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Shakespeare's Storms

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Thesis written towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Sussex

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Signed.....

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Textual Note.

Unless stated otherwise, all Shakespearean quotations are from *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan eds. (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001) and are included in the text. All Biblical quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Geneva text of 1587.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to provide a new perspective on storms in Shakespeare. Rather than a recurrent motif, the storm is seen as protean: each play uses the storm in a singular way. The works of Shakespeare's contemporaries are explored for comparison, whilst meteorological texts and accounts of actual storms are examined for context. Using close reading and theories of ecocriticism throughout, I show that Shakespeare's storms are attentive to the environmental conditions of experience. Although the dominant practice of staging storms in early modern England is to suggest the supernatural, Shakespeare writes storms which operate quite differently. I argue that this is a compelling opportunity to see Shakespeare develop a complex engagement with audience expectations.

Five plays are explored in separate chapters, each with respect to performative conditions and through close reading of the poetry. Firstly, I argue that the Globe's opening in 1599 demanded a spectacular showcase, to which *Julius Caesar* responded, shaping the play's language and staging. With *King Lear* (c.1605), the traditional, non-Shakespearean location of the heath betrays a tendency to misread the play in terms of location rather than event. *King Lear*'s storm withholds the supernatural, a manifestly different approach from that in *Macbeth* (c.1606); Shakespeare both adheres to and resists convention in this respect. The relationship between storm and the supernatural in *Macbeth* is shown to be fundamental to the play's equivocation.

Shakespeare's next storm is in *Pericles* (c.1608), which also contains a storm by George Wilkins. The two writers' approaches are explored with respect to the Bible, alluded to extensively throughout the play. Finally, with *The Tempest* (c.1611), I argue that Shakespeare's manipulation of audience expectation through the storm demands a reading which combines the metatheatrical and the ecocritical. Foregrounded as expressions of dramatic and environmental awareness, I bring new insights to Shakespeare's storms.

Introduction.

Shakespeare's storms are an ostensibly straightforward topic for a critical study. Familiar to the most casual reader, the raging of King Lear, the shipwreck of *The Tempest* and the Witches of *Macbeth* are received emblems, part of the cultural furniture in the halls of canonisation. Like all such texts, they are experienced through the mediation of tradition and repetition; like all such texts, they repay close attention on their own terms. In this focus, the storms of Shakespeare are less familiar and less straightforward. They retain their capacity to surprise.

Shakespeare seems to have been remarkably fond of storms, not only in the stage effects he so often calls for, but in the metaphors and similes he gives to his characters. Indeed, if we include such images, we may say that there is some instance of storm in every Shakespearean play. Given this completeness, and the impossibility of addressing *all* of the storms in detail, I have chosen to concentrate on five plays in particular: *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Pericles* and *The Tempest*. In these plays, we will not find all that the Shakespearean storm can do, and so I will, of course, be drawing on the other instances in my reading. However, these plays seem to me to represent a vast range of possibilities in this narrow topic, and each one justifies the attention I will give it. Before the discussion of individual plays, however, it will be worthwhile to explore some of the contexts in which those plays will be examined. In this introduction then, I will consider, in turn, meteorology, theatrical expectation, the ecocritical and what I propose to call the storm of separation. The plays I have mentioned will then be discussed in the order in which they were written.

Early Modern Meteorology.

Many can brook the weather, that love not the wind.

Love's Labour's Lost, 4.2.34.

Although storms, thunder and lightning, and the associated phenomena of high winds, rain and raging seas are all used frequently by early modern writers as metaphors or similes, the extent to which those images are grounded in contemporary meteorology is

extraordinary. It is surely not possible for a reader today to witness a storm – whether theatrical or natural – through an early modern system of understanding. Such would be the requisite leap of imagination, for example, to think of lightning as something other than electrical. However, as much of Shakespeare’s use of weather imagery, and especially storms, is determined by the prevalent Elizabethan and Jacobean modes for understanding the weather, it is important to familiarise ourselves with the details of those modes. Such familiarisation will enable close reading of the plays and poems to reveal connotations which are normally invisible in the 21st century. In exploring this subject, I am particularly indebted to S. K. Heninger’s work, *A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology* (1968), which addresses the whole gamut of early modern weather with enviable deftness.

Meteorological principles in early modern England were largely derived from the work of classical philosophers. Of these works, the first to attempt to unify a theory of the weather into one system was Aristotle’s *Meteorologica*. In the *Meteorologica*, Aristotle explains atmospheric phenomena in a way which is recognisable to any reader of similar texts from Elizabethan and Jacobean England: a system of ‘exhalations’ and ‘vapours’, together known as ‘evaporations.’¹ Aristotle’s theory states that the sun draws these exhalations upwards, potentially through three regions of the air, during which process, they account for all various types of weather. Vapours, warm and moist, are drawn from bodies of water, rivers, bogs and marshland. The exhalations, in contrast, are hot and dry, and drawn from the earth. As the evaporations rise, they change in temperature – caused by the air’s different regions, proximity to the sun or the varying temperature of the sun itself – and this change is manifested in different types of weather, or meteor. Which meteor occurs depends on the mixture of evaporations and how their temperature is altered. From vapours come rain, snow, clouds, hail, frost and mist, whilst exhalations produce thunder and lightning, winds, comets and earthquakes as well as the occasional airborne fireball. Our modern notion of a storm, then, with rain, thunder, lightning and wind, requires several simultaneous evaporations producing discrete meteors. Many other

¹ Aristotle. *Meteorologica*, trans. H. D. P. Lee (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1952). For the initial outlining of the arguments on exhalations and vapours, see page 21.

atmospheric phenomena are accounted for by the reflection of sun, moon or stars, in configurations of airborne vapours. This group, which include rainbows and multiple suns, are known as ‘reflections’.²

Although meteorological theory in early modern England was based on the principles outlined by Aristotle, it was more specifically derived from the Roman thinkers who translated the texts from the Greek. In the works of Plutarch, Seneca and Pliny the Elder are available exhaustive summaries of Aristotle’s system and the additions made by subsequent generations. As Heninger remarks, Pliny seems to have been ‘the Roman encyclopaedist most widely read in the Renaissance’, and it is important that the empiricism of Aristotle is ‘embellished with ... many elements of wonder and even superstition’.³ Both of these elements, as we shall see, are found in many of the meteorological writings of Elizabethans and Jacobean, whether scientific text or artwork.

Fortunately for our purposes, the Elizabethan and Jacobean meteorologists clearly found thunder and lightning fascinating. As Heninger writes, ‘[n]o phenomenon, in fact, was more carefully and variously explained – by the meteorologist, the astrologer, and the merely superstitious.’⁴ Whilst Aristotle’s model of the processes by which thunder and lightning are produced still held firm for such writers, the opportunity to expound on it in fresh language was clearly appealing, and popular to readers. A common feature of the weather phenomena we will be examining is that each was thought to come from clouds. A brief description of clouds is therefore an appropriate starting point:

A Cloude is a *vapor* cold and moist, drawn out of the earth, or waters by the heate of the sunne, into the middle region of the ayre, where by colde it is so knit together, that it hangeth vntill either y^e waight or some resolution cause it to fall downe.⁵

² See *ibid.*, 241.

