation studies have yet to provide a schema that fully takes into account the political and historical circumstances that guide the production and reception of particular adaptations. In the case of Louis de Bernières' Corelli's Mandolin—a novel that deals extensively with the nature of historical recounting and the political history of the Second World War—its adaptation to film required diplomatic and genre concessions to be made in regards to both content and theme. I would argue that these outside pressures primarily helped shape the film adaption and that the consequential excising of political and historical themes so pivotal to the novel—and the romance between Pelagia (Penelope Cruz) and Corelli (Nicholas Cage)—creates a thematic vacuum that removes the very tensions that make de Bernières' novel so compelling.

Corelli's Mandolin tells a story of the German/Italian occupation of Greece during WWII and the German massacre of Italian soldiers once Mussolini surrendered. The novel has received relative popularity and critical praise since its 1994 publication. Far more popular within the United Kingdom than the U.S., it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, and it is estimated that one out of twenty British households owns a copy (Arroyo 17). Lured by the promise of an inbuilt audience, what resulted was a collaborative film effort between Universal, Studio Canal, Miramax, and Working Title Films, which promised a potential Hollywood blockbuster. The novel provides all the traits to an audience—whether English or American—usually salivates over: romance, intrigue, war, and a potentially epic quality a la The English Patient. Add to that the star power of Nicholas Cage as Corelli and the beautiful scenery of the Greek island Cephallonia, and it seems that adapting Corelli's Mandolin to the screen would be a full-proof plan. Lauded as the "big date movie of the summer" (Mctavish 19), an aura of anticipation and expectation of box office success surrounded the movie's release. A major studio production, it was the first movie by director John Madden since his Oscar-winning Shakespeare in Love—a movie that was extremely popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet most critics quickly panned Captain Corelli's Mandolin, calling it "a disappointing follow-up" and "sluggishly paced" (Rozen 35). And in fact, it would seem the movie-going public would agree; the film only recouped $25,528,495 of its $57,000,000 budget in U.S. theaters. So what specifically went awry in the perception of a movie that should have had enormous mainstream audience appeal? It would seem the problems with adapting de Bernières' novel have, in part, to do with the discursive nature of the novel itself. It is a novel that does not fit neatly into the structure of your typical dramatic narrative. Reviewers of the novel have failed to arrive at any consensus as to what is the "central" theme of Corelli's Mandolin. The BBC, while promoting "The Big Read" campaign, remarked that de Bernières captures "the human values and eccentricity that persist amidst the horrors of war." A reviewer in the New Statesman rather felt "the central theme is not really war at all, but everything good which is threatened by war, and the captain's music is a fitting enough symbol for this" (Holland 64). I would argue that the novel revolves around

Works Cited


