CHAPTER 1

Introduction
'What Have We Here?': Acknowledging Shakespeare's Romances on Screen

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Shakespeare's romances are magical. Four plays belonging to Shakespeare's late-phase work[1] – *Pericles* (1607–8), *Cymbeline* (1609–11), *The Winter's Tale* (1609–10) and *The Tempest* (1610–11) – should conclude tragically but miraculously end happily. Originally labelled as 'tragicomedies' (a term coined by playwright John Fletcher in his foreword to *The Faithful Shepherdess* in 1608), these hybrid plays were re-categorized as 'romances' in 1875 by Irish poet and critic Edward Dowden. Like the medieval tales relating legendary or extraordinary adventures, Shakespeare's romances defy narrative logic and verisimilitude; they emphasize sensational extravagance, geographical wanderings, wonderful coincidences and reunions in tense scenes of recognition. Loved ones are fantastically found again even when they were thought to be dead and lost forever. The plays do not only tell magical stories, they also reveal how ideological discourses shape the world and celebrate the magic of artistic creation, blurring the limits between illusion and the 'real' and marking the power and prominence of fiction, even over those who author and enact it.

José Ramón Díaz Fernández's select film-bibliography at the end of the volume, as well as the more comprehensive version provided in the volume's online resources,[2] show that *The Tempest* is obviously a prominant 'island' in the archipelago of Shakespeare's romances on screen, but also that the screen has long searched to accommodate the magic of *all* the romances and the incredible situations it engenders. During the pre-sound era, the romances were considered particularly well adapted to rendition in motion pictures: they contributed to celebrate the new techniques of cinema, especially the trend of *trucages* set by Georges Méliès, a stage magician turned filmmaker.[3] The pioneering 12-minute *Tempest* directed by Percy Stow in 1908 displayed some elaborate effects through editing and superimpositions and ignored the unity of time by adding flashbacks. Fades created magical effects during the shipwreck and Ariel's tricks, generating what Peter

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Holland has identified as a polarity between the 'realism of the magic' and the 'magic of emotional realism', a tension which characterizes subsequent *Tempest* films as well.[4] The silent film versions produced by the Thanhouser company even strengthened 'hope in the future of kenematography'.[5] For instance, the one-reel *Tempest* (1911), now lost, was praised for its exquisite storm effects.[6]

As Judith Buchanan argues in this volume, alternative endings, which are referenced, remembered, averted or suppressed in the plays, haunt the romances as traces of what could have been, inviting productions to unearth the stories 'from within and behind the surface narrative'. The silent *Winter's Tale* of 1910 makes use of a court jester who seems parachuted right from *King Lear* to serve as an ironic commentator of the action: as Leontes and Hermione reunite, the fool replaces the missing words by blatant gestures metafictionally marking how unbelievable the events are.[7] In this volume, Lindsay Ann Reid wonders what, in the Thanhouser *Cymbeline* (1913), made Shakespeare's play seem so well suited for screen adaptation; she argues that the pre-sound version reshaped the play into a romantic comedy, eliminating *Cymbeline*'s notorious villains, emphasizing the love narrative and doing away with many of the fanciful and self-consciously excessive elements. The films were successful possibly because they were no longer romances. And, indeed, the romances' early popularity did not endure.

'Strange Stuff' (*The Tempest*, 4.1.232)

Albeit the diversity of spectacle, the display of magic and the array of emotions that characterize the romances, *Cymbeline*, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* are some of Shakespeare's least-filmed plays. Even *The Tempest*, a play which might have been thought an appealing text for cinematic adaptation, has not been as repeatedly adapted for the screen as, for instance, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* or *Richard III*. As Buchanan suggests, 'the small clutch of film adaptations that have emerged are all quirky or idiosyncratic in some way', thus reflecting their 'fantastical source'.[8] This addition to the Shakespeare on Screen series endeavours to explore these idiosyncratic adaptations from the silent versions to the television productions, from cinematic 'straightforward' adaptations to more 'spectral' appropriations. The history of adapting the romances on-screen is one of transfiguration that, each time, resets and illuminates the plays in various lights.