³ S.K. Heninger, *A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵ William Fulke, *A Goodly Gallery* (London: 1563), 101.

Moving on to stormy meteors, Simon Harward was able, in 1607, to dedicate a single work to lightning alone, and offers a detailed account of the phenomenon:

First a viscous vapour joyned with a hot exhalation is lifted up to the highest part of the middle region of aire, by virtue of the Planets: then the waterie vapour by the coldnesse both of place and of matter, is thickened into a clowd, and the exhalation (which was drawne up with it) is shut within the clowd, and driven into straights.

This hotte exhalation flying the touching of the cold clowd, doth flie into the depth of the clowd that doeth compasse it about, and courseth up and downe in the clowd seeking some passage out.⁶

At this point, it is worth remarking that Harward here, and others back to Aristotle, are effectively describing the way in which a cloud becomes electrically charged. If this seems naïve, it should be remembered that such a process cannot in fact be accurately described (at least without disagreement) even by today's meteorologists. Although the language of vapours and exhalations is peculiar, then, the idea that clouds are invested with a special and unusual energy before producing lightning is a curious anticipation of electricity. Whilst Harward is describing lightning, thunder was understood to be linked, as is demonstrated by William Fulke:

Thonder is a sound, caused in y^e cloudes by the breaking out of a whote & dry *Exhalation*, beating against the edges, of the cloude... but when the whot *Exhalation* cannot agré^e w^c the coldnes of y^e place, by this strife being driuen together, made stronger and kendled, it wil neades breake out which soden & violent eruption, causeth y^e noyse which we cal thonder.⁷

Fulke's text, *A Goodly Gallery*, was a consistently popular and enduring work: this quotation is taken from the first edition, 1563, but there were at least five more in the next eighty years. Although its popularity lends it authority, it is for its thoroughness that I will refer to it often. Note how similar Harward's description is to that of Fulke; there is no fundamental disagreement between the two, and this is illustrative of a common understanding of weather which, barring minute details, seems to have gone unquestioned. To complete Harward's basic description of lightning, then,

⁶ Simon Harward, *A Discourse of the Severall Kinds and Causes of Lightnings* (London: 1607), 13.

⁷ Fulke, *Op. Cit.*, 50.

...it maketh a way by force, and being kindled, by the violent motion it breaketh through the clowde. If the sides of the hollowe clowd be thicke, and the exhalation be drie and copious, then there is made both thunder and lightning: but if the clowd be thin, and the exhalation also rare and thin, then there is lightening without thunder.⁸

Both writers use evocative diction to describe their relative phenomena: it is notable that ‘force’, ‘violent’, ‘breaketh’ and ‘strife’ are used. The storm, then, is necessarily vicious before the effects are seen or heard. Whether this understanding was in place before terms such as *storm*, *thunder* or *tempest* became synonymous with human violence, or whether that figurative use of language became influential over the understanding, is probably not knowable. What is clear, however, is that the means by which the weather is described in reality is entirely commensurate with the way in which it is so often employed figuratively.

Whereas the theories of thunder and lightning available in Elizabethan and Jacobean England did not vary greatly, those which dealt with wind were more contentious. Rather than detail exactly the way in which winds move and gain in strength, writers in early modern England followed their Classical predecessors in ascribing particular characteristics and names to each wind. This has led to a tendency to oversimplify in retrospect, as we shall see when dealing with responses to *Pericles*, and there is no consensus that one wind is more associated with storms than the others.⁹ When winds are described meteorologically, it is often the case that storm winds are not given specific attention. Part of the problem is that wind was far from being an element of the definition of storms as in today’s language.¹⁰ Rather, *storm* and *tempest* operate more as a way of indicating that the weather is at its most violent, without signalling particular weather phenomena. Thus the phrases ‘tempest of thunder’ and ‘storm of lightning’ are widespread, and the same applies to wind, as, for example, in the Gospel of Mark: ‘there

⁸ Harward, *Op. Cit.*, 13.

⁹ See below Chapter 4, 139-43. For a discussion of the various attributes of the winds, and literary uses which reflect them, see Heninger, 109-128.

¹⁰ Indeed for the *OED*, wind is *the* defining element, with storm defined as: ‘A violent disturbance of the atmosphere, manifested by high winds, often accompanied by heavy falls of rain, hail, or snow, by thunder and lightning, and at sea by turbulence of the waves.’ and tempest defined as: ‘A violent storm of wind, usually accompanied by a downfall of rain, hail, or snow, or by thunder.’

arose a great storme of winde, and the waues dashed...'.¹¹ Even when winds were described in meteorological terms, there was a dispute over the basic principles, as inherited from the Classical texts. Heninger clarifies the '[t]hree distinct theories of wind formation' as formed around the question of 'whether wind was [as defined by Aristotle] a true meteor formed from an exhalation ..., or whether it was [as Hippocrates thought] merely Air in motion'.¹² Pliny, moreover, wrote that there are 'certaine caves and holes which breed winds continually without end'.¹³ As Heninger makes clear, these competing views were resolved by Fulke, who 'combined the three independent and opposing theses...into a single system which explained all types of winds'.¹⁴ Fulke's solution is to allow for each theory to apply: Aristotle's in general, and the others in specific situations.

It is possible to infer from Fulke's descriptions, that the high winds which we now associate with storms are of the Aristotelian, exhalation group, but this is not made explicit until much later.¹⁵ Only when he has fully explained thunder and lightning, does Fulke define 'Storme wynde', as 'a thycke *Exhalation* violently moued out of a cloude without inflammation or burning'.¹⁶ The reasons for this order of the text are made clear, as Fulke likens the storm winds to lightning itself, 'all one with y^e matter of lightening, that hath been spoken of: namely it is an *Exhalation* very whot and drye, and also grosse and thycke, so that it wyll easely be set on fyre, but then it hath another name, & other effectes'.¹⁷ This reasoning shows that it is not unlikely for storm winds and lightning (which, as we have seen, was recognised as producing thunder) to occur in close proximity. Fulke describes this type of storm with a certain reverential tone:

¹¹ Mark 4:37. For instances of 'storm/tempest of thunder', see for example, Richard Hakluyt (ed.) *The principal nauigations...* (London: George Bishop, 1599-1600). In Richard Johnson's 2 *Seven Champions of Christendom*, a castle gate 'rattle[s] like a violent tempestuous storme of thunder' (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1597), D3.

¹² Heninger, *Op. Cit.* 107.

¹³ Pliny, *The History of World...Translated into English by Philemon Holland* (London, 1601), 21.

¹⁴ Heninger, *Op. Cit.* 108.

¹⁵ Fulke's view is that the wind which is simply moving air, rather than an exhalation, is 'soft gentle and coole', whilst the Plinian cave theory is reworked as the idea that there are localised winds in certain countries, or areas.

¹⁶ Fulke, *Op. Cit.* fol. 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, fol. 31.

