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INDEX / CONTENTS

Special Jane Austen

AUSTEN RE-MAKING AND RE-MADE.
QUOTATION, INTERTEXTUALITY AND REWRITING

Editors Eleonora Capra and Diego Saglia

<i>Austen in the Second Degree: Questions and Challenges</i> DIEGO SAGLIA (Università di Parma)	3-11
<i>The Anonymous Jane Austen: Duelling Canons</i> EDWARD COPELAND (Pomona College – Claremont)	13-39
<i>“Comedy in its Worst Form”? Seduced and Seductive Heroines in “A Simple Story”, “Lover’s Vows”, and “Mansfield Park”</i> CARLOTTA FARESE (Università di Bologna)	41-56
<i>Bits of Ivory on the Silver Screen: Austen in Multimodal Quotation and Translation</i> MASSIMILIANO MORINI (Università di Urbino Carlo Bo)	57-81
<i>Remediating Jane Austen through the Gothic: “Pride and Prejudice and Zombies”</i> SERENA BAIESI (Università di Bologna)	83-99
<i>Revisiting “Pride and Prejudice”: P. D. James’s “Death Comes to Pemberley”</i> PAOLA PARTENZA (Università “G. d’Annunzio” Chieti – Pescara)	101-122
<i>P. R. Moore-Dewey’s “Pregiudizio e Orgoglio”: An Italian Remake of Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice”</i> ELEONORA CAPRA (Università di Parma)	123-142
<i>Recreating Jane: “Austenland” and the Regency Theme Park</i> MADDALENA PENNACCHIA (Università di Roma Tre)	143-154
<i>Writing in the Shadow of “Pride and Prejudice”: Jo Baker’s “Longbourn”</i> OLIVIA MURPHY (Murdoch University – Perth)	155-169
<i>Reading the Austen Project</i> PENNY GAY (University of Sydney)	171-193

MATERIALI/ MATERIALS

- James Frazer, il cinema e “The Most Dangerous Game”*
DOMITILLA CAMPANILE (Università di Pisa) 197-208
- Jeux et enjeux intertextuels dans “Le Soleil ni la mort
ne peuvent se regarder en face” de Wajdi Mouawad*
SIMONETTA VALENTI (Università di Parma) 209-233
- Re-membering the Bard : David Greig’s and Liz Lochhead’s
Re-visionary Reminiscences of “The Tempest”*
MARIA ELENA CAPITANI (Università di Parma) 235-250

LIBRI DI LIBRI / BOOKS OF BOOKS

- [recensione – review] *‘Open access’ e scienze umane. Note su diffusione
e percezione delle riviste in area umanistica*, a cura di Luca Scalco,
Milano, Ledizioni, 2016
ALBERTO SALARELLI 253-257



MARIA ELENA CAPITANI

**RE-MEMBERING THE BARD:
DAVID GREIG’S AND LIZ LOCHHEAD’S
RE-VISIONARY REMINISCENCES
OF “THE TEMPEST”**

The inherent capacity of theatre to reinvent itself across centuries is highly revealing about the natural resilience of this art form:

“Theatre returns, it always does. It returns to places where it has already been before and to times in which it has already appeared. And while it does so, it sends us too, the spectators, to those places and times, performance after performance. Theatre also rewrites. It constantly does. It rewrites history, relationships, stories and rules. It refashions beliefs, recycles old and used objects and reassembles them into new embodied experiences. Above all, theatre repeats, and incessantly so. It repeats itself and the act of returning and rewriting, as though it were struck by an obsessive compulsion to reiterate and re-enact, again and again, the vestiges of its past. In so doing, it adapts itself to present contingencies and situations, like an animal species struggling to survive through evolution.”¹

¹ M. Laera, *Introduction: Return, Rewrite, Repeat: The Theatricality of Adaptation*, in *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat*, edited by M. Laera, London and New York, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014, p. 1.

