

Shakespeare's *Tempest*: A tale of revenge, and forgiveness

By Jerry Russell and Joe Atwill

At a surface level, the *Tempest* tells the story of Prospero, the exiled Duke of Milan, who achieves a just revenge against his enemies who overthrew him, and then he forgives them and permits his daughter to marry into their family. At the symbolic level, his enemies represent the Flavian trinity of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, and his revenge consists bringing them to the verge of partaking in a cannibalistic feast; while the marriage of Prospero's daughter Miranda to the king's son represents the reversal of the Flavian "root and branch" theme, as the Jewish branch is grafted onto the gentile tree. A story from Virgil's *Aeneid* is invoked as another example of the "root and branch" theme, developing a vast cyclical view of deep historical time, while toying with gender reversal as well as ethnic reversal of the dramatic roles.

The *Tempest* is one of Shakespeare's last plays, displaying the author's most mature outlook. In addition to the Flavian comic system, it draws from many diverse sources that have been identified by scholarship. I argue that unlike the earlier Shakespearian revenge plays, the forgiveness offered is real and heartfelt, and the author is looking forward to a humanist future in which religious hatred and bigotry can be transcended.

The play opens on a ship in a raging storm at sea, as the courtier Gonzalo and several royal passengers emerge from their cabins to express their concerns to the crew. The Boatswain's rebuke to Gonzalo ironically recalls Christ's ability to calm the waves:

GONZALO

Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

Boatswain

None that I more love than myself. You are a counsellor; if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority:

Gonzalo replies with a prediction that the boatswain will survive the storm, if only to perish by hanging later on for his impertinence.

GONZALO

I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows.

[....]

GONZALO

I'll warrant him for drowning; though the ship were
no stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an
unstanched wench.

Gonzalo's prophecy is like Paul's prophecy in Acts:

"And now I urge you to take heart, for **there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship...**

Watching the storm from the shelter of a nearby tropical island, Prospero's daughter Miranda is alarmed at the fearsome prospects for loss of life on the ship, but Prospero tells her to calm herself:

PROSPERO

The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touch'd
The very virtue of compassion in thee,
I have with such provision in mine art
So safely ordered that there is no soul--
No, not so much perdition as an hair
Betid to any creature in the vessel
Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink.

Prospero's action has fulfilled Gonzalo's prophecy, just as in both Acts and Josephus we find that all have survived, by God's providence:

the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from [their] purpose, and commanded that **those who could swim should jump** [overboard] first and get to land, ⁴⁴ and the rest, **some on boards and some on things from the ship**. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land. (Acts)

our ship was drowned in the Adriatic Sea, we that were in it, being about six hundred in number, swam for our lives all the night; when, upon the first appearance of the day, and upon our sight of a ship of Cyrene, I and some others, eighty in all, by God's providence, prevented the rest, and were taken up into the other ship (Josephus, Life).

Prospero goes on to tell his daughter that he was once the Duke of Milan, but that he was overthrown by a conspiracy of his brother Antonio in concert with Alonso, the King of Naples:

PROSPERO

Now the condition.
The King of Naples, being an enemy
To me inveterate, hearkens my brother's suit;
Which was, that he, in lieu o' the premises

Of homage and I know not how much tribute,
Should presently extirpate me and mine
Out of the dukedom and confer fair Milan
With all the honours on my brother: whereon,
A treacherous army levied, one midnight
Fated to the purpose did Antonio open
The gates of Milan, and, i' the dead of darkness,
The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
Me and thy crying self.

This evokes a parallel to the fall of Jerusalem, as well as the play-within-a-play in *Hamlet* depicting the fall of Troy. In this parallel, Alonso and Antonio are in the roles of Vespasian and Titus, with Alonso as the senior power and Antonio as the junior conquerer. However, there two other royal figures present: Fernando and Sebastian, both the sons of Alonso. As we shall see, the four royal figures give the playwright the resources necessary to satirically represent various aspects of the complete Flavian trinity of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. At this point in the play, Antonio is taking the role of Titus, but at other times Ferdinand seems to be in the role of reversing Titus's fate (that is, he is figuratively 'pruned' and becomes 'fish food'), while Sebastian is more reminiscent of Domitian, scheming against the legacy of his father and brother.

In keeping with the theme we have seen in *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Merchant of Venice*, the hero Prospero seems to be a hidden Jew masquerading as a Gentile, as well as a representative of the ancient Jews who were destroyed or deposed by Titus; but also, above, he represents God himself, in his ability to control the storm and save every hair on the passengers' heads.

Prospero tells Miranda that they themselves were saved from a similar plight at sea, also by divine providence.

MIRANDA

How came we ashore?

PROSPERO

By Providence divine.
Some food we had and some fresh water that
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,
Out of his charity, being then appointed
Master of this design, did give us, with
Rich garments, linens, stuffs and necessaries,
Which since have steaded much; so, of his gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnish'd me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.

This poses a riddle. If Gonzalo is being typologically linked to Paul and Josephus in the shipwreck scene, and Prospero and Miranda represent the Jews, then why is Gonzalo extending such kind provisions to Prospero and Miranda? The storyline seems to be hinting at the author's awareness that Rabbinical Judaism, far from being abandoned under the Flavians, was also defended (even if saddled with endless technicalities) and ultimately brought under the Imperial wing. Is it possible that 'Shakespeare', reading further into Josephus and the Talmud, has realized the crucial role played by the Romans in setting up the Jewish rabbinical academies, and noticed that the Talmud's tale of the revered Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai and his application of the Star Prophecy to Vespasian is a precise parallel to the similar episode describing Josephus's meeting with Vespasian? Gonzalo is being used as a type for ben Zakkai's role as well as a type for Josephus, showing that the playwright may have understood that the Romans also made this connection. Prospero tells us that Gonzalo was "Master of this design" and that he furnished books "from mine own library", recognizing that Josephus and ben Zakkai (Josephus's 'type') had exactly that role in preserving the Old Testament books and giving them back to the rabbinical Jews. Emilia may have recognized that certain Jews, from Roman times until the present, had a role to play as intellectuals and courtiers to Gentile royalty, and that the Bassano family held that type of position in English society.