Finally, it is so troublesome wyth thonder, lyghtnyng, rayne and blaste, besydes these darkenesse and colde, that it woulde make menne, at so neare a pynche to bée at their wyttes endes, yf they weare not accustomed to suche tumultuous tempest. Wherefore it weare profitable, to declare the signes that go before it, to the ende, menne myght beware of it. But they are so commen to other tempestes, that either they are knowen well enoughe, or els beyng neuer so well knowen, in a seldome calamytie they woulde lytle bée feared.¹⁸

It is clear from Fulke's description, then, that the occurrence of these storm winds alongside other tempest phenomena is what makes the extreme storm extreme. Thunder and lightning, even with rain, falls into the less fearsome category of 'other tempests'. This is made clearer as Fulke goes on to list other, lesser, types of wind associated with storm, including 'whyrl wyndes' ('lesse in quantitie, and of thinner substaunce') and 'the fyred whirle wynde'.¹⁹

The majority of what we now consider elements of storms are then, in Aristotelian terms, exhalations. Only rain, and the related hail or snow, are categorised as vapours. As the process by which hail and snow are formed is similar to that of rain (depending, as each does, on the temperature of the region of air), we will examine them all together. As with the rest of the above phenomena, each was understood to be generated from clouds:

After the generation of cloudes is wel knowen, it shall not be hard to learn, from whence the rayne commeth. For after the matter of the cloud being drawen vp, and by cold made thick, (as is sayde before) heate followynge, which is moste commenlye of the Southerne wynde, or any other wynde of hotte temper, doth resolue it againe into water, so it falleth in droppes.²⁰

Wind, then, is needed to produce rain, as it melts the cloud. We have already seen the storm winds described as 'very whote and drye', and so it is no coincidence that rain should accompany them.

The above paragraphs on the various phenomena associated with storms are intended as a brief overview. Rather than scrutinize the early modern meteorology of tempests in its

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. fol 49.

entirety now, I will, as we explore Shakespeare's storms, continue to introduce relevant meteorological texts which will inform our understanding. However, to illustrate the extent to which it is possible to incorporate the fine detail of such writings into our reading of dramatic texts, I will now briefly consider a single passage from *Pericles* which provides a valuable example. Although there are many storms throughout Shakespeare's plays, and though some characters perish in shipwrecks, it is only in *Pericles* that anyone is killed directly by lightning. This seemingly simple statement is as troubled as the text of *Pericles* itself, for it is with just a fragile veneer of certainty that we can suggest that Shakespeare's co-author of the play was George Wilkins, only finding more solid ground when saying blithely that we know Shakespeare did not write the play alone. I am content to follow the current critical consensus that Wilkins was indeed the main creator of and influence on the first two acts of the play, and my chapter below will explore the implications of this consensus with regards to the way in which each writer uses storms in the same play. Although it seems unlikely that Shakespeare was indeed responsible for the speech in which the deaths by lightning are described, in a study of storms in plays by or partly by Shakespeare, it is impossible to ignore. Here is the death of Antiochus and his daughter, as reported by Helicanus:

When he was seated in a chariot
Of inestimable value, and his daughter with him,
A fire from heaven came and shrivelled up
Their bodies even to loathing for they so stunk
That all those eyes adored them ere their fall
Scorn now their hand should give them burial.
(2.4.7-12)

There is a conflation of Antiochi here: Helicanus' speech draws both from the play's source texts of Gower and Twyne and (as Naseeb Shaheen has identified) from the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the Bible (hereafter Antiochus IV).²¹ The latter connection is based both on the chariot and the stink of flesh: Antiochus IV 'commanded his charet man to driue continually ... But the Lorde almightie ... smote him with an incurable and inuisible plague' and 'his flesh fell off for payne and torment, and all his armie was

²¹ Naseeb Shaheen *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 689.

grieved at his smell.²² For all the similarities, however, there are important differences. Firstly, Antiochus is killed with ‘A fire from heaven’ and not a plague. Secondly, Antiochus IV is judged to be solely responsible for his sin, and is punished accordingly, whereas Antiochus perishes with his daughter. The fire from heaven can only be understood as a lightning strike²³ and its absoluteness ensures that Antiochus does not have the time for redemption for which Antiochus IV survives. Indeed, in *The Painful Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre* (1608), Wilkins’ prose version of the story, attention is drawn to this aspect: ‘twixt his stroke and death, hee lent not so much mercy to their liues, wherein they had time to crie out; Iustice, be mercifull, for we repent vs.’²⁴ In Wilkins’ narrative, the deaths are caused by lightning,²⁵ as in John Gower’s poem, *Confessio Amantis*, the major source of the play:

That for vengeance, as god it wolde,
Antiochus, as men mai wite,
With thondre and lythnyng is forsmite;
His doghter hath the same chaunce.²⁶

Similarly, in Laurence Twyne’s adaptation of the story, *The Pattern of Painful Adventures*, ‘Antiochus and his daughter by the iust iudgement of God, were stroken dead with lightning from heauen’²⁷. For our purposes, however, in exploring the storms in the play text, it is not enough to name the fire from heaven as lightning. Early modern meteorology dictates that it must be a specific *kind* of lightning, one of several theorised by thinkers following, as so often, classical principles. Fulke distinguishes four separate types of lightning: fulgetrum, coruscation, fulgur and fulmen.²⁸ According to Fulke,

²² II Maccabees, 9:4-5; 9:5.

²³ For other examples of what might constitute a ‘fire from heaven’, see Heninger, *Op. Cit.*, 91-101. They are all harmless, and hence my conclusion that the *Pericles* fire is lightning.

²⁴ George Wilkins, *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre* ed. K. Muir (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1953), 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁶ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* ii, 998-1001. It may conceivably be argued that *Pericles* itself is the major source of *Painful Adventures*, rather than *Confessio Amantis*, although this would be a point of pedantry, rather than elucidation. Both texts owe much to Gower’s poem.

²⁷ Laurence Twyne, *The Pattern of Painefull Adventures*. Quotations taken from the Literature Online database (Lion): <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Prose:Z100028524:1 accessed 22/04/09> Accessed 22/04/09. 75.

²⁸ Fulke, *Goodly Gallery*, *Op. Cit.*, 26-28. Not every commentator uses the same system of classifications as Fulke, nor distinguishes by the same features of lightning. Fulke’s system is the most apposite here,

fulgetrum, whilst ‘terrible to beholde’, is ‘not hurtful to any thing’, with the occasional exception being when ‘it blasteth corne, and grasse, with other small hurt.’²⁹ Clearly, the fire which strikes Antiochus and his daughter is not recognisable in this description, and fulgetrum can be ruled out. Coruscation can also be discounted in this case, for it ‘is a glistering of fyre, rather then fyre in deade, and a glymmerynge of lyghtning, rather then lightning it self.’³⁰ By Fulke’s description, fulgur comes closer to *Pericles*’s fire from heaven, as when the thunder ‘beateth against the sydes of the cloude, with the same violence, it is set on fyre, and casteth a great lyghte, whiche is séen, farre and neare.’³¹ Whilst there is a certain amount of violence mentioned in the definition, however, it is, like those listed before it, ‘more feareful then hurteful’³². For Fulke, fulmen ‘seldome passeth w^tout som damage doing’, and is ‘The moste dangerus, violent, & hurtfull, kinde of lightning’.³³ Bartholomeaeus’ description of fulmen, as translated by Stephen Batman in 1582, agrees with that of Fulke: ‘this lyghtening smiteth, thirleth, and burneth things that it toucheth, and multiplyeth, and cleaueth and breaketh, and no bodilye thing withstandeth it.’³⁴ Thomas Hill, with characteristic concision, names fulmen as ‘the perillousser lightning’,³⁵ highlighting both its danger and extremity.