The theatrical urge to self-reiterate is not the mere result of a survival instinct. Rather, it highlights the two-way relationship between theatre and the society in which it is produced, as well as the transformative power of this medium: “Theatre [...] does not reshape its coordinates simply to remain alive or to remain itself through time, but also to change the world around it. Theatre, one could say, never stops adapting its features to the world and the world to its features”.² The extraordinary ability of theatre to re-present itself by re-figuring its past relics and adapting its conventions to current issues helps us to understand the permanence – and proliferation – of revisionist artefacts on the contemporary stage.³

A prolific adaptor of various kinds of narratives, textual materials, as well as specific writers such as Ovid, Plutarch, or Holinshed, it is no surprise that William Shakespeare left us a uniquely intertextual output which has been defined as “a crucial touchstone for the scholarship of appropriation as a literary practice and form”.⁴ Constantly reinterpreted, rewritten, restaged, reshaped or – more generally – remade, the Shakespearean canon has challenged and crossed cultural, geographical, historical, and generic boundaries, becoming a multi-layered, protean, and transnational heritage, “an aggregate forever in flux”.⁵ Indeed, this extended Shakespearean *corpus* – a living organism transgressing borders and continuously (re)adapting itself to the world and the world to itself – can be considered as a privileged *locus* for investigating the poetics and

² Ibidem.

³ See J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 48: “Performance is an inherently adaptive art; each staging is a collaborative interpretation, one which often reworks a playscript to acknowledge contemporary concerns or issues”.

⁴ Ibidem, pp. 45-46.

⁵ D. Lanier, *Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value*, in *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, edited by A. Huang and E. Rivlin, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 32.

politics of appropriation and its aesthetic and ethical dimension as a literary and cultural practice.

Along with *Othello* and *Hamlet*, *The Tempest* (1611) is one of those Shakespearean texts which have been reinterpreted, adopted and adapted most frequently over the centuries,⁶ becoming “a play for all eras, all continents and many ideologies”.⁷ The reasons why *The Tempest* is still extremely appealing and relevant today are to be found in the distinctive features of the play itself. The last drama written entirely by Shakespeare – whose protagonist Prospero is believed to represent the Bard himself saying farewell to the stage – revolves around a series of extremes epitomising the play’s “endlessly arguable nature”.⁸ To begin with, *The Tempest* features a deliberately vague setting: some critics argue that the Bard drew upon New World sources (in 1609 an English ship, the *Sea Venture*, was wrecked in Bermuda)⁹ and located Prospero’s enchanted island in the Atlantic, while other scholars domesticate the confusing geography of the play by placing it somewhere in the more reassuring waters of the Mediterranean Sea. This spatial ambiguity – or even “apparent placeless-ness”¹⁰ – and interpretative elusiveness add to the exportability of the romance and encourage a multiplicity of readings and transformations.

⁶ See J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, cit., p. 52.

⁷ V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, *Introduction*, in W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, edited by V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, London, Thomson Learning, 2006, p. 1. It is important to note that, through its exceptional variety of recontextualisations and renditions, *The Tempest* “has helped shape three contemporaneous movements – postcoloniality, postfeminism or postpatriarchy, and postmodernism – from the 1960s to the present” (C. Zabus, *Tempests after Shakespeare*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave, 2002, p. 1).

⁸ V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, *Introduction*, cit., p. 1.

⁹ See *ibidem*, p. 41.

¹⁰ C. DiPietro, *Performing Place in "The Tempest"*, in *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now: Criticism and Theory in the 21st Century*, edited by C. DiPietro and H. Grady, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 85.