Prospero goes on to tell Miranda the story of their loss of the Dukedom, and their arrival on the island. Speaking of the travails of their journey by sea, Prospero uses words strikingly similar to the way a woman would describe a pregnancy, beginning a theme of play with Prospero's gender.

MIRANDA

Alack, what trouble
Was I then to you!

PROSPERO

O, a cherubim
Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile.
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,
When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt,
Under my burthen groan'd; which raised in me
An undergoing stomach, to bear up
Against what should ensue.

Miranda wonders how this tale of woe is related to the storm and shipwreck she has just seen.

MIRANDA

Heavens thank you for't! And now, I pray you, sir,
For still 'tis beating in my mind, your reason
For raising this sea-storm?

PROSPERO

Know thus far forth.
By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune,
Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If now I court not but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop.

Thus, we are told that although Gonzalo / Josephus gets some credit for a sympathetic role, the rest of the passengers of the wrecked ship are still Prospero's enemies.

Enter ARIEL

ARIEL

All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come
To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curl'd clouds, to thy strong bidding task
Ariel and all his quality.

PROSPERO

Hast thou, spirit,
Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee?

ARIEL

To every article.
I boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flamed amazement: sometime I'd divide,
And burn in many places; on the topmast,
The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,
Then meet and join. Jove's lightnings, the precursors
O' the dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
And sight-outrunning were not; the fire and cracks
Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble,
Yea, his dread trident shake.

Again the capabilities of Prospero to command the spirits is nothing less than divine. The name of 'Ariel' (or 'Uriel') appears frequently in apocryphal and traditional sources as the name of a powerful angel or demiurge, and she is characterized as the voice of Jerusalem in Isaiah (29:4). Her words in the above passage are evocative of God's powers described by the book of Job:

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
² Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?
³ Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.
⁴ Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.
 [...]
²² Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,
²³ Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?
²⁴ By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?
²⁵ Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder;
²⁶ To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man;
²⁷ To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?
²⁸ Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?
²⁹ Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?
³⁰ The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.
³¹ Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?
³² Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?
³³ Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?
³⁴ Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?
³⁵ Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are?

Prospero's answer to all of God's questions is, of course, 'Yes I Can.' He continues:

PROSPERO

But are they, Ariel, safe?

ARIEL

Not a hair perish'd;
 On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
 But fresher than before: and, as thou badest me,
 In troops I have dispersed them 'bout the isle.

Again 'Shakespeare' reinforces the theme of Prospero's divine powers as master of his agent Ariel. Next they discuss Ariel's back story:

PROSPERO

O, was she so? I must
Once in a month recount what thou hast been,
Which thou forget'st. This damn'd witch Sycorax,
For mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible
To enter human hearing, from Argier,
Thou know'st, was banish'd: for one thing she did
They would not take her life. Is not this true?

ARIEL

Ay, sir.

PROSPERO

This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child
And here was left by the sailors. Thou, my slave,
As thou report'st thyself, wast then her servant;
And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate
To act her earthy and abhorr'd commands,
Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,
By help of her more potent ministers
And in her most unmitigable rage,
Into a cloven pine; within which rift
Imprison'd thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years; within which space she died
And left thee there; where thou didst vent thy groans
As fast as mill-wheels strike. Then was this island--
Save for the son that she did litter here,
A freckled whelp hag-born--not honour'd with
A human shape.

ARIEL

Yes, Caliban her son.

Scholars have puzzled over the source of the character 'Sycorax'. My hypothesis is that this name is a pun or a composite of the names 'Sycaeus' and 'Sicharbas', which are the names given by Virgil and Servius respectively for the character that was the first husband of the Widow Dido, founder of the city of Carthage. The Widow Dido will be mentioned again in the play later on.

According to the Aeneid, Dido and her brother Pygmalion were co-rulers of Tyre in Phoenicia, but Pygmalion killed Dido's husband Sycaeus in hopes of using his wealth to depose her. However, Dido was able to flee to Carthage with Sycaeus's gold, which she used to found a new kingdom. Aeneas, fleeing from the Trojan War, also arrives at Carthage, and Dido falls in love with him. Aeneas eventually decides to proceed on to

Italy. On his departure, Dido is distraught, and immolates herself. Later, in the underworld, Aeneas meets Dido again, but she returns to her first husband Sychaeus.

Virgil's version of the story has apparently been somewhat altered from earlier versions, in which the role of the foreign suitor is played by a neighboring Berber king named Iarbus, who Dido detests. She kills herself in order to avoid a forced marriage to Iarbus. The Aeneid does mention Dido's rejection of Iarbus, which is contrasted to her love for Aeneas.

The purpose for Virgil's introduction of Aeneas into the story, of course, was to create a historical justification for Rome's eventual conquest of Carthage. When Dido sees Aeneas sail away, she curses him, even though she loves him; the prototypical anger of the woman scorned. However, the failure of Aeneas to father a child with Dido, and his ultimate rejection by Dido in the underworld, are wrongs that will be redressed by the Roman conquest.

In Shakespeare's version of the story, Sychaeus (Sycharbus) is rendered as a woman (Sycorax), a "blue-eyed hag" and thus a Gentile like Aeneas, and she has given birth to a son "not honour'd with a human shape." We are not told who the father is, but if the playwright is viewing the entire story as a type of the "root and branch" theme, the father must be of Phoenician / African stock, and the child is the rude outcome of the interracial coupling. The gender reversal mirrors the reversal of the outcome: i.e. in the original story, the Gentile attempt to 'graft' into the Carthaginian lineage fails, while in Shakespeare's retelling it succeeds, producing a grotesque issue in the next generation.

Also, playing the role of the Gentile in the "root and branch" theme, similar to Titus, Sycorax has taken Ariel captive, frozen speechless in a tree, as a symbolic representative of the Jewish spirit, people and religion.

According to Virgil, Aeneas came ashore in Carthage after a shipwreck (in which all survived) in a manner identical to the arrival of the Milanese and Neapolitan royalty. Aside from begging the question of whether both Paul and Josephus's similar adventures are both modeled on Aeneas's, this supports the idea that Aeneas should be viewed as a type of the Gentile role in this story (and thus also a type of Sycorax, aside from the gender reversal).