The danger perceived in fulmen resides chiefly in the belief that it is seen as resulting in a thunder-stone. Hill describes the process:

The fumous and somewhat black lightning, procéedeth of a verie earthly and obscure, yet a matter mightily burning, whose clowde, in that it containeth very much of the viscous moysture, is woont to fabricate or forme a black or yronnie stone, which in y^e shot sent forth, burneth hastilye mightie bodyes of trées, and sundrie other most solide matters, without shewe or signe left

because it represents an advancement on classical writers such as Pliny, Seneca and Aristotle, and is the most descriptive and exact in its categorization.

²⁹ Fulke, *Goodly Gallery*, *Op. Cit.*, 26^r.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 27^v.

³¹ *Ibid.* 27^r.

³² *Ibid.* 27^r.

³³ *Ibid.* 28^v.

³⁴ Bartholomeaeus, *Batman vppon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended* Stephen Batman, trans. (London: Thomas East, 1582) 164^r. To thirl is to ‘pierce, to run through ... to perforate’ (OED, *thirl* v1), and also ‘to enslave’ (v2) and ‘to hurl’ (v3).

³⁵ Thomas Hill, *A contemplation of mysteries* (London: Henry Denham, 1574) 54^v.

behinde: yea, these and other matters this cleaueth, destroyeth, and vtterly wasteth.³⁶

The thunder-stone, then, is wholly destructive. It is this level of danger, for example, which Cassius evokes in *Julius Caesar* as he boasts, ‘I have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone’ (1.3.94). It might seem as though fulmen, then, is the only type of lightning which could possibly fit Helicanus’ description of the fire from heaven which kills Antiochus and his daughter. However, there is a further classification of lightning which is also potentially violent and needs to be considered. Clarum does not appear in Fulke’s list, and is not so named by many other commentators, who nonetheless describe its qualities. As Heninger notes, ‘it accounted for many wonders popularly ascribed to lightning.’³⁷ Bartholomeaeus, one to name the lightning as clarum, claims that it ‘melteth golde and siluer in purses, and melteth not the purse.’³⁸ Hill makes the same claim, and offers further descriptions of clarum’s features, declaring that it ‘burneth man inwarde, and consumeth the bodie to ashes, without harming the garments, it slayeth the yongling in the wombe, without harme to the mother... it melteth the sworde the sheath being whole’³⁹ Harward, referring to ‘penetrant, a pearcing lightening’, also hints at its destructive properties: ‘It pearceth thorough the outward pores of the body and slayeth the vitall parts within.’⁴⁰ Given two such deadly possibilities, then, it would seem difficult to find a way of identifying which kind of lightning is responsible for the deaths of Antiochus and his daughter. La Primaudaye describes what happens when people are struck by lightning: ‘Those who are stricken ... remain all consumed within, as if their flesh, sinews, and bones were altogether molten within their skin, it remaining sound & whole, as if they had no harme.’⁴¹ La Primaudaye here, although the lightning is not named, is surely referring to the penetrative effects of clarum. Conversely, as we have seen in Bartholomeaeus, ‘no bodilye thing withstandeth’ the power of fulmen. It might seem a minor distinction, but referring back to Helicanus’ account, we recall that ‘A fire from heaven came and shrivelled up | Their bodies’, suggesting that the subtler effect of

³⁶ Ibid., 54^r-55^v.

³⁷ Heninger, *Op. Cit.*, 78.

³⁸ Bartholomeaeus, *Op. Cit.*, 165^v.

³⁹ Hill, *Op. Cit.*, 57^r-58^v.

⁴⁰ Harward, *Op. Cit.*, 4. The long s and f are extremely similar in the type used in the Harward text (see, for example, ‘should shake iron fetters’, 5.) and ‘slayeth’ could conceivably be intended ‘flayeth’.

⁴¹ Quoted by Heninger, *Op. Cit.*, 79.

clarum is not in evidence. We might add further, that the corpses in *Pericles* ‘so stunk’ that the citizens either refused to bury them, or bemoaned the responsibility. In Bartholomaeus’ text, the author lists as a property of fulmen that ‘where he burneth, he gendreth therewith full euill stench and smoak’.⁴² Thus it is possible to conclude that the fire from heaven in *Pericles* is fulmen, the thunderstone, and not to be identified with other types of lightning strike.

The classification of lightnings in relation to dramatic texts is not simply a dry academic exercise, for it may recover poetic nuances which the modern mindset would otherwise overlook. In *Cymbeline*, for example, as Guiderius and Aviragus lament ‘Fidele’, their song contains the phrase ‘Fear no more the lightning flash, | Nor th’all-dreaded thunder-stone.’ (4.2.270-1). The thunder-stone, as we have seen, is caused by fulmen, and is therefore justifiably ‘all-dreaded’. Conversely, the lightning flash could be any of the harmless fulgetrum, coruscation or fulgur⁴³: the crucial quality is that it *is* harmless, the tendency to fear it being in its suddenness and shock value. Only with an acknowledgement of the classifications of lightning, can we appreciate that this phrase is suggestive of lightning’s two extreme manifestations: a wide range of occurrences, not a single storm. Thus, it integrates more comfortably with the song’s aesthetic, in which ‘the heat o’th’ sun’ is juxtaposed with ‘the furious winter’s rages’ and ‘the reed is as the oak’ (258-9;267). The distinction is important in the case of *Pericles*, for fulmen is the most completely destructive of lightnings. Whereas a clarum strike would still be fatal, it would maintain the *appearance* of harmlessness. Antiochus, a ruler who places great emphasis on appearances, is ‘seated in a chariot of inestimable value’ and he and his daughter are ‘both apparelled all in jewels’.⁴⁴ In *Painful Adventures*, Wilkins goes

⁴² Bartholomeaeus, *Op. Cit.*, 164^r.

⁴³ In that it flashes, it fits most closely with coruscation, in Fulke’s words ‘a glymmerynge of lightning, rather then lightning it self’, but it could easily be characteristic of the other two. It is manifestly *not* fulmen, the chief characteristics of which are its downward motion and its violent force. My conclusion here is possibly troubled by the stage direction in Philip Massinger’s *The Unnatural Combat* (c. 1624-5, first published 1639), which instructs that Malefort is ‘killed with a flash of lightning’ (5.2.306). However, this is more of a practical issue than a poetic one: it is likely that a pyrotechnic effect is called for here. It seems, indeed, that Massinger’s lightning can also be classified as fulmen: Malefort’s corpse is commented on by witnesses, who note both its smell and altered appearance (338-40).