Another possible reason for the highly enduring potential of Shakespeare's play, whose plot unfolds between 2 p. m. and 6 p. m. ("The time 'twixt six and now"),¹¹ is its investigation of the notion of time. It is no coincidence that Shakespeare opts for the term *tempest*, rather than choosing its less formal Saxon equivalent *storm* (which is used only by vulgar characters such as the boatswain in the very first scene and Trinculo later in the play). The more elegant Latin etymology reminds us of the idea of *tempus*, a concept around which the whole play revolves.¹² In this light, *The Tempest* is the Bard's "most tightly structured play", which offers a type of symmetrical pattern wherein "several roles and events are parallel".¹³ For instance, the topic of usurpation recurs three times: we are told that Prospero, the Duke of Milan, was overthrown twelve years earlier by his brother Antonio, who – together with Sebastian – now plots to assassinate the King of Naples Alonso, while Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo plan to murder Prospero. These variations on a theme exemplify well the importance of repetition in a play which is permeated with reflections and refractions, and – at the same time – embedded in the idea of recollection. Shakespeare himself

"[...] insists that his characters merely *remember* the events of the twelve years preceding. Although Miranda cannot recall enough to challenge Prospero's account, Caliban and Ariel do remember early events on the island; Caliban's recollections, in some particulars, challenge his master's, leaving the audience to speculate as to what really happened."¹⁴

The fact that many significant events are conjured up through words rather than (re)enacted on the theatrical stage, as well as the elliptical

¹¹ W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, cit., p. 166 (I, 2).

¹² See N. Fusini, *Vivere nella tempesta*, Torino, Einaudi, 2016, pp. 3-5.

¹³ V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, *Introduction*, cit., pp. 14-15.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

narrative structure of *The Tempest*, stimulates the imagination of readers, spectators, and writers who are eager to discover more about past troubles and foretell future developments.¹⁵ This fascinatingly elusive game of mirrors, played in a surreal and oneiric dimension in which past, present, and future overlap,¹⁶ makes it impossible for a contemporary writer to resist the powerful urge to repeat and re-member, in the double sense of the term (to recall and to reassemble something – in this case, a hypotext, in a different way, after dismembering it).

1. *A Savage Reminiscence*

This analysis focuses on two re-visionary¹⁷ appropriations of the Bard's highly resonant and exportable romance, David Greig's monologue *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, first performed by Graham Eatough at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 1991, and Liz Lochhead's *The Magic Island*, a rewriting of *The Tempest* for seven- to eleven-year-olds, commissioned by the Unicorn Children's

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 75: "In implicit disagreement with the observation that Shakespeare begins *The Tempest* at nearly its end, in many adaptations the play is merely an interlude between the events of the previous twelve years and the time since Prospero sailed home. 'What's past is prologue' (2.1.253)."

¹⁶ See H. F. Brooks, "*The Tempest*": *What Sort of Play?*, in "Proceedings of the British Academy", LXIV, 1978, p. 37.

¹⁷ This article draws upon the notion of re-visionary writing, as theorised by Peter Widdowson: "The term 're-vision' deploys a strategic ambiguity between the word *revise*: 'to examine and correct; to make a new, improved version of; to study anew', and *re-vision*: to see in another light; to re-envison or perceive differently; and thus to recast and re-evaluate the 'original'" (P. Widdowson, *Literature*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 164). Widdowson pointed out that the term *re-vision* was coined by the American poet Adrienne Rich, who employed it to refer to a radical appropriation of the canon aiming at countering oppressive patriarchal culture: "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction [...] We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (A. Rich, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision*, in "College English", 34, October 1972 [*Women, Writing and Teaching*], pp. 18-19).

Theatre and first staged in London in February 1993. Even if they differ from a variety of points of view, both Scottish *Tempests* retell the Shakespearean narrative through the lens of memory, trying to fill the gaps and reconstruct the story from a different perspective.

A Savage Reminiscence is the first play of David Greig, one of the most talented contemporary Scottish dramatists. This text, which remains unpublished, was conceived as a one-man show to be performed by Graham Eatough, who studied at Bristol University with Greig. In the early 1990s, the two young theatre-makers formed an experimental company, Suspect Culture, which produced groundbreaking work for more than a decade.¹⁸ The transnational and palimpsestic quality of Greig's work is in keeping with the versatility of the prolific writer, who has collaborated with various artists and experimented with different forms and media. During his fertile artistic journey, Greig has also reworked a selection of Greek tragedies, including Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (2005), Euripides' *The Bacchae* (2007), and Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Women* (2016), as well as European sources, for example Camus's *Caligula* (2003).