Aside from Prospero's insults, this Sycorax also seems to be a parallel to Prospero in some respects: like him, she was abandoned on the island 'with child' for some unnamed offense, and endowed with divine powers over spirits.

Some critics have made too much of this similarity: in my view, Prospero is a mirror image or reversal of Sycorax, not an ethical clone. He is pure good, just as Sycorax was pure evil. Sycorax perished like a mortal, the opposite of a God, leaving behind Ariel imprisoned in a pine tree, and the misbegotten Caliban as the only 'freckled welp' on the island. However, the parallel between Sycorax and Prospero is fascinating in that it continues the play's toying with Prospero's gender identification.

Prospero is soon discussing Caliban with his daughter:

PROSPERO

Shake it off. Come on;
We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never
Yields us kind answer.

MIRANDA

'Tis a villain, sir,
I do not love to look on.

PROSPERO

But, as 'tis,
We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood and serves in offices
That profit us. What, ho! slave! Caliban!
Thou earth, thou! speak.

CALIBAN

[Within] There's wood enough within.

So even as a refugee on this island, Prospero sees himself as an aristocrat, and Caliban is put to work as his slave to do menial tasks. The name 'Caliban' is an anagram of 'Canibal'. Within Shakespeare's comic system, Caliban typologically represents the ironic situation of a Christian slave in service to a powerful Jew.

CALIBAN

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both! a south-west blow on ye
And blister you all o'er!

PROSPERO

For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps,
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up; urchins
Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,
All exercise on thee; thou shalt be pinch'd
As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging
Than bees that made 'em.

Caliban and Prospero trade symmetrical curses, but Caliban has no power over Prospero, while Prospero's curses strike terror into his defenseless slave.

Caliban, Prospero, and Miranda share their story that Caliban had been loved, cared for, and educated by Prospero and Miranda, until Caliban "didst seek to violate the honour" of Miranda. Caliban saw this as perfectly reasonable, that he wanted to have "peopled... this isle with Calibans"; but Miranda and Prospero recoiled in horror, like true aristocrats.

The entire scenario is yet another re-enactment of the “root and branch” theme, in which Caliban has tried and failed to inject his genes into the royal pool.

Caliban is sent to gather firewood. As he goes, he remarks:

CALIBAN

Aside

I must obey: his art is of such power,
It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
and make a vassal of him.

Setebos was the god of the Patagonian natives, but the name also sounds a little bit like Zabidus, Josephus's pun on 'Sabazius', the ancient Roman name for the Jewish god. At any rate, 'Shakespeare' is painting Prospero's powers to be greater than this ancient god.

Moving on to the next scene, Ariel lures Prince Ferdinand, son of the King of Naples, to meet with Prospero's daughter Miranda. Ariel sings of the prince's father Alonso's death, but notably without using any recognizable cannibal imagery. In yet another reversal of Josephus's theme of the 'new root and branch', Prospero is planning to marry his daughter to the Prince, thus grafting his family back into the royal line. Miranda is quick to make her own declaration of Ferdinand's divinity, as she first encounters him.

MIRANDA

What is't? a spirit?
Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir,
It carries a brave form. But 'tis a spirit.

PROSPERO

No, wench....

MIRANDA

I might call him
A thing divine, for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.

Miranda and Ferdinand quickly fall in love, just as Dido fell in love with Aeneas. Prospero is delighted, but nevertheless resolves to put roadblocks in their path, “lest too light winning make the prize light.” He tells Ferdinand:

PROSPERO

Come;
I'll manacle thy neck and feet together:
Sea-water shalt thou drink; thy food shall be
The fresh-brook muscles, wither'd roots and husks
Wherein the acorn cradled. Follow.

'Fresh-brook muscled' would be a type of fish. Thus, within the Flavian system, this is a cannibalistic threat, and not entirely in jest, as Ferdinand's royal line is to be subsumed to Prospero and Miranda's Jewish line in the upcoming "new root and branch" reversal. Prospero also gives Miranda his 'opinion' about Ferdinand:

PROSPERO

Thou think'st there is no more such shapes as he,
Having seen but him and Caliban: foolish wench!
To the most of men this is a Caliban
And they to him are angels.

With this tongue-in-cheek verdict, Prospero expresses real disdain for royal privilege, and speaks the truth about what "most of men" think of the preening elite.

At the opening of Act II, the royal villains from the shipwreck are wandering around the island and exchanging seemingly harmless banter. Gonzalo remarks on how their clothing is as good as new, verifying Ariel's report. They joke about the Widow Dido of Carthage (and the 'Widower Aeneas') while discussing the wedding of Alonso's daughter Claribel in Tunis, which Gonzalo (almost correctly) asserts was synonymous to Carthage. This marriage is yet another cyclical repeat of the "root and branch" theme, as Claribel, a Gentile, has become attached to the king of Tunis (a Phoenician, an African and a type for the Moorish Jews.) The reference becomes ominous as the bantering discussion returns to Gonzalo's doublet from the wedding, which Antonio says was 'well fished for', hinting that Claribel's marriage in Tunis is similarly doomed. Remember that Dido's first husband and true love had been killed by her brother, and Aeneas became a "widower" because Dido killed herself after his departure.¹

GONZALO

Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we
put them on first in Afric, at the marriage of
the king's fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis.

SEBASTIAN

'Twas a sweet marriage, and we prosper well in our return.

ADRIAN

Tunis was never graced before with such a paragon to
their queen.

GONZALO

Not since widow Dido's time.

ANTONIO

Widow! a pox o' that! How came that widow in?
widow Dido!

SEBASTIAN

What if he had said 'widower AEneas' too? Good Lord,
how you take it!

ADRIAN

'Widow Dido' said you? you make me study of that:
she was of Carthage, not of Tunis.

GONZALO

This Tunis, sir, was Carthage.

ADRIAN

Carthage?

GONZALO

I assure you, Carthage.

[....]

GONZALO

Sir, we were talking that our garments seem now
as fresh as when we were at Tunis at the marriage
of your daughter, who is now queen.

ANTONIO

And the rarest that e'er came there.