The romance plays have often thrived less on the big screen than on the small one. One of the very few instances, *Pericles*, was adapted to the

screen for the BBC in 1983. Under the direction of David Jones, who saw in the figure of Gower some kind of 'television presenter',[9] the exterior scenes ended up looking 'more like sterile storybook illustrations than authentically gritty environments'[10] but used the TV conventions of the time, between artifice and realism, to create a unique rendering of the play, although a relatively neglected one. According to Jones, the play 'seems to have been written by many different hands but what it *is*, marvellously, is cinematographic and episodic' because it is 'cut to "meanwhile, in this place" and "meanwhile there"'.[11] Edel Semple revisits, in this volume, the BBC *Pericles* by looking at a female gaze which contributes to balance the power between gender roles. While the play frequently presents women as desirable objects of visual pleasure, the BBC production focuses on women's own looking.

Broadcasts of scenes from *Cymbeline* in 1937 and 1956 were also among the earliest British television productions of Shakespeare, as John Wyver documents in his chapter. Neither broadcast was recorded but, for both of these 'lost' productions, the BBC Written Archives Centre preserves detailed camera scripts, revealing the development of the language of television studio drama. Shot lengths, camera movements and framings – which are more complex in 1956 – are explored by Wyver and compared with the extant studio production of Elijah Moshinsky's BBC 1982 *Cymbeline*, a version which Robert S. White then analyses at length, examining both the history of the production and the stakes of its casting choices. Moshinsky appropriates a Rembrandt imagery and sets the play in Jacobean interiors, while creating stylised, snowy landscapes for the exterior scenes in Wales.

Jane Howell's BBC *Winter's Tale* (1981) was even more experimental with its deliberate rejection of naturalistic design and its emphasis, instead, on 'minimalist, expressionistic sets and symbolic costumes (a bearskin hat and cloak for Leontes in prefiguration of the famous bear in the third act)'.[12] Having directed the play twice for the stage before, Jane Howell felt less free. She described the setting she used in the BBC version as 'too harsh, unaccountably harsh'.[13] In this volume, Jacek Fabiszak compares Howell's work with Zofia Mrozowska's filming of the play for the Polish Television Theatre. Although the two TV versions do not refer to or acknowledge each other, the similarities are surprising: they both strive to render the non-realistic nature of the play through meta-televisual devices, while imagining how 'television realism' might work. From the stage to the televison screen, the framing of shots may affect profoundly our perception of scenes. Christopher Wheeldon's 2014 ballet version of *The Winter's Tale*, directed for the screen by Ross MacGibbon, is explored by Judith

Buchanan. Leontes and Hermione reunite in a tormented and redemptive *pas de deux* scene in which a statue of their deceased son, Mamillius, has been added on stage. The alternation between shots that show Mamillius's statue and shots that hide it engenders an emotional oscillation between the joy of miraculous reunion and the sadness of knowing that the child is lost forever.

The Winter's Tale has also been adapted by Stanislav Sokolov as a puppet show (1994) in the television series *Animated Tales from Shakespeare*. The animated production not only highlights the fantastic already present in the play-text, but creates more of it. Flame-like figures dance around Leontes as he banishes his baby daughter, as if he were manipulated by the devil and no longer responsible for his actions; the interpolated ghost of Hermione appears in Antigonus's boat, making her death even more certain for the viewers. The technique of stop-motion photography that is used to animate the puppets contributes to explore metafilmically 'the magical boundary between stillness and movement' in a play where Hermione's statue is revived.[14] As Laurie Osborne argues, 'By explicitly invoking the magic of puppetry where still sculpted figures come to life and move, the animators thus create the fantastic within an interplay between filmed movement and sculpture'.[15] In this volume, Maddalena Pennacchia prolongs this idea, suggesting that Paulina reviving the statue is a Prospero-like character who puts on 'magic' shows and pulls the strings of drama. *The Tempest* for the *Animated Tales* (1992), produced with puppets as well, aptly reflects on Prospero as a puppeteer and on the presence of Italian puppet theatre in England since the 1570s.