Intriguingly, the Scottish dramatist seems to be interested in imagining what happens after the end of some of the most iconic Shakespearean plays, re-interpreting the past and creating new scenarios. Like *Dunsinane* (2010), Greig's re-visionary account of what happens after Macbeth's deposition and Malcolm's subsequent accession to the throne, *A Savage Reminiscence* can be defined as a *sequel* to *The Tempest*. In this appropriation, after being left alone on the island, a guilty Caliban takes centre stage and "embarks upon a gripping voyage of reminiscence",¹⁹

¹⁸ See C. Wallace, *The Theatre of David Greig*, London and New York, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013, p. 16.

¹⁹ S. Poole, [review of *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*], programme, Theatre Zoo, 1991, n. p.

recollecting some past events – in particular his rape of Miranda – from his own (traditionally) marginalised point of view. Extensively reconfigured and reinterpreted across centuries, Caliban is probably the character of *The Tempest* who has undergone the most significant critical metamorphosis.²⁰ While the setting of *The Tempest* is deliberately vague, in the opening stage directions Greig describes ‘his’ island as tropical and later locates it in the Bermuda area. The scene is set in the magician’s cell, now vacated by Prospero (who has left all his precious books there) and inhabited by a self-aware Caliban and the wild nature of the island:

“ [...] nature is beginning to reclaim the place. Paint is peeling, vines have begun to creep across the bookshelves and a general accretion of dirt and sand has built up. In addition, the room is presently inhabited by an ex servant of the magician. To make life simpler, the servant has moved his bedding, his food and his firewood into the one room. The room bears witness to his habitation with a layering of mess.

The room is filled with many books half unpacked from travelling crates. Some maps and charts have also been unpacked.

The scene is dominated by a large oil painting in the renaissance style which hangs on the back wall. The painting is of a reclining nude”.²¹

These detailed stage directions, helping the reader to cross historical and textual borders, function as a bridge between the Shakespearean narrative and Greig’s re-presentation of past events. After the departure of

²⁰ G. Walch, “*What’s Past is Prologue*”: *Metatheatrical Memory and Transculturation in “The Tempest”*, in *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare’s Time*, edited by J.-P. Maquerlot and M. Willelms, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 223: “Caliban has made an amazing career through the ages. In the course of that career, during which he managed to become Prospero’s serious rival for critical attention, he graduated from Renaissance wild or primitive man, savage and slave to lecherous drunk, cannibal and savage monster reflecting European fears of the non-European world, but also noble being in the eighteenth century; to a victim of oppression from 1838, when the modern Caliban seems to have been born, ape and Darwin’s missing link, downtrodden peasant and Saxon serf; to the ‘Americanist Caliban’ since 1898; Fritz or the Boche at the end of the First World War and finally colonized black nationalist and Irish peasant.”

²¹ D. Greig, *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, unpublished, n. p. I want to express my profound gratitude to David Greig for generously sharing his play.

all the other human characters appearing in the original play (his only offstage companion is the spirit Ariel), Caliban inherits his master's shelter – a messy and dirty room – and his intellectual legacy, consisting of volumes, maps, and charts. A Renaissance-style oil painting portraying a reclining nude dominates the scene, serving as a visual quotation which establishes a connection with the Shakespearean Age and, simultaneously, as a sexual innuendo alluding to Caliban's obsession with Miranda and to her rape, a traumatic event looming large over Greig's sequel. While the sexual abuse is only attempted in *The Tempest* ("PROSPERO: [...] thou didst seek to violate / The honour of my child"),²² Greig rewrites the hypotext through Caliban's reminiscence, conjuring up the appalling crime verbally. In the sixth of the nine scenes into which *A Savage Reminiscence* is divided, the native – who is sitting by a sculpture representing Miranda on which he is working and that he will later destroy in a fit of anger – confesses what he has done to Prospero's virtuous daughter:

"I had imagined her before. All sorts of things. The moment that she realised I loved her she would turn around and say... 'I didn't know... I've been waiting for you to say it'. And then bare skin and... I WANTED HER... for me to do the things I... I came up from the logs and they fell around me. I had the hammer in my hand. She was afraid. [H]er eyes were full of horror at me. I said I loved her I said, 'I LOVE YOU,' But all I could feel was her fear. [H]er fear crawling over my skin. Her fear sending power up my legs. Her fear... I had already committed the crime.

She didn't scream immediately. There was silence first. Silence as she tried to breathe but she couldn't get the breath in to scream. It was as if there was a weight pushing down on her chest. I had the hammer raised but I didn't need it for her so I dropped it. I knew she didn't want me. BUT I THOUGHT I CAN DO THIS WHETHER SHE WANTS IT OR NOT. I HAVE THE POWER TO DO THIS.

(At the painting.) Fuck you... fuck you... FUCK YOU".²³

²² W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, cit., p. 174 (I, 2).

²³ D. Greig, *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, cit., n. p.

Even if *A Savage Reminiscence* is far from being an in-yer-face play, Caliban's account is permeated with a considerable amount of violence, which is absent from the dreamy Shakespearean source but, in a sense, anticipates the kind of theatrical sensibility which will develop in mid-Nineties Britain.²⁴ However, despite the inherent violence in some of Caliban's most intense lines, it should be noted that this multi-layered text²⁵ constantly oscillates between different registers: "Greig's script is a dazzling mix of linguistic philosophy, literary jokes, and 'a certain earthy lyricism'".²⁶ Indeed, even if Greig stages a savage recollection, his re-figuration of the native exemplifies the phenomenon defined as 'the rise of Caliban'.²⁷ Therefore, it might be argued that *A Savage Reminiscence* belongs to that wave of twentieth-century postcolonial rewritings of *The Tempest* dethroning the figure of the Duke of Milan, here described negatively rather than positively, and reaffirming the subaltern character of Caliban. If, on the one hand, the monster-slave born on the island cannot suppress his primitive instincts leading him to rape an innocent, on the

²⁴ See A. Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, London, Faber and Faber, 2001 and Id., *Modern British Playwriting: the 1990s: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations*, London, Methuen Drama, 2012.

²⁵ It is worth pointing out that other minor Shakespearean characters such as the witch Sycorax, the naïve Miranda, and the airy Ariel are evoked throughout Caliban's account and that Greig incorporates some explicit intertextual references into his meta-theatrical piece. For instance, the "Be not afeard. This isle is full of noises" speech is delivered at the end of scene 5, while some of Caliban's first lines in the original ("I must eat my dinner / This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother") are repeated in the final scene of Greig's witty piece: W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, cit., p. 232 (III, 2) and p. 173 (I, 2).

²⁶ S. Poole, [review of *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*], cit., n. p.

²⁷ C. Zabus, *Tempests after Shakespeare*, cit., p. 9: "As decolonization proved an absolute necessity by the 1960s, African and Caribbean postcolonial writers as well as European and Latin American dissenting intellectuals came to use the counter-hegemonic *idea* of Caliban in order to destabilize colonial sets of ideas and call for the deprivileging of Prospero-qua-colonizer. Despite the indignant reluctance of some to 'parody the imperialists,' it became *necessary* to wrest from the Shakespeare canon an emblem of postcoloniality and to rewrite *The Tempest* from Caliban's perspective".

other, he has become a cultivated man reading the philosophical work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, writing a book, drawing, sculpting, listening to Ariel's music and constructing maps the way Miranda taught him before the silence fell between them after the rape. As brutal as he can be, Greig's Caliban subverts colonial discourse ("DESTROY ALL THE IMPERIALIST PRISONS! I thought to myself")²⁸ and rebels against the man who colonised him, his island, and his story, dominating the canonical narrative as the undisputed protagonist of Shakespeare's play:

"He wrote me in his play... did Prospero... I call it his play that is not strictly true of course he was a magician but he wasn't a genius. Still... it was his play. It belonged to him. He wrote me in his fucking play and made me watch it being done... BY ACTORS... He put my words together and got someone in to be me on the stage and then he showed it to me and it was all lies. I don't like to overstate this but I am more than that. There is more in me than that. I am not some howling, drunken salvage piece of driftwood. I live here".²⁹

2. *The Magic Island*

Similarly, Liz Lochhead's *The Magic Island*, an appropriation of *The Tempest* for a very young audience which has never been published in the UK, is permeated with (slightly revised) quotations from, and allusions to, its hypotext, intriguingly enmeshed with contemporary references. Like Greig, Lochhead has rewritten a number of hypotexts and well-established narratives during her prolific writing career, including the genesis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in her *Blood and Ice* (1982), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1985), Molière's *Tartuffe* (1986) and *Le Misanthrope* (re-baptised *Misery Guts*, 2002), Cechov's *Three Sisters* (2000), Euripides' *Medea* (2000) and – even more ambitiously – Sophocles' Theban trilogy (*Oedipus the King*,

²⁸ D. Greig, *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, cit., n. p.

²⁹ Ibidem, n. p.

Oedipus at Colonus, and *Antigone*), Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, and Euripides' *The Phoenician Women*, which were rearticulated in a single text entitled *Thebans* (2003). The former Scottish Makar (the national poet laureate)³⁰ is also the author of a variety of plays for children and young audiences / performers, such as *Shanghaied* (1982), *The Magic Island* (1993), *Cuba* (1997), and *Elizabeth* (1998): "the challenge to adult authority, the charting of the successes and failures of the younger generation's quest for freedom and identity, run as powerful strands throughout Lochhead's theatre for children and young people".³¹

The Magic Island adapts Shakespeare's play to the needs and taste of a young audience by adopting some effective strategies. Lochhead's revisionist appropriation may be defined a 'memory play' reconstructing the story retrospectively through the eyes of Prospero's daughter. This rewriting, which "reconfigures the Renaissance politics as a feud within an Edwardian theatre family",³² opens with the female protagonist Miranda in the outermost frame, addressing her young spectators:

"MIRANDA: I no longer live on the island. I'm not sad or anything, don't get me wrong, it's nice to live here. Honest. In the real world of wet Wednesdays and feeding the rabbit, and cleaning out the cage where we keep the doves, and mending costumes, and doing my practice, and making the tea for everybody. We take turns. I don't want you to think I'm complaining, I'm not some Cinderella sort that's right hard done to. Not me, not Miranda, not likely. Today it's my turn.

But, you know, earlier on... [...] I was delving in the hamper where we keep the cossys – No, I said 'hamper' not hamster, it's a rabbit we've got, take owt else out a top hat and everybody's disappointed – anyhow two or three of these greeny-silver sequins stuck to my hand and they reminded me of fish-scales, and that reminded me of the

³⁰ This prestigious position was established by the Scottish Parliament in 2004. In that year Edwin Morgan became Scotland's first official national poet, succeeded by Liz Lochhead in 2011 and Jackie Kay in 2016. See A. Scullion, *A Woman's Voice*, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Liz Lochhead*, edited by A. Varty, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 116.

³¹ A. Varty, *Liz Lochhead's Theatre for Children and Young People*, *ibidem*, p. 105.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 108.

island. It was magic on the Magic Island! Until I was twelve I always lived on the island, just me and my dad...”³³

Miranda’s first speech is extremely important, in that it sets the context by anticipating some of the major themes developed later in the play. For instance, the rabbit alludes to Prospero’s ability as a stage magician who worked at the Empire Theatre (colonial overtones), some twelve years earlier, before his greedy brother Antonio, a theatre impresario, decided to invest their fortunes in a different field and embarked on a cinema venture. As a consequence, Prospero was cast out, got a job aboard the unsinkable *Titanic* as ship’s entertainer and found himself, together with his two-year-old daughter, shipwrecked on this mysterious Magic Island. Re-imagining its Shakespearean source and simultaneously reflecting upon the idea of theatre itself, like Greig’s text, Lochhead’s play can be described as a highly intertextual and meta-theatrical artefact.³⁴