⁴⁴ According to the Oxford text, at least. The phrase ‘both...jewels’ is inserted from *Painful Adventures* into line 9.

further, in describing the couple as ‘gazing to be gazed vpon’⁴⁵. The impact of fulmen is not to maintain such images of pompous indulgence, but utterly to destroy it. This recognition, then, prompts us to return to the Biblical account of Antiochus IV, who is castigated under similar conditions: ‘Howbeit he woulde in no wise cease from his arrogancie, but swelled the more with pride’⁴⁶ Just as Antiochus and his daughter, Antiochus IV rides in his ‘charet that ran swiftly’.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the figurative moral distance between the Antiochi and their respective people is represented sensually: ‘no man could beare because of his stinke, him that a litle afore thought hee might reach to the starres of heauen.’⁴⁸; ‘for so they stunk | That all those eyes adored them ere their fall | Scorn now’. And just as the striking of fulmen destroys the iconographic image of the incestuous couple of *Pericles*, so the divine plague affects the mind and belief of Antiochus IV as much as his body: ‘And when hee him selfe might not abide his owne stinke, hee saide these wordes, It is meete to be subiect vnto God, and that a man which is mortall, shoulde not thinke him selfe equall vnto God through pride.’⁴⁹ This is a key difference between the Biblical account and that of *Pericles*, for there is no space for repentance in the play. Antiochus IV has time to become wholly contrite, but Antiochus and his daughter have no time to speak at all. This seems to be a feature of the account which Wilkins deliberately constructed, for in *Painful Adventures* it is explicit: ‘twixt his stroke and death, hee lent not so much mercy to their liues, wherein they had time to crie out; Iustice, be mercifull, for we repent vs.’ Part of the appeal of the lightning strike over the Biblical disease of Antiochus IV, therefore, is the rapidity of action. So often figuratively representative of anything swift or sudden, the reality of lightning when employed for these very qualities has the urgency which only a dramatically reclaimed and reified metaphor can assume.

⁴⁵ Wilkins, *Op. Cit.*, 41.

⁴⁶ II Maccabees. 9:7.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9:2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 9:10.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 9:12.

Shakespeare's Storms in Theatrical Context.

Hast thou, spirit,
Performed to point the tempest that I bade thee?

The Tempest 1.2.193-4.

An important essay which my thesis must address is Leslie Thomson's 1999 study 'The Meaning of *Thunder and Lightning*: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations'. Thomson's argument is that '*thunder and lightning*' was the conventional stage language – or code – for the production of effects in or from the tiring house that would establish or confirm a specifically supernatural context in the minds of the audience.⁵⁰ Given that the essay's focus is 'Elizabethan and Jacobean plays', the argument is, broadly, well founded, and supported, as we shall see, by several pertinent examples. With regards to Shakespearean instances of these stage effects, however, along with the similar examples of some of his contemporaries, Thomson's conclusion is something of a misfit. In this section of my introduction I will examine Thomson's argument, and return to it where appropriate elsewhere.

Part of the argument in question rests on the assumption that rather than being 'theatrical in origin', 'the effects were a theatrical representation of unnatural disruptions generally believed to accompany the appearance and actions of figures such as witches, devils, and conjurers in the real world of the audience.'⁵¹ Furthermore, the widespread belief in such figures 'meant less disbelief to be willingly suspended.'⁵² The connection between the paranormal and storms is clearly well established: Thomson cites Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* to support the claim, but there are several other sources with which it may be reinforced.⁵³ Less clear is whether the tradition of using storm effect to create a supernatural context can be ascribed to this popular belief, or whether it grew from a similar theatrical practice. Both angels and devils were directed to use fire effects,

⁵⁰ Leslie Thomson, 'The Meaning of *Thunder and Lightning*: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations', *Early Theatre* 2 (1999): 11-24, (11).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵³ See below, in Chapter 3, on *Macbeth*.

similar to those used for lightning, in mystery cycles and earlier Tudor secular plays.⁵⁴ Although the connection of witches and magi to violent weather can be traced to superstition, then, the similar connection of the forces of Heaven and Hell with storm has deep theatrical roots by the late 16th century. Of the examples cited by Thomson and others alluded to in her essay, there are just as many instances of thunder accompanying the descents of gods and ascents of devils as there are which accompany the specific act of conjuring. This would seem to indicate, then, that whilst Elizabethan and Jacobean stage thunder panders to or reflects popular belief, it also operates as the successor to a more specific tradition of the theatre in which thunder and lightning is conflated with heavenly or hellish figures rather than the earthly beings who conjure them.

Thomson's essay supports its assertions with examples from several early modern plays in which the stage effects of thunder and lightning serve to establish a supernatural context. In order to continue Thomson's work and to add nuance to her conclusion, I will now examine a series of examples from the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries. There are several texts which would fit this criterion. One play not cited in Thomson's essay, for example, is George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*, in which a Behemoth (self-describing 'Emperor | Of that inscrutable darkness') ascends to the stage to the sound of thunder (4.1.290; 298-9). In the anonymous play *Thomas of Woodstock*, which was first staged circa 1592, storm effects accompany the entry of a ghost: '*Thunder & lightning Enter the ghost of the Black Prince*'.⁵⁵ In addition to the obviously supernatural character, the effects also offer a context in which to read the Ghost's words, as he says 'night horror and th'eternall shreekes of death | in tended to be done this dismall night' have summoned him.⁵⁶ Thunder is again signalled as the Ghost prognosticates: 'preuent thy doome | thy blood vpon my sonne, will surely come | for which, deere brother Woodstocke haste and flye.'⁵⁷ Immediately following this speech, the Ghost exits and is replaced by another spirit, this time the ghost of Edward III. There is no thunder directed

⁵⁴ See Phillip Butterworth *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre*. (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1998), 41-53.

⁵⁵ Wilhelmina P. Frijlinck, (ed.), *The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second, or Thomas of Woodstock* (Malone Society Reprint, 1929) 5.1.53sd.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-3.

for the second Ghost, nor again in the play. Given the availability of examples which these two plays hint at, I will hereafter concentrate on works which either utilise the correlation of storm and supernatural extensively, or plays which examine that correlation in an unusual way.

Presumably because there are no directions for thunder, Thomson does not mention Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c.1589).⁵⁸ In the play, however, storm is indeed conflated with the supernatural, as the brazen head created by Bacon shows: '*Here the Head speaks and a lightning flasheth forth*'.⁵⁹ Whether or not the same effect is required earlier, as '*Bungay conjures, and the tree appears with the dragon shooting fire*' the notion that lightning is linked with conjuration is explicit.⁶⁰ In George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, which is roughly contemporaneous with *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, however, the stage directions for '*Lightning and Thunder*' precede the entrance of Fame, allowing for comment by the Presenter: 'Nowe throwe the heauens foorth their lightning flames, | And thunder ouer Affrickes fatall fields, | Bloud will haue bloud, foul murther scape no scourge.'⁶¹ Here, then, the storm effects allow for human interpretation – through the omniscient narrator figure – as well as signal the appearance of a supernatural figure. Indeed, Fame does not affect the action of the play, but is part of the dumb-show which the Presenter is narrating. There is a quality every bit as supernatural displayed in the wide scope of the Presenter's narration as in the figure of Fame herself: the show is as much concerned with the power of storytelling and theatre as with the expectations of its audience in response to the sights and sounds of a staged storm.