If *The Tempest* has been adapted as 'traditional' low-budget productions on television – such as George Schaefer's Hallmark *Tempest* (1960) or John Gorrie's BBC version (1980) – on the big screen, directors have instead revelled in the possibilities of playing with the illusionistic dimension of cinema itself. They have challenged our notion of realism, displaying the materiality of filming through the unreality of the special effects, as well as reproducing Prospero's powers. As Derek Jarman stated, 'Film is the wedding of light and matter – an alchemical conjunction'.[16] His low-budget, art-house 1979 *Tempest* was a reaction against, according to Samuel Crowl, the 'stale, safe atmosphere' of the BBC Shakespeare productions launched two years before.[17] Jarman took a play belonging to establishment culture and reshaped it in anti-establishment terms, bringing to it a transgressive, camp and punk sensibility. The film is presented as the complex, agitated, psychodramatic dream of an unhappy and aggressive Prospero. As Lisa Hopkins has remarked, the film's last word is 'sleep' instead of 'free',

suggesting that the whole cinematic drama is 'rounded with a sleep' indeed.[18] The island becomes an eighteenth-century mansion (a critical comment on the tradition of heritage films?) in which Caliban's and Ariel's relations to Prospero become homoerotically charged. By casting a white actor as Caliban, Jarman underplays the racial/colonial issues of exploitation to concentrate on the sexual/gender ones. A flashback thus shows an adult Caliban sucking his mother Sycorax's breast. The witch Sycorax is portrayed as a huge and grotesque woman enchained, presenting maternity and heterosexuality as both repulsive and alienating.

Prospero's island becomes a series of fantastically lit rooms in which viewers lose all sense of direction, and watch the transformation of each chiaroscuro, secluded room into a pictorial and almost motionless composition. The magic of cinema is thus replaced by the elaboration of visual tableaux.[19] With this disorientation and fracturing of represented space,[20] the 'splitting' of the ship in the play's first scene, as Rothwell suggests, 'acts as metaphor for Prospero's own desperate struggle against the alienation of self from self and society, as well as self-referentially Jarman's own split from conventional movie making'.[21] The storm is created with apparently authentic, blue-filtered, black-and-white stock footage, thus standing apart from the rest of the fiction film. Prospero's unreal tempest is therefore, in Peter Holland's words, 'defiantly *real* in a film whose techniques exuberantly enjoy their often carefully campy separation from the real'.[22] Jarman explicitly presents Prospero as a magus using magic mirrors and surrounded by walls covered with cabbalistic symbols, recalling Elizabeth I's official astrologer John Dee. Magic becomes a way to evoke closeted gay sexuality and a means to subject eternally childish daughters to their fathers. The masque is turned into a spectacular, campy Hollywood musical: sailors dance in what can be read as a queering of the British navy, destabilizing both colonial and heterosexist discourses,[23] and Elisabeth Welch gives a soulful performance of 'Stormy Weather', a song which suggests Prospero's unceased power so that it 'keeps rainin' all the time'.[24] Recalling Feste's song in *Twelfth Night*, the chorus suggests both happiness and possible chaos. Harmonious reconciliation can thus also be seen as a subversion of the play's sexual politics: the normalizing marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand is first desentimentalized through burlesque, then celebrated through a queer show.[25] When Ariel leaves the mansion, he visually enacts 'the act of coming out of the closet', presenting Jarman's *Tempest*, according to Coernelis Martin Renes, as 'a pamphlet against the repression of homoerotic desire'.[26] The film, as Kate Chedgzoy suggests, 'emerges from the conjunction of magic and power, in that it is crucially concerned with the

use of cinematic magic to stimulate the spectator's engagement with its exploration of power'.[27] In this volume, Peter J. Smith explores the way Jarman's *Tempest*, through the portrayal of Prospero and the performance of the masque, acknowledges the strangeness and roughness of the play, undermining the comfortable assumptions about the romances as being plays of forgiveness, resignation and restoration. Russell Jackson prolongs the reflection by addressing the masque/play relationship in three cinematic adaptations of *The Tempest*, noting that none delivers the masque as it appears in the script, as if the scene posed a real challenge on screen and demonstrated how the limits of cinema came into touch with the limits of theatre.