SEBASTIAN

Bate, I beseech you, widow Dido.

ANTONIO

O, widow Dido! ay, widow Dido.

GONZALO

Is not, sir, my doublet as fresh as the first day I
wore it? I mean, in a sort.

ANTONIO

That sort was well fished for.

Continuing in this ominous vein, Alonso laments that his daughter might as well be lost. Indeed, in Shakespearean typology, she certainly has been lost, her bloodline 'pruned' by the intermarriage with Jewish royalty.

GONZALO

When I wore it at your daughter's marriage?

ALONSO

You cram these words into mine ears against
The stomach of my sense. Would I had never
Married my daughter there! for, coming thence,
My son is lost and, in my rate, she too,
Who is so far from Italy removed
I ne'er again shall see her.

Next, Alonso is in despair with the realization that his beloved son Fernando has become fish food, and thus is lost as well. The correct interpretation of his statement is that he too will be pruned and grafted by his love for Miranda, and figuratively be eaten by the 'fish' in a reversal of the Flavian eucharist.

ALONSO

O thou mine heir
Of Naples and of Milan, what strange fish
Hath made his meal on thee?

After more such banter, Gonzalo tells of his ideal philosophy for ruling such an island as they have landed on.

GONZALO

And were the king on't, what would I do?

SEBASTIAN

'Scape being drunk for want of wine.

GONZALO

I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty;--

SEBASTIAN

Yet he would be king on't.

ANTONIO

The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning.

Though, as widely noted, Gonzalo's words are taken directly from an essay "Of Cannibals" by Montaigneⁱⁱ, the sentiments go back to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 6:24-34:

²⁴ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

²⁵ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

²⁹ And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³⁴ Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Although not specific to the Paul / Josephus typology, Gonzalo continues to establish himself as a voice for stoic if not cynic philosophy similar to what Jesus or Paul might have advocated. Sebastian and Antonio ridicule Gonzalo's inconsistency in wanting to be King of an egalitarian utopia, and Alonso rejects Gonzalo's advice as "nothing".

Ariel charms Gonzalo and Alonso asleep, leaving Antonio and Sebastian (Alonso's brother) to plot against Alonso. They realize that if Alonso and Gonzalo were killed, no one would be the wiser, and Sebastian would inherit the throne of Naples. Antonio and Sebastian reminisce about Antonio's wicked theft of Prospero's dukedom, and agree that guilty feelings have not been a problem. This is a rich and hilarious parody of the trinity of Flavian emperors, evocative of Domitian's repudiation of the Flavian churches and his reconstruction and re-invention of the Christian religion after their deaths. Meanwhile, on

the surface level, there is also rich irony in that it is far from obvious how the plotters will ever get back to Naples to claim their prize.

ANTONIO

Ay, sir; where lies that? if 'twere a kibe,
'Twould put me to my slipper: but I feel not
This deity in my bosom: twenty consciences,
That stand 'twixt me and Milan, candied be they
And melt ere they molest! Here lies your brother,
No better than the earth he lies upon,
If he were that which now he's like, that's dead;
Whom I, with this obedient steel, three inches of it,
Can lay to bed for ever; whiles you, doing thus,
To the perpetual wink for aye might put
This ancient morsel, this Sir Prudence, who
Should not upbraid our course. For all the rest,
They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk;
They'll tell the clock to any business that
We say befits the hour.

In this speech is another hint of cannibal imagery: Alonso is “This ancient morsel”.

Antonio and Sebastian are standing with their swords drawn and ready to plunge into Gonzalo and Alonso's necks, but Ariel awakens them in the nick of time.

The next scene opens with Caliban giving yet another cannibalistic curse against Prospero. Notice that it is by ‘trifles’ that Caliban is controlled: probably a reference to Pliny's description of Christianity as trifles, or ‘toies and fooleries’.

CALIBAN

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall and make him
By inch-meal a disease! His spirits hear me
And yet I needs must curse. But they'll nor pinch,
Fright me with urchin--shows, pitch me i' the mire,
Nor lead me, like a firebrand, in the dark
Out of my way, unless he bid 'em; but
For every trifle are they set upon me;
Sometime like apes that mow and chatter at me
And after bite me, then like hedgehogs which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount
Their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I
All wound with adders who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness.

Trinculo the clown enters, and identifies Caliban as a 'Fish': that is, a Jewish or Christian hoi polloi, a victim of the aristocracy:

TRINCULO

....What have we
here? a man or a fish? dead or alive? A fish:
he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-
like smell; a kind of not of the newest Poor-
John. A strange fish! Were I in England now,
as once I was, and had but this fish painted,
not a holiday fool there but would give a piece
of silver: there would this monster make a
man; any strange beast there makes a man:

Stephano enters drunk, echoing Gonzalo's preference to die at land rather than at sea. Trinculo's name is a hint that he, along with Stephano and Caliban, are a clownish, comic send-up of the Flavian imperial trinity of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, as well as their Flavian Christian trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, while Caliban is also representing the hoi polloi targets of the hoax. A large part of the humor is the speed at which roles are swapped, rendering it a futile task to assign specific identifications.

STEPHANO

I shall no more to sea, to sea,
Here shall I die ashore--
This is a very scurvy tune to sing at a man's
funeral: well, here's my comfort.

Drinks

Sings

The master, the swabber, the boatswain and I,
The gunner and his mate
Loved Mall, Meg and Marian and Margery,
But none of us cared for Kate;

Stephano's grouping of himself and five other shipmates all courting Margery (who may or may not be the same as Meg or Marian or Mall) may be humorously indicating that any number of clowns can pile into a single Trinity. Or, this may be a pointer to look to the Taming of the Shrew for more help with the interpretation.

Caliban believes that Stephano is an agent of Prospero; that is, a proxy of God. Stephano believes that his liquor "will give language to" Caliban, as Titus intended that the Gospels would give a new voice to the Jews.

STEPHANO

This is some monster of the isle with four legs, who hath got, as I take it, an ague. Where the devil should he learn our language? I will give him some relief, if it be but for that. if I can recover him and keep him tame and get to Naples with him, he's a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat's leather.