Perhaps the most surprising play to be left out of Thomson's text is *The Devil's Charter*, by Barnabe Barnes. First performed in 1606, the play embodies all of Thomson's arguments, several times over in spectacular detail. In a preludic dumb-show, the Monk draws circles on the stage, '*into which (after semblance of reading with exorcismes)*

⁵⁸ In David Bevington et al (eds.), *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* (New York: Norton, 2002), 134-183.

⁵⁹ 11.76.

⁶⁰ 9.83.

⁶¹ George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqi:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z300109118:3> Accessed 27/05/09.

appeare exhalations of lightning and sulphurous smoke in midst whereof a diuill in most vgly shape'.⁶² This direction alone is enough to establish the familiar relationship of storm and the supernatural, but the dumb-show is emphatic in this point. Roderigo, who wants a particular quality of spirit, turns his face from the devil,

*hee beeing coniured downe after **more** thunder and fire, ascends another diuill like a Sargeant with a mace vnder his girdle: Roderigo disliketh. Hee descendeth: after **more** thunder and fearefull fire, ascend in robes pontificall with a triple Crowne on his head, and Crosse keyes in his hand: a diuill him ensuing in blacke robes*⁶³

The repetition of the special effects reinforces the conflation beyond doubt. When the dumb-show is finishing, there is one final direction, '*this donne with thunder and lightning the diuills descend*'.⁶⁴ Clearly, the thunder, lightning and fire function as a symbolic definition of the liminal points between worlds. It is a function which is re-employed later in the play: '*Fiery exhalations lightning thunder ascend a King, with a red face crowned imperially riding vpon a Lyon, or dragon*'; '*The diuell descendeth with thunder and lightning and after more exhalations ascends another all in armor*'; '*Deuill descendeth with thunder &c.*' '*Thunder and lightning with fearefull noise the diuells thrust him downe and goe Triumphant*'.⁶⁵

In addition to being used in the entrance and exits of the spirits, the effects are also recalled in the language of the play:

With golden maiesty like *Saturnes sonne*
To darte downe fire and thunder on their foes.

For beare your violence in the name of God:
Fearing the scourge, and thunder from aboue,
Our offers are both iust and reasonable⁶⁶

⁶² Barnabe Barnes, *The Devils Charter*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqi:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z100055835:1> Accessed 27/05/09.

⁶³ Ibid., my emphases.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 5.1.260sd.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1.4.18-19; 2.1.86-9.

When the stage effects are as insistent as in *The Devil's Charter*, then these verbal reminders are effective, particularly when 'the name of God' is juxtaposed for contrast, and a dialectic of good and evil established. Perhaps the most significant verbal instance in the play comes at its finale:

Dead, and in such a fashion,
As much affrights my spirits to remember,
Thunder and fearfull lightning at his death,
Out cries of horror and extremity.⁶⁷

The death in question, that of Alexander at the hands of the devils, is the self-stated subject of the play, and this quotation follows the last incident of thunder and lightning, which it describes. There is, then, a definite closure of the play in the way in which it began: with the thunder and lightning related to otherworldly characters. Moreover, the double meaning of 'spirits' here has the effect of adding human emotion to the fusion of storm and the supernatural, thus further, and finally, consolidating the notion of thunder and lightning as the sound of a boundary between mortal and immortal dimensions.

The relationship between storm effect and the supernatural is played upon in *The Puritan*, which was first performed in 1606.⁶⁸ In this play when thunder is signalled Idle uses the convenient sound to reinforce the effect of his fraudulent conjuring of a devil. The sound effect is enough to convince the onlookers, one of whom comments: 'Oh admirable Conjuror! has fetcht Thunder already', shortly before another says 'O brother, brother, what a Tempest's ith'Garden, sure there's some Conjuration abroad.'⁶⁹ Thus the correlation of storm and the supernatural is staged and used metatheatrically: the gulls are, in effect, a naïve audience, operating on a basic level of understanding. Thomson notes the irony on which this episode relies, but does not examine it in detail.⁷⁰ Crucially,

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.6.64-7.

⁶⁸ The authorship of the play has been the subject of much debate – it was, for example, first published as 'written by W.S.' and included in an impression of the third Folio edition of Shakespeare's works – but has most recently been included as one of Thomas Middleton's works. See Gary Taylor et. al. (eds) *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: OUP, 2007) 509-543.

⁶⁹ *The puritaine or The viddovv of VVatling-streete*, Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z100048024:1> Accessed 27/05/09. 4.1.143;153.

⁷⁰ Thomson, *Op. Cit.*, 18.

theirs is an aural error – they only see Idle through a keyhole, and the ‘devil’ is ‘conjured’ with a fake voice – for it is the sound of thunder even more than the flash of lightning which seems to establish the theatrical context of the supernatural. It is also a demonstration of the dramatically ironic reifying of theatrical effect: the audience understand that the staged sound is ‘real’ because the gulls understand it as supernatural. Hence layers of irony cover any possible deficiency in stage mechanics.

In R.A Gent’s *The Valiant Welshman* (c.1612), there is no sound directed to accompany the entrance of Fortune at the beginning of the play: ‘*Fortune descends downe from heauen to the Stage, and then shee cals foorth foure Harpers, that by the sound of their Musicke they might awake the ancient Bardh*’.⁷¹ Although thunder and lightning often occurs simultaneously to descents from the heavens, then, Fortune here apparently enters in silence, especially if ‘*and then*’ is taken literally. Despite the obvious supernatural context of the scene, it is the music which seems to cue the magic: ‘*The Harpers play, and the Bardh riseth from his Tombe*’.⁷² Later in the play, however, as the Witch, her son and the evil Gloster plot the latter’s revenge, the son conjures a spirit to ‘*hauocke all the borderers of Wales*’.⁷³ As he casts the spell, offstage, ‘*Thunders and Lightning*’ is directed, which the Witch comments on:

Now whirle the angry heauens about the Pole,
And in their fuming choler dart forth fires,
Like burning *Aetna* , being thus intraged
At this imperious Necromantike arte.⁷⁴

Thunder also sounds when the spirit enters, in the form of a serpent, both in this scene and later in the play.⁷⁵ Evident in the play, therefore, is the connection between storm and evil magic, to the extent that the latter is distinguished by stage effects whereas other supernatural events are staged in silence or with music. Similarly, Dekker’s *If It Be Not*

⁷¹ *The Valiant Welshman*, Quoted from the Lion database,
http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z200113314:2 Accessed 27/05/09.
(1.1.0sd).

⁷² Ibid. 1.1.23

⁷³ Ibid., 3.4.49.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 64-7.

⁷⁵ See 3.4.89 and 4.2.23.