After living her childhood in an all-male environment where no threats to the masculine hegemony are present, today’s Miranda is a more self-confident and mature girl, who is brought back to “the real world of wet Wednesdays” and spends her days mending costumes, performing, and dispensing tea to music-hall artists. From Lochhead’s feminist perspective, a naïve and subjugated female character such as Miranda needs to establish her adult identity by questioning her adored father’s authority, thus finding

³³ L. Lochhead, *The Magic Island*, in “Tess. Rivista di teatro e spettacolo”, III, 2003, p. 49.

³⁴ A. Varty, *Liz Lochhead’s Theatre for Children and Young People*, cit., p. 109: “It is theatre, the enacting of spectacular transformations, which achieves the healing change Prospero seeks, and which makes the meta-theatricality of the piece not simply an arch means of re-visioning Shakespeare, but a complete integration of form with content. At the heart of this mending is Prospero’s wish to reveal the past, and the understanding of identity it holds, to his daughter. Aged fourteen, it is time for her to become integrated in a society larger than the microcosm Prospero has created around her on the Magic Island.”

her own voice, through which the past can be re-appropriated and retold “with fresh eyes”.³⁵ To “break” Prospero’s “hold over”³⁶ Miranda, Lochhead gives her a friend to spend her time with on the island, Antonio’s younger daughter Fernandelle, who replaces the Shakespearean figure of Alonso’s son, Miranda’s fiancé Ferdinand:

“Music. Fernandelle and Miranda, both astonished, stare at each other and slowly circle, staring into the mirror of each other. A magical, silent moment. Prospero draws closer, watches. It is impossible to know how he feels about this meeting he has engineered.

PROSPERO: Miranda!

Fernandelle, astonished, looks at him then back at Miranda who has never taken her eyes off Fernandelle even when she answers.

MIRANDA: Father?

PROSPERO: What do you see, Miranda?

MIRANDA: A friend.

PROSPERO: A friend?

MIRANDA: Yes. I never had a friend before.

[...]

FERNANDELLE: I don’t feel as if you are my friend, Miranda.

MIRANDA: Of course I’m your friend, how can you...

FERNANDELLE: No. I feel you are more than a friend. More like a sister.”³⁷

This moving encounter is orchestrated by Prospero in a highly theatrical way. Before Fernandelle appears for the first time in front of the audience, Miranda’s father, “as if on stage in a theatre”,³⁸ binds his daughter’s eyes and, when the right moment comes, removes her mask, asking the astonished girl what she sees. Being described in the stage directions as a young figure “as almost identical as possible to Miranda in appearance”,³⁹ Fernandelle serves as her cousin’s double, stressing the specularly of these two characters. Seeing herself mirrored in someone

³⁵ A. Rich, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision*, cit., p. 18.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

³⁷ L. Lochhead, *The Magic Island*, cit., pp. 125-131.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 117.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

else, Miranda embarks on her journey towards adulthood.⁴⁰ Brought up as an only child without any siblings to play with, Miranda has never had the opportunity to spend time with someone of her own age, while Fernandelle used to perform in the theatre with her sister Claribel:

“MIRANDA: I never had a sister...

FERNANDELLE: I did. I do. But I feel as if I'll never see her again. I've lost her, Miranda, lost her forever.

MIRANDA: Oh, Fernandelle...

FERNANDELLE: Her name was Claribel. Her name is Claribel. We used to be a double-act.

MIRANDA: What's a double-act?

FERNANDELLE: You know...in the theatre. Don't you know anything?

MIRANDA: No. Everything I practised with my Dad was ... solo.