CALIBAN

Do not torment me, prithee; I'll bring my wood home faster.

STEPHANO

He's in his fit now and does not talk after the wisest. He shall taste of my bottle: if he have never drunk wine afore will go near to remove his fit. If I can recover him and keep him tame, I will not take too much for him; he shall pay for him that hath him, and that soundly.

CALIBAN

Thou dost me yet but little hurt; thou wilt anon, I know it by thy trembling: now Prosper works upon thee.

STEPHANO

Come on your ways; open your mouth; here is that which will give language to you, cat:

As Stephano and Trinculo exchange cheery banter, Caliban becomes convinced that Stephano is a god:

CALIBAN

[Aside] These be fine things, an if they be not sprites.
That's a brave god and bears celestial liquor.
I will kneel to him.

Stephano accepts Caliban's adulation, and promises that if Caliban will "kiss the book", then he will "furnish it anon with new contents." With this, Stephano reminds us of Domitian, who also furnished the New Testament with "new contents." Stephano says he is "the man in the moon", another attribute of Domitian, as we shall see in the next volume in the *Caesar's Messiah* series.

CALIBAN

Hast thou not dropp'd from heaven?

STEPHANO

Out o' the moon, I do assure thee: I was the man i'
the moon when time was.

CALIBAN

I have seen thee in her and I do adore thee:
My mistress show'd me thee and thy dog and thy bush.

STEPHANO

Come, swear to that; kiss the book: I will furnish
it anon with new contents swear.

The mention of Stephano's dog and bush recalls *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which the character 'Moonshine' in the rough mechanical's interlude also has a dog and a bush.

Trinculo laughs that Caliban has been rendered "puppy-headed" by Stephano's drink and propaganda. Caliban has become a suitable target for beatings:

TRINCULO

I shall laugh myself to death at this puppy-headed
monster. A most scurvy monster! I could find in my
heart to beat him,--

Like Antonio and Sebastian, Stephano now confesses that it is the thirst for power on this deserted island that is his deepest motivation.

STEPHANO

I prithee now, lead the way without any more
talking. Trinculo, the king and all our company
else being drowned, we will inherit here: here;
bear my bottle: fellow Trinculo, we'll fill him by
and by again.

Caliban fancies that he has won his freedom, even as his new boss is giving him his marching orders.

CALIBAN

No more dams I'll make for fish
Nor fetch in firing
At requiring;
Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish
'Ban, 'Ban, Cacaliban
Has a new master: get a new man.
Freedom, hey-day! hey-day, freedom! freedom,
hey-day, freedom!

STEPHANO

O brave monster! Lead the way.

After the clowns go offstage, at the beginning of Act III, Ferdinand has taken up Caliban's burden and is carrying piles of logs, a task unbecoming a young man of royal blood; but in his view the task is ennobled by his love for Miranda, who reportedly told him "such baseness had never like executor." Miranda tells him that Prospero the wizard is busy, "safe for these three hours" (a period reminiscent of Jesus's three days in the tomb), tempting him to pleasures of the flesh; but actually Prospero is hovering in the background, watching everything that transpires. Ferdinand and Miranda continue to talk flirtatiously, and pledge themselves to be married.

Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban continue to wander about the island, and Trinculo has returned to his opinion that Caliban is a fish, because he drinks like one:

TRINCULO

Why, thou deboshed fish thou,
was there ever man a coward that hath drunk so much
sack as I to-day? Wilt thou tell a monstrous lie,
being but half a fish and half a monster?

Caliban pleads with Stephano to destroy Prospero and his books, take Miranda to bed, and take sole power over the island -- while the spirit Ariel toys with them and provokes them to quarrel. Stephano and Trinculo are alerted by the sound of Ariel's pipe playing a tune, but Caliban reassures them:

CALIBAN

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.

The sound of "a thousand twangling instruments" reminds us of Paul's "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).

Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian and Antonio continue wandering around the island in search of Fernando, and they are growing weary and about to sleep when they suddenly find a marvelous banquet laid out for them by "strange Shapes" seen as a "gentle-kind", in contrast to the royal court, who Prospero describes as "worse than devils".

ALONSO

Give us kind keepers, heavens! What were these?

SEBASTIAN

A living drollery. Now I will believe
That there are unicorns, that in Arabia
There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix
At this hour reigning there.

ANTONIO

I'll believe both;
And what does else want credit, come to me,
And I'll be sworn 'tis true: travellers ne'er did
lie,
Though fools at home condemn 'em.

GONZALO

If in Naples
I should report this now, would they believe me?
If I should say, I saw such islanders--
For, certes, these are people of the island--
Who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet, note,
Their manners are more gentle-kind than of
Our human generation you shall find
Many, nay, almost any.

PROSPERO

[Aside] Honest lord,
Thou hast said well; for some of you there present
Are worse than devils.

ALONSO

I cannot too much muse
Such shapes, such gesture and such sound, expressing,
Although they want the use of tongue, a kind
Of excellent dumb discourse.

PROSPERO

[Aside] Praise in departing.

FRANCISCO

They vanish'd strangely.

Alonso is reluctant to eat, and Gonzalo's words do not seem reassuring: he says the banquet reminds him of "mountaineers... whose throats had hanging at 'em Wallets of flesh" and "men Whose heads stood in their breasts." It seems that Gonzalo knows that the banquet consist of flesh and breasts of men. The cannibal imagery is palpable. But, Alonso quiets his concern, and agrees to partake.

SEBASTIAN

No matter, since
They have left their viands behind; for we have stomachs.
Will't please you taste of what is here?

ALONSO

Not I.

GONZALO

Faith, sir, you need not fear. When we were boys,
Who would believe that there were mountaineers
Dew-lapp'd like bulls, whose throats had hanging at 'em
Wallets of flesh? or that there were such men
Whose heads stood in their breasts? which now we find
Each putter-out of five for one will bring us
Good warrant of.

ALONSO

I will stand to and feed,
Although my last: no matter, since I feel
The best is past. Brother, my lord the duke,
Stand to and do as we.