Good, The Devil Is In It (c.1611), begins with the entrance of Pluto and Charon, ‘at the sound of hellish musick’, but the effect of ‘Rayne, Thunder and lightning’ is saved for Lucifer’s entrance, with devils.⁷⁶ Again, the correlation is with the specifically evil, rather than more broadly supernatural.

In John Fletcher’s play *The Mad Lover* (1617), thunder is directed shortly before Venus descends. However, three lines after the direction for thunder comes the following: ‘*Musicke. Venus descends.*’⁷⁷ It is possible that there is a scribal error in the quarto text, and that only one sound effect was meant for performance. If, however, the transcription is accurate, then the thunder acts as a signal of the supernatural rather than as its accompaniment. Chilax responds to the visit of Venus, ‘Ile no more Oracles, nor Miracles [...] Am not I torne a pieces with the thunder?’ Later in the scene, the same character has the line ‘No more of that, I feare another Thunder’, to which the response, ‘We are not i’t’h’ Temple man’ reinforces the notion that thunder is only possible in the rarefied and magical setting of invocation.⁷⁸

Thomas Heywood uses thunder in four of the five plays of his sequence, *The Ages*.⁷⁹ In the first of these plays, *The Golden Age* (c.1610), Jupiter is presented with ‘his thunder-bolt’, yet the sound effects are reserved for Neptune, whose epithet, ‘Hee can make Tempests, or the waues appease’, is carried through in the stage direction which follows: ‘*Sound, Thunder and Tempest*’.⁸⁰ The episode, although similar to other examples we have already seen, has the attraction of staging the meteorological model outlined above. Thus, a thunder-bolt is construed as quite distinct from a tempest, which in turn, is separate from wind: ‘*Enter at 4 seuerall corners the 4 winds: Neptune riseth disturb’d: the Fates bring the 4 winds in a chaine, & present them to Æolus, as their King.*’⁸¹ Whilst

⁷⁶ Thomas Dekker, *If It Be Not Good, The Devil Is In It*, TLN 0sd; 1900sd.

⁷⁷ John Fletcher, *The Mad Lover*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z100079097:1> Accessed 27/05/09.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Only *The Iron Age Part II* is lacking the stage direction.

⁸⁰ Thomas Heywood, *The Golden Age*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z100085992:1> Accessed 27/05/09.

⁸¹ Ibid.

the scene might be said merely to depict the attributes of the classical gods, the delineation of those attributes speaks to a meteorological model which had remained largely unaltered. The sound effects of the storm, then, are still linked with the supernatural, but in a way which also enacts an allegorical template for the natural philosophy-based understanding of the Jacobean audience. At the beginning of the next play in the sequence, *The Silver Age* (c.1611), the familiar formula is again revisited, free from any meteorological overtones: '*Thunder and lightning. Iupiter descends in a cloude.*'⁸² The effect is repeated several times in similar contexts through the play, most notably as Jupiter burns Semele to death. Most dramatically of all, however, *The Brazen Age* (c.1611) stages the death of Hercules: '*Iupiter aboue strikes him with a thunder-bolt, his body sinkes, and from the heauens descends a hand in a cloud, that from the place where Hercules was burnt, brings vp a starre, and fixeth it in the firmament.*'⁸³

The descending of gods through the sequence of *The Ages* becomes increasingly less prominent, as their influence on the drama decreases. It is perhaps, then, no coincidence that the fourth play, *The Iron Age Part 1*, contains no directions for thunder, or that in *Part 2*, we find only the following: '*They both wound him, at which there is a greate thunder crack.*'⁸⁴ The victim here is Agamemnon, whose dying speech reminds the audience of the difference between this thunder and that in the plays which have gone before:

This shoues, we Princes are no more then men.
 Thanks *Ioue* tis fit when Monarches fall by Treason,
 Thunder to all the world, would show some reason.⁸⁵

This incident of thunder is illustrative of the process of Thomson's argument, for it is not counted as being an 'effect for weather only'.⁸⁶ This is manifestly problematic: there is

⁸² Thomas Heywood, *The Silver Age*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z100086156:1> Accessed 27/05/09.

⁸³ Thomas Heywood, *The Brazen Age*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z100085874:1> Accessed 27/05/09.

⁸⁴ Thomas Heywood, *The Iron Age Part 2*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z100086045:1> Accessed 27/05/09.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

no descent of god here, nor ascent of devil, no conjuration or invocation of spirits. It is surely more fitting to read the episode in light of there being *no* supernatural intervention, when the three plays quoted above all use thunder differently. Agamemnon's lines might allude to Jove, but draw attention to his lack of intervention on the stage. It seems to me that Heywood here subverts the storm/supernatural relationship maintained by many others including himself, and does so with the effect of highlighting the sheer lack of influence held by the mortal characters. The lines quoted might just as easily represent the willingness of the human to ascribe deep importance to random weather events, subverting the tradition in order to mark that randomness more starkly. The audience expectations of which Thomson writes are also staged in the aftermath of Agamemnon's death: 'Prodigious sure, | Since 'tis confirm'd by Thunder.'⁸⁷ The idea in Pyrrhus' lines that the thunder invests the situation with a specific level of meaning is related to the way in which Thomson claims the contemporary audiences generally thought. As we have seen, however, this level of meaning is not manifested in the play; indeed, it has been shown gradually to diminish over the course of the sequence.

Although I will be arguing that there are many examples in Shakespeare's works which depart quite radically from Thomson's view, it must also be acknowledged that there are many which support it. I shall look in detail at the thunder and lightning episode in *Henry VI Part 2* when discussing *Macbeth*, as the Witches in each case prove for illuminating connections. In each case, there is no room for ambiguity, as the Witches either enter with the special effects, as in *Macbeth*, or are onstage before them, as in *2 Henry VI*. Hence, whilst Thomson does not include the *Henry VI* plays, and makes only a brief mention of *Macbeth*, they clearly support her conclusion, and need not be dwelt upon here.

The least contentious Shakespearean examples given in Thomson's essay are those of descents: of Jupiter in *Cymbeline*, and of Ariel in *The Tempest*. We have seen numerous

⁸⁶ Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) 230. In attributing the quotation to Thomson, I am following her note in the essay, 22n2.