FERNANDELLE: Two's better! We sang in harmony...

MIRANDA: What's harmony?"⁴¹

Miranda – who has always been a soloist in her life and art – cannot understand the idea of double-act, of performing together and sharing the stage with someone who is not her beloved Dad. Thus, Fernandelle explains to her new friend what it means to be a duo:

“You don't ... I suppose you only ever learned the melody? Being on your own. Anyway, we sang harmony, did acrobatic dancing, diabolo, high wire work, and juggling. My father might've been a financial wizard, but we came from an old, old, theatrical family, you know!"⁴²

Only establishing an intimate friendship with Fernandelle, with whom she will perform at the end of the play, when they are no longer on the Magic Island, Miranda recognises the importance of female solidarity

⁴⁰ A. Varty, *Liz Lochhead's Theatre for Children and Young People*, cit., p. 111: “The technique of doubling [...] suggests how the self must recognise itself as both unique and other to take an adult role. Miranda, and indeed Fernandelle, must learn to recognise themselves from the outside as well as from within”.

⁴¹ L. Lochhead, *The Magic Island*, cit., pp. 133-135.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 135.

and shared experience and asserts her independence from her domineering father Prospero.

Miranda's metamorphosis into a grown-up, the reduction in the number of *dramatis personae* (from more than 20 characters to 7) and acts (from 5 to 2), as well as Lochhead's focus on the theme of friendship and on the younger generation, are some of the techniques employed by the playwright to captivate her young audience sitting in the Unicorn Children's Theatre. After all, theatre for children (and young people) should not be considered as a different or separate art form.

Interestingly, Lochhead's rewriting ends on a very postmodern note: like at the start of the play, Miranda is in the spotlight, holding the rabbit in her hands. She has just finished reconstructing her story in front of the audience when Fernandelle, addressing the young spectators, says:

"I tell you that island was a well-weird blooming lovely absolutely miraculous amazing place. I don't know what to make of it. I never did. I bet I could have told you a totally different true story. Same magic island. Different story."⁴³

These words are highly revealing about the theatrical urge to (self)reiterate mentioned at the beginning of this article, in that they emphasise the circularity and endless repetition (with variation) to which canonical tales, such as Shakespeare's, are destined. As Greig's and Lochhead's early Nineties retellings of *The Tempest*, among many others, demonstrate, the Bard of Avon still lives in our present time through this remarkable proliferation and transnational dissemination of innumerable rewritings preserving the unique plurality and universality of his output. Thanks to its "remarkable resistance to interpretative closure",⁴⁴ unspecific

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 299.

⁴⁴ G. Walch, "What's Past is Prologue": *Metatheatrical Memory and Transculturation in "The Tempest"*, cit., p. 224.

location, and oneiric dimension, the Shakespearean romance in which the past becomes prologue, “with its poietic openness and textual productivity”,⁴⁵ proves to be particularly suitable for rewriters in search of malleable narratives which can be dislocated and trasplanted into other contexts. Obsessed with their past, the characters of *The Tempest*, as well as the protagonists of *A Savage Reminiscence* and *The Magic Island*, are particularly prone to recollection:

“Memories are shown [...] to be supremely important to the play, but not only the memories themselves. Amazingly what is also shown is the technique of managing, storing and recalling memories, a dramatic device designed also to emphasize the importance of memories to the world of the play.”⁴⁶

From a postcolonial and postfeminist perspective respectively, Greig and Lochhead re-route this ‘memory play’, whose loose end and vague locale stir the imagination, by rehabilitating and giving a resonant voice to the figures of Caliban and Miranda, thus “entering an old text from a new critical direction”.⁴⁷ Through a complex web of intertextual references interwoven with more contemporary echoes, these two re-visionary reminiscences thus re-member and dismember their Shakespearean source problematizing any unimaginative subscription to the dramatic canon and simultaneously reflecting upon the concept of theatre itself.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 237.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 230.

⁴⁷ A. Rich, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision*, cit., p. 18.

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