Ariel suddenly appears "like a harpy, claps his wings upon the table", and the banquet vanishes. Ariel pronounces a condemnation on the men, reminding them of their theft of Prospero's dukedom;

ARIEL

for which foul deed
The powers, delaying, not forgetting, have
Incensed the seas and shores, yea, all the creatures,
Against your peace. Thee of thy son, Alonso,
They have bereft; and do pronounce by me:
Lingering perdition, worse than any death
Can be at once, shall step by step attend
You and your ways; whose wraths to guard you from--
Which here, in this most desolate isle, else falls
Upon your heads--is nothing but heart-sorrow
And a clear life ensuing.

While the fate Ariel pronounces is generally consistent with the fate of Gentile lords in the Shakespearian literature, the final benediction, “a clear life ensuing”, seems to offer unusually hopeful prospects. Prospero, however, is satisfied that “these mine enemies are all knit up in their distractions; now they are in my power.”

Beginning Act IV, Prospero pronounces his blessing over Miranda, Ferdinand, and their love, and looks forward to a grand wedding. In the meanwhile, he chides them to remain chaste. Then he calls Ariel to “bring the rabble”:

PROSPERO

Thou and thy meaner fellows your last service
Did worthily perform; and I must use you
In such another trick. Go bring the rabble,
O'er whom I give thee power, here to this place:
Incite them to quick motion; for I must
Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple
Some vanity of mine art: it is my promise,
And they expect it from me.

The spirits of Iris, Ceres and Juno appear to pronounce blessings and a rich life for the “young couple”, presenting a “most majestic vision” which enchants Ferdinand and Miranda. However, it’s not clear that this is the “vanity of mine art” that was promised by Prospero, since the “rabble” are not yet returned. Following the appearance of the spirits, he belittles them in a famous passage:

PROSPERO

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

With the “revels” over, Prospero gets back to business. He prepares a trap for Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo by putting “the trumpery in my house” onto a clothesline where the three clowns find it. They have lost their wine, which Stephano says is an “infinite loss”, perhaps a metaphor for loss of Christian faith.

However, what is better, they have found the royal and priestly apparel that Prospero and Ariel have left for them, and they revel in playful pomp. The “trumpery” seems to be a parody of the banquet that was laid out for the King of Naples and his party: the gentile

royalty aspire to eat real flesh, while the clowns, pretenders, get only the opportunity to fancy themselves as royalty for a moment. One commentator thought that the garments represent Shakespeare's writings; that is, the "paschal lamb" prepared by Bassano in the *Salve Deus*.

Caliban warns the clowns that the moment to carry out their criminal conspiracy against Prospero is passing. Stephano shushes Caliban:

STEPHANO

Be you quiet, monster. Mistress line,
is not this my jerkin? Now is the jerkin under
the line: now, jerkin, you are like to lose your
hair and prove a bald jerkin.

The concern for loss of hair and baldness again recalls Domitian's end. As the clowns are playing, "divers Spirits, in the shape of dogs and hounds" enter to drive them away, as Prospero curses them.

This would be a fitting end for a Shakespeare play, but the action proceeds in a most unexpected fashion from here. Ariel calls on Prospero's pity, especially for Gonzalo:

PROSPERO

I did say so,
When first I raised the tempest. Say, my spirit,
How fares the king and's followers?

ARIEL

Confined together
In the same fashion as you gave in charge,
Just as you left them; all prisoners, sir,
In the line-grove which weather-fends your cell;
They cannot budge till your release. The king,
His brother and yours, abide all three distracted
And the remainder mourning over them,
Brimful of sorrow and dismay; but chiefly
Him that you term'd, sir, 'The good old lord Gonzalo;'
His tears run down his beard, like winter's drops
From eaves of reeds. Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.

PROSPERO

Dost thou think so, spirit?

ARIEL

Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO

And mine shall.
Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gaitist my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel:
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves.

Prospero, an aristocrat, elitist, and former duke himself, decides to recognize his common humanity with his enemies, and to forgive them.

At this point one is tempted to speculate that 'Shakespeare' has been blackmailed into showing so much unfamiliar kindness; or perhaps, that she has been replaced entirely, and an alternate author has been enlisted to craft such an uncharacteristically happy ending.

However, I have argued earlier that Emilia Bassano, in her continuing studies of Josephus and the Talmud, may have recognized that the same Flavians who created Christianity were also responsible for giving succor and warmth to her beloved Rabbinical Judaism. This understanding was symbolized by Gonzalo's act of furnishing the necessities and luxuries of life for Prospero and Miranda in their lifeboat. If so, Ariel's special esteem for Gonzalo is consistent with this, and it is Gonzalo that particularly inspires Prospero's "nobler reason", in spite of his having been established as a 'type' of Josephus.

Preparing to set the prisoners free, Prospero reviews how he has called upon the elves and spirits for his magic. In doing so, he uses the words of Medea from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As discussed elsewhere, 'Shakespeare' frequently refers to Ovid's Philomela (book 6) but this time is different. The choice of this parallel is apt: in Ovid's tale of book 7, the heroic Jason and the Argonauts have come to Colchis, where the king's daughter Medea has fallen in love with him. Her passion burns, but she chastely waits until Jason agrees to marry her. Medea's father assigns Jason the task of winning the golden fleece, which he accomplishes with the aid of Medea's magic.

Up until this point, Medea is a parallel to Miranda, and Jason is parallel to Ferdinand. However, from this point forward in Ovid's story, Medea's life turns to wickedness, and then unhappiness. At Jason's request, she conjures up a magic spell to restore his father

Aeson's youthful powers. Then she "pretended to a sham quarrel with her husband" and left him to go to the court of Pelias, where she used her trickery and magic to kill him. Meanwhile, Jason has remarried, and Medea kills his new wife and all the children too.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rather than proceed down Medea's wicked path, Prospero "abjures" this "rough magic" and promises to break his staff, and drown his book.