Like Jarman's *Tempest*, Peter Greenaway's 1991 *Prospero's Books* seems to place the entire dream-like action into the mind of Prospero, 'de-narrativizing' and defamiliarizing the play through the staging of sumptuous *tableaux vivants*.[28] The magus writes and ventriloquizes all the parts until the late stage of the drama, engendering a world he controls entirely (though he does it consciously rather than unconsciously). However, in many respects, the film stands in opposition to Jarman's. Greenaway's Prospero is not just a manipulator of people and events, as Elsie Walker claims; he is their *originator*.[29] While Jarman endeavours to debunk Prospero, Greenaway elevates him as the ultimate patriarch and auteur – a Renaissance doge and scribe, whose artistic composition is inspired by literary study and who merges the competing authorities of Shakespeare as playwright, Greenaway as filmmaker, and consecrated actor John Gielgud as guarantor of Shakespearean authenticity. Writing himself into his own fiction, a God-like Prospero conjures a dense, baroque and vertiginous world of images and sounds, filled with framing effects of *mise-en-abyme*, superimposed screens, handwritten words and interpictorial references that emphasize the hypermediatic and illusory dimensions. For Neil Forsyth, *Prospero's Books* is a 'tribute to the connection of magician and playmaker'.[30] As a painter and art historian turned film director, Greenaway revels in all the possibilities offered by digital wizardry, notably the Paintbox software, to create twenty-four animated books of impossible knowledge from Prospero's island-turned-library. The twenty-four books (an allusion to cinema's twenty-four frames per second)[31] give the film its structure, but they also anticipate the shift from paper to '"magically" enhanced electronic books' while suggesting that the Renaissance 'codex volume is as much a part of our future as our past'.[32] Concepts and ideas are given shapes and movements, while 'the material presence of film' is made 'palpable', 'producing a stratification of layerings that is deliberately beyond our capacity

of watch'.[33] *Prospero's Books* presents itself as both a 'faithful' version of the text and a *drowning* of the text's authority and monumentality within a very personal vision.[34] The film, therefore, exploits cinema's 'technology of magic' and 'magic of technology' while simultaneously, as Michael Anderegg argues, 'fetishis[ing] the written word (specifically, the words of Shakespeare)'.[35] To create the action and construct the characters, Prospero first offers us the material vision of textuality, from ink to quill and paper, deconstructing the very act of dramatic (and filmic) authoring and showing how written words can become cinematic material. As Prospero shoots his quill like a dart and lets the ink seep out like blood, the act of writing is presented as a violent way to performatively shape the world in one's own terms.

Authorship and Authority

If politics is a theatrical art, fiction is here shown to have political impact and effect. Through the 'Anatomy of birth' scene, we are invited to imagine that Prospero's wife died in childbirth. Contrary to what takes place eventually in *Pericles* or *The Winter's Tale*, no reunion can happen between husband and wife. The presence of the naked woman removing her skin to reveal her entrails may suggest that Prospero's rapture in 'secret studies' concerned pregnancy. As the implied vivisector of his wife's body for his research, the magus appears, in Chantal Zabus's words, as a 'master-anatomist' whose 'domination remains secure over her in life and death'.[36] For James Andreas, Greenaway even 'kills off Prospero's dead wife again' in this flashback of medical anatomy, enhancing the vision of the island as a perfected male fantasy.[37] By composing words, this Prospero creates 'sentences' that are, in fact, 'executed on Ariel and Caliban, Miranda and Ferdinand'.[38] Power is accessed through the actual magic of writing. If Gordon McMullan argues that Greenaway cuts lines to 'support the image of Prospero as benign and serene' instead of an 'insecure, colonizing tyrant',[39] Paul Willoquet-Maricondi suggests that *Prospero's Books* points to the 'inherent colonizing impulse of modernity', showing how language as a technique of abstraction may create 'totalistic and imperialistic illusions' to acquire 'power and authority over people, things, and places'.[40] As scribe and interpreter, Greenaway's Prospero is a true *dictator*. He controls the characters' speeches until they are eventually released from his spell. He appropriates (if not usurps) the maternal, life-giving body through literacy and digital technologies that offer illusions of life,[41] from the first animated Book, that of Water (matching the inaugural storm), to Shakespeare's *Complete*