PROSPERO

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure, and, when I have required
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

Compare to Medea's incantation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (VII.265-277, Golding translation, 1567):

Ye Ayres and windes: ye Elves of Hilles, of Brookes, of Woods alone,
Of standing Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everychone
Through helpe of whom (the crooked bankes much wondring at the thing)
I have compelled streames to run cleane backward to their spring.
By charmes I make the calme Seas rough, and make the rough Seas plaine,
And cover all the Skie with Cloudes and chase them thence againe.
By charmes I raise and lay the windes, and burst the Vipers jaw.
And from the bowels of the Earth both stones and trees doe draw.
Whole woods and Forestes I remove. I make the Mountaines shake,
And even the Earth it selfe to grone and fearfully to quake.

I call up dead men from their graves: and thee O lightsome Moone
I darken oft, though beaten brasse abate thy perill soone.
Our Sorcerie dimmes the Morning faire, and darkes the Sun at Noone.

Once again, this powerful parallel to Medea continues the feminization of Prospero's character. As I have mentioned earlier, the film director Julie Taymor noticed this feminine side of Prospero, and cast Helen Mirren in the role. This duality has a special poignancy if indeed the playwright 'Shakespeare' was not only a Jew masquerading as a Christian, but also a woman playing the part of a man in the world. In an interview, Taymor explained:

In the era of Shakespeare's time, again, women were burned at the stake for even dabbling in medicinal arts, let alone alchemy. And therefore the whole issue of white magic/black magic is right there in terms of a woman who was given the freedom by her husband, if you follow the backstory, to practice in the sciences and her brother uses it to have her accused of witchcraft to usurp her dukedom. So Prospera may feel and start as a benevolent sorcerer or alchemist, but because of the revenge factor of having her kingdom taken away and her daughter and she sent out to die, the vengeance part takes over her spirit and she moves into the dark side. I think what you get with Helen's performance is this unbelievably complex woman who's both powerful and vulnerable, has an incredible maternal side to her, which is very unique, to have this mother-daughter relationship, she's got a sensuality and a humor to her because she's [Helen Mirren](#), and in the end when she puts her corset back on, it's very different than when a man puts on his duke's robes. You see that she is really giving up her life to go back into civilization for her daughter; she's giving up her freedom, because to go back into that courtly society she has to go back into the corseted stays of women of that time. So there's an enormous amount of the various changes that happen by putting a woman into this role, but ultimately the play is the play, and the themes of Shakespeare's play don't change.^{iv}

Prospero enchants the royal party, chides and forgives them, awakens them, chides and forgives them again, and re-acquaints Alonso with his son, happily in love with Miranda. Miranda gives the group her famous blessing:

MIRANDA

O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't!

Miranda's blessing recalls Hamlet's soliloquy "what a piece of work is man", but without the dark conclusion that "he delights me not". As the play moves rapidly forward to its conclusion, the master and boatswain are brought forth, and set free. Finally, Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban come forward, and Caliban also receives a blessing, and promises to "seek for grace":

ALONSO

This is a strange thing as e'er I look'd on.

Pointing to Caliban

PROSPERO

He is as disproportion'd in his manners
As in his shape. Go, sirrah, to my cell;
Take with you your companions; as you look
To have my pardon, trim it handsomely.

CALIBAN

Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I, to take this drunkard for a god
And worship this dull fool!

The “thrice-double ass” is the false Christian/Flavian Trinity that Caliban has worshiped, and also play-acted in as a clown, and has now foresaken. At the last, Ariel is set free, and Prospero asks for the audience’s applause and their pardon to set him free to return home.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my analysis, this play is unlike some others that have been discussed in this book, in that a far greater percentage of the typology and symbolism of the play is derived from other sources aside from the Flavian comic system. I will now briefly review some of those other sources.

If the heart and soul of the play are drawn from classic Shakespearean reversal of Flavian themes, the dramatic scaffolding seems to be have been drawn from Commedia del' Arte, a form of Italian improvisational theater that was popular in the mid to late 16th century. The acts were based on a stereotypical set of players. In *The Tempest*, Prospero resembles “Pantalone”, a wealthy elder who seeks to marry off his daughter “Isabella” (that is, Miranda). Isabella falls in love with “Fabian” (that is, Ferdinand) whose father is “The Doctor”, an authority figure like Ferdinand’s father Alonso. “The Captain” is a cowardly blow-hard like Sebastian, “Brighella” a manipulative schemer like Antonio, “Arlecchino” (the harlequin) a clown like Trinculo, “Zanni” a low-class butler like Stefano. “Pulcinella” (Caliban), a deformed tragic figure, completes the ensemble.^v

Prospero Adorno, Duke of Genoa until he was deposed in 1478, may have been Shakespeare’s inspiration for the name Prospero. Alonso may be Alonso II, King of Naples, who abdicated the throne in 1495 in favor of his son Ferdinand.

Trinculo had “lesser legs” like the satirist John Marston, who was known for his short legs. Marston was associated with ventriloquism, while in *The Tempest* Ariel plays a ventriloquist’s game with Trinculo and Stephano. Smelling Caliban with Trinculo under

the gabardine, Stephano builds a pun on Trinculo's name: "vent' Triculo". Similarly, Stephano seems to be based on Marston's close friend (and closer enemy) Ben Johnson.^{vi}

Ariel is the name given to Jerusalem in Isaiah 29, where it is said that "thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust" (Isaiah 29:4). Aside from making Ariel a type for the voice of Jerusalem (that is, the breath or spirit of the Jews), this also makes her an appropriate sprite for playing the role of a ventriloquist.

Shakespeare's shipwreck seems clearly based on the wrecks of Josephus and Paul, which in turn were most likely drawn from Aeneas's wreck at Carthage. However, Shakespeare also took elements of his tale from current events. Of course, all shipwrecks have many elements in common, so the task of evaluating literary dependence is a matter of looking for distinguishing detail. Three accounts of a shipwreck in the Bermuda Islands in 1609, including one by William Strachey, are often mentioned as the most direct inspiration for Shakespeare's descriptions of the wreck and the island. However, Peter McIntosh argues for earlier sources, describing explorations of Magellan, Drake and Sarmiento de Gamboa.^{vii}

... 'the still vex'd Bermoothes' may not be a reference to the Bermuda Islands at all, since the name Bermoothes was known in Jacobean times (and by Shakespeare's contemporary, Ben Jonson) as a brothel district... So Prospero is not only asking Ariel to obtain something from somewhere far away, but he also may be asking Ariel to achieve a task impossible for mortals: to find dew (possibly signifying purity) in the most unlikely of places, a brothel district. Shakespeare's wry humour would not be lost on the playgoers who had come to hear a comedy.