Works. The First Folio includes blank pages waiting for *The Tempest* as if Greenaway imagined that the play was to be based on the film we have just seen, raising the question of sources and origins.[42] In this volume, Randy Laist explores the film's hyperreality where 'the art and the artist both inhabit a shifting landscape of ontological indeterminacy': real-world books are written within the confines of fiction; Prospero is the author not only of the other characters but of the text that includes himself, like the hand that draws itself in the M. C. Escher drawing. If Prospero throws his books into the water, Caliban rescues the Folio and the manuscript of *The Tempest*, echoing the work of the First Folio editors who rescued plays that Shakespeare had maybe decided to 'drown'. If the film suggests that some artefacts of Western civilization are redeemable, it also hints at the fact that Prospero's magic has not been fully abandoned and may have seeped into the 'real' world in the form of Shakespeare's influence on Western culture. In the film's last shot, Ariel undertakes to jump out of the screen, a move echoing Prospero's desire to be released from the play by the audience and leaving the film literally *open* to interpretation and rewriting.[43]

Julie Taymor's 2010 *The Tempest* takes great liberty with the script. If stage productions had already shown cross-dressed Prosperos played by women, Taymor changes Prospero's gender from male to female. Prospera, played by Helen Mirren, is given a new backstory in the 1.2 exposition, with a few lines of faux Shakespearean verse written by Glen Berger. With these lines, Prospera explains to Miranda that, at the death of her husband, the Duke of Milan, her scientific experimentation led her to be accused of witchcraft. With this crucial act of regendering, Prospero's aspirational and competitive anxiety concerning maternal body becomes, as Judith Buchanan suggests, less disruptive and may explain why, contrary to other film productions, Taymor's does not put Sycorax on screen: Mirren's Prospera embodies at once the magus and the sorceress, turning the story into a commentary on the way powerful women are branded as witches.[44]

Prospera's move from masculine Europe to a wild island filled with possibilities creates a feminist version of the exile from Milan, according to Samuel Crowl.[45] For Virginia Mason Vaughan too, Taymor's film offers a feminist critique of patriarchal power.[46] However, in interviews, Taymor denied a feminist motivation for the gender swap and spoke of a performance-based choice 'that in no way alter[s] the essence of Shakespeare's play',[47] an opinion shared by many reviewers of the film. As Courtney Lehmann analyses, Taymor's *Tempest* houses the sacrilegious and messy 'not-Shakespeare' within its narrative structure precisely because it

is 'Shakespeare'.[48] Moreover, Lehmann qualifies the film's feminist stance. In fact, Prospera's interpolated backstory in Milan reinforces contemporary stereotypes concerning female professionals and their dedication to the workplace versus family. The events on the island then present her as an emotionally unstable victim and a revengeful, raging harpy. As Prospera relinquishes her power at the end of the film, she has to be corseted painfully again and prepare herself to return to the constraints and conventions of a world ruled by men, sacrificing her freedom for her daughter's happiness. This corseting of Prospera's power is reflected in the film's ending, which gives the last word to Ariel. Dispossessed of the epilogue, which is sung as a kind of elegy by singer Beth Gibbons in the credit sequence, Prospera never says that her dukedom has been restituted (Epilogue, 6), thus rendering her sacrifice somehow pointless.

In this volume, Delilah Bermudez Brataas revisits Taymor's film in relation to the notion of utopia and rekindles the debate concerning the protagonist's regendering, showing how Prospera's transformation makes her shift 'between patriarchal master-mage, androgynous mother-mage and masculine-Duchess within her utopic realm'. For Brataas, the regendering achieves 'less a reconciliation of the demonized other and more a reclamation of the excluded m/other', since Taymor's film reclaims not only Caliban's mother, but also Miranda's, allowing them both, through Prospera, to take part in the island's utopia. In this perspective, the fact that Prospera does not deliver the epilogue takes another meaning. She never declares her 'charms overthrown' nor does she ask to be released from the utopic space she has contributed to build.

As in *Prospero's Books*, the representation of Prospera's magic makes use of computer graphics. As the actor playing Ariel could not be present on set, his character was added in post-production, making him literally a digital drone obeying Prospera's tyrannical orders.[49] Contrary to the C3I Ariel, Caliban appears, in the film, as Nature personified and subdued. For Lehmann, through the portrayal of a skin-deformed Caliban bearing firewood on his back, Taymor's *Tempest*, shot on the volcanic island of Lanai, invokes the colonial history of Hawaii and its sugarcane plantations in which leprosy reached an epidemic scale. In being obliged to leave the island, Prospera also calls to mind the overthrow of the last Hawaiian female ruler, deposed by US businessmen. For Michael D. Friedman, on the contrary, Taymor's film more classically presents Caliban as an African (notably through the choice of actor Djimon Hounsou, recalling his previous part in Steven Spielberg's 1997 film *Amistad* on the African slave trade). The film would thus ahistorically transplant the story of African slavery to

a place that never kept any African slaves, erasing the lesser-known, more racially diverse history of slavery in Hawaii.[50]

Both Greenaway's and Taymor's films dramatize how the performance of magic involves language and knowledge to exercise control over humans, spirits and nature. In this volume, Victoria Bladen revisits the magic and the supernatural in both films in relation to their aesthetic, metafictional, gendered and postcolonial implications, but also shows how each production significantly harnesses early modern ideas and iconography, eventually alerting to the central paradox of *The Tempest* – control is ultimately about the relinquishing of power. This is somehow what the process of adaptation reveals: the romance plays are more alive culturally when they are rewritten, recycled and reappropriated in other film genres.

Cymbeline has thus been revived on the big screen under the title *Anarchy*. Michael Almereyda's 2014 film rewrites the story as a gritty war between dirty cops and an outlaw biker gang. In this volume, Douglas Lanier explores Almereyda's *Cymbeline/Anarchy* as a return, a generation later, to issues which animated his *Hamlet* (2000): the fate of the hipster, the effects of social media on youth culture and the very possibilities for cultural dissidence from the American mainstream. Imogen's journey from high-school sweetheart to butch biker chick echoes Shakespeare's move from mainstream teen culture to a dissident alternative in independent cinema. According to Lanier, 'by saying goodbye to all that teen Shakespeare while himself producing a form of just such a film, Almereyda seeks to propel Shakespeare on film into a new, as yet uncharted, phase'.

A Cabinet of Filmic Curiosities

Cultivating openness and hybridity, Shakespeare's romances precisely seem to be a privileged ground for experimentation, freedom of adaptation, or for what Douglas Lanier calls in this volume acts of 'adaptational independence'. The romances are essentially what Yves Peyré calls 'protean plays',[51] 'prismatic comedies' that 'present themselves as tales to better display their own theatricality'.[52] Blending comic and gruesome ingredients, they have been defined as 'grotesque' by Barbara Mowat.[53] This strange monstrosity is a source of fascination and repulsion as well as of never-ending interrogation. This protean nature explains why they can be digested by so many film genres, as is shown by Kinga Földváry who studies how *The Tempest* has found its way into a western, *Yellow Sky* (dir. William A. Wellmann, 1948); a science fiction film, *Forbidden Planet* (dir. Fred M. Wilcox, 1956); two films that she classifies as *auteur* films, *Age of Consent* (dir. Michael Powell, 1969),