...one of the more unusual and intriguing references in *The Tempest* must be considered—the reference to the South American demon Setebos, who was Sycorax's god. Setebos was invoked for help by the Patagonian captured and shackled by Magellan's crew when overwintering at the port of St Julian in South America, as described in Antonio Pigafetta's (1525) account of the first circumnavigation of the globe. Pigafetta also described St Elmo's fire, tempests and assorted giants and cannibals, making it likely that Pigafetta's account (or the [1577](#) English translation and summary by Richard Eden) was a source used by Shakespeare when writing *The Tempest*. An additional source may be Francis Fletcher's account of Francis Drake's 1577–1580 circumnavigation of the world, in which Setebos is again mentioned (in 1578 Francis Drake visited the same port of St Julian where Magellan had encountered the Patagonians), as is a deadly tempest and a native addicted to wine.

Many parallels occur between descriptions in Sarmiento de Gamboa's journals and those in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* ([Table 1](#)). Although accounts of storms and strange experiences at sea necessarily have common themes, the vocabulary used by Sarmiento de Gamboa is closer to Shakespeare's than Strachey's. Both

mention thunder and lightning, flame and calls to God for help. Note how in both Sarmiento's account and in *The Tempest* the word 'flame' (*fuego*) is used; Strachey's vocabulary is different: he describes a 'little round light' or 'sparkling blaze.' In *The Tempest*, the ship is first wrecked then miraculously preserved in a 'deep nook' (harbour) and in Sarmiento's writings a ship is stranded in an arm of the sea, then wrecked. In *The Tempest*, mariners remain in a stranded ship and in Sarmiento's account of a ship stranded on the beach, 'There were still soldiers and settlers in the ship [...] who were hurled about at every lurch.'

In other parts of Sarmiento's journals we read of islands, lights in the sky, short-statured natives and features having parallels to Shakespeare's description of Prospero's island: berries and shellfish, land which is pleasant and fertile with pastures suitable for supporting animals, and freshwater springs. Sarmiento mentions evergreens and oaks and Shakespeare writes of pines and oaks, and (significantly) does not mention the exotic warmer-climate prickly pear and palms of Bermuda. Sarmiento mentions shellfish (identified as mussels), and Shakespeare writes of mussels; in contrast the sea foods Strachey mentions are fish, oysters and whelks. Sarmiento and Caliban find springs of water but Strachey specifically notes their absence.

Several of the villains who challenged Sarmiento de Gamboa's authority have the names Alonso or Antonio, names also used for the villains in *The Tempest*. In addition witnesses (presumably trusted members of the expedition) to a ceremony were named Gonzalo and Fernando (a name equivalent to Ferdinand) and these names correspond to the names of the trusted councillor and the good prince in Shakespeare's play. Sarmiento also describes wine casks being washed ashore, and a wine cask is washed ashore in *The Tempest*.

In both *The Tempest* and Sarmiento's account mutineers are apprehended with weapons in their hands. In *The Tempest* the mutineers excuse their drawing of swords by saying they had heard the bellowing of bulls or lions; Sarmiento mentions seeing the tracks of tigers and lions. Strange lights in the sky are seen in the Strait of Magellan and voices of devils are heard in the Azores: both observations have parallels in *The Tempest*.

Considered in isolation, some of these parallels could be expected to occur by chance, but in total they establish the likelihood of some connection between Sarmiento de Gamboa's accounts and *The Tempest*. Significantly, the parallels between Sarmiento's account and *The Tempest* are more specific than the supposed parallels between the Bermuda accounts and *The Tempest*.

Charles Frey further notes that Magellan suffered a mutiny at sea, by sailors named Antonio and Sebastian, but it was put down by Gonzalo Gomez de Espinosa; and that one of Magellan's ships was wrecked, but "all the men were saved by a miracle, for they were not even wetted."^{viii}

Regardless of the significance of these various parallel sources, I would argue that the Flavian comic system is the deepest underlying structure of the play. However, the use of the themes has changed compared to the earlier plays: 'Shakespeare' no longer seems quite so hell-bent on revenge, but rather has grown to see that the various religions and aristocracies, if not exactly equivalent, are all equally obsolete. The 'grafting' metaphor is applied to "admirable Miranda" who has been educated from all the sorcerer's books (but will be moving forward without "rough magic"), and to the noble youth Ferdinand. They seem to represent the Enlightenment ideals of tolerance and free thought. Shakespeare's *Tempest* is infused with the hope and excitement of the exploration of the New World, of Magellan and Drake and Sarmiento. The Flavian signature, although still distinctly present, has faded a bit into the background. Perhaps Emilia Bassano has given up hope that anyone will ever get her hidden jokes about the Flavians; and perhaps she doesn't care as much as she once did.

ⁱ Faith Nostbakken, "Understanding the *Tempest*", 2004.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.victorianweb.org/courses/nonfiction/montaigne/cannibals.html>, accessed Jan. 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph7.htm>, accessed Jan. 2014.

^{iv} 'Julie Taymor on "The *Tempest*," Prospero's Sex Change, and Spider-Man', *AOL Mofone* <<http://news.mofone.com/2010/12/11/julie-taymor-on-the-tempest-prosporos-sex-change-and-spider/>> [accessed 6 March 2014].

^v Sarah Clinch, "*Commedia del' Tempest*", 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/m3y87v4> (accessed Jan. 2014); Oreglia, Giacomo. *The Commedia dell'Arte*. New York: Methuen and Co LTD, 1968

^{vi} Charles Ceighton, *Shakespeare's Story of His Life*, 1904

^{vii} Peter D. McIntosh, [Storms, Shipwrecks and South America: from Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa's Voyages to Shakespeare's The Tempest](#), *Colonial Latin American Review* Vol. 20, Iss. 3, 2011

^{viii} Charles Frey, "The *Tempest* and the New World, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, v. 30, no. 1, 1979, p. 34.