⁸⁷ Heywood, *The Iron Age Part 2*, *Op. Cit.*

incidences in other plays of the sounds of thunder and lightning accompanying descents and ascents, and so neither example is surprising. In *Cymbeline*, ‘*Jupiter descends in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle: he throws a thunderbolt. The Ghosts fall on their knees*’ (5.4.93). The mention of the Ghosts here is a reminder that the scene is already suffused with a supernatural context, the spirits having entered to ‘Solemn music’ (30), which, as in the above examples, may function in a similar way to the storm effects. As in the examples of 2 *Henry VI* and *Macbeth*, then, there is no room for doubt as to the way in which the thunder and lightning are operating. The same applies to the example of *The Tempest*: ‘*Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariel, like a harpy*’ is directed shortly after ‘*Solemn and strange music, and Prospero on the top, invisible. Enter several strange shapes*’ (3.3.53;19). As Thomson writes, ‘[an audience] familiar with the specific meaning of the use of thunder would have been better able to grasp the thematic implications of these aural effects.’⁸⁸

Whereas these examples support Thomson’s argument, there are instances of storm effects in Shakespeare’s plays which are far less straightforward. In the case of *The Tempest*, the ‘*tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard*’ as the play begins is one such instance, and will be explored fully along with others in the play with respect to Thomson’s essay in the chapter below (1.1.0sd). In *Henry VI Part 1*, after Salisbury is shot on the turrets, Talbot swears revenge and ‘*it thunders and lightens*’ (1.4.97).⁸⁹ Talbot’s response, ‘What stir is this? What tumult’s in the heavens? | Whence cometh this alarum and the noise?’ is enough to allude to the notion that the weather is responding to his oaths, or to the death of Salisbury, but there is no theophany staged to clarify. Here, then, the human apprehension of weather may allow for the possibility of the supernatural, but an apprehension only it remains. Any audience alive to, in Thomson’s words, ‘the specific meaning of the use of thunder’, are surely left wondering exactly what specifically that meaning is. This same approach to storm effects is developed in

⁸⁸ Thomson, *Op. Cit.*, 21.

⁸⁹ The play was apparently first published in the Folio edition of 1623, and this stage direction is not included. It is, however, now always added by editors, following Nicholas Rowe’s 1709 edition. Talbot’s response makes it obvious that separate effects of alarum and thunder and lightning have been heard. Thomson also considers stage directions which were not included in the printed text of the plays, for example, in *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (see Thomson, 19-20) and there is no argument here that Talbot, like Vindice ‘only imagines it’.

Julius Caesar: for all of Casca's items in the lists of wonders, only Cicero and Casca himself are onstage (1.2.3-28). As in *1 Henry VI*, the meaning of the weather (in addition here to the other 'prodigies') is debated: 'let not men say | "These are their reasons, they are natural" | For I believe they are portentous', runs Casca's argument. Cicero's response is 'men may construe things after their fashion | Clean from the purpose of the things themselves' (29-30;34-5). These lines are a rebuttal both of Casca's point and of the dramatic tradition with which Casca's position coincides. There is, then, as outlined by Thomson and in the above examples, a definite custom of theatrical signification which would suggest concurrence with Casca's reaction. Shakespeare, however, is clearly prepared to stage 'the things themselves' and allow for, or indeed encourage the variety of possible responses.

Part of Thomson's conclusion rests on the perceived difference between the direction for *storm* and that for *thunder and lightning*. The former, which appears several times in *King Lear*, is comparatively rare, and Thomson argues that 'however accidentally' it illustrates that the effect called for is one of bad weather, rather than one to be associated with supernatural activity.⁹⁰ In the case of *Lear*, then, 'the use of "*storm*" in the stage direction implicitly confirms that Lear is wrong to assume supernatural intervention' it is only a storm – even if thunder and lightning are among the special effects at this point in the play.⁹¹ There are several problems with such an argument, one of which is that there are not enough extant examples of *storm* used to provide a representative sample group. Furthermore, it is unclear what, if any, would be the differences in the effects produced by a tiring-house technician producing *storm* and one producing *thunder and lightning*. It seems a stretch too far to conclude that there are various tempestuous effects which have been ingrained in theatrical practice to the extent that the audience recognise that one is natural, one supernatural. These concerns aside, the use of *storm* as a stage direction is clearly interesting for our purposes. *Lear* is the only play in the Shakespeare canon in which this is the case, and there are a handful of other non-Shakespearean examples.⁹² In, for example, Thomas Heywood's plays *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II*,

⁹⁰ Thomson, *Op. Cit.*, 16.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹² The word is also used to direct anger in the actor. See Dessen and Thomson, *Op. Cit.* 218.

and *Loves Mistresse*, ‘a storme’ is indicated.⁹³ In *Lear*, however, the direction is simply ‘*Storm and Tempest*’, and later ‘*storm still*’ – never, that is, with a preceding article. Only one extant play from the period uses ‘*storm*’ in the same way – the much later play *The Prisoners*, by Thomas Killigrew (c.1641), in which, as in *Lear*, the direction occurs several times.⁹⁴

Shakespeare's Storms and the Ecological Question.

Weather that you make yourself.

Much Ado About Nothing, 1.3.22-3.

To make the transition from exploring the expectations of early modern audiences to addressing the body of scholarly work increasingly grouped under the term ‘ecocriticism’ may seem an abrupt leap. In this section, I will examine the ways in which these approaches inform each other.

Until very recently, literary ecocriticism concentrated almost exclusively on Romantic poetry, and the literature of that period remains very attractive to the field.⁹⁵ However, a growing body of ecocritical work is now focussing on the art and literature of the early modern period and so to approach the topic of ‘Shakespeare’s Storms’ in this way is not wilfully to abandon other early modernists.⁹⁶ As the term ‘ecocriticism’ is awaiting wider

⁹³ Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z400086024:4> and *Loves Mistresse*, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z400086110:4> Both accessed 27/05/09.

⁹⁴ Thomas Killigrew, *The Prisoners*. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Drama:Z300094858:3> Accessed 27/05/09.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991); Laurence Coupe (ed.), *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2000); Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁹⁶ Recent writing in the area includes Bill Phillips, ‘The Rape of Mother Earth in Seventeenth Century English Poetry: An Ecofeminist Interpretation’, *Atlantis: Revista de la Asociacion Espanola de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos* 26 (2004), 49-60; Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006); Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr, *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England* (Houndmills, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Robert

recognition, I will quote the definition offered by Lawrence Buell: '[the] study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis.'⁹⁷ Buell's definition, as we shall see, is perhaps already outdated, or at least indicative of the fact that 'ecocriticism' has become a term which rather forcefully homogenises the writings to which it refers. More recent attitudes towards a definition are more pragmatic: 'The term "ecocriticism" is perhaps useful as a means of referring to a relatively new dimension and emphasis in literary studies and beyond, but in many respects it makes no sense. It is not a matter of choosing to be or not to be an ecocritic.'⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Buell's definition is a helpful place from which to begin and will prove a useful point to return to, after further discussion.

Of the work I have listed above which brings an ecological approach to early modern literature, the most wide-ranging and ambitious is Robert N. Watson's *Back to Nature*. Watson argues that the origins of the modern ideas of nature as sacrosanct are located in the 'Late Renaissance', and his book examines 'artistic responses to the nostalgia for unmediated contact with the world of nature'.⁹⁹ *Back to Nature* amounts to an anatomy of early modern epistemology, drawing on several areas of anxiety – theological, political, economic, scientific, etc. – to explain 'nostalgia for Eden, for the Golden Age, for an idealized collective agrarian feudal England, and for a prelinguistic access to reality'.¹⁰⁰ In not knowing themselves, then, the Late Renaissance subjects Watson pieces together provoke the idea of nature as a truthful and direct experience. The consequences of this idea have been outlined in great detail by Timothy Morton, whose *Ecology Without Nature* argues that any notion of 'nature' is essentialising and deeply troubling for the ecological: 'to contemplate deep green ideas deeply is to let go of the idea of Nature, the

N. Watson *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006).

⁹⁷ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) 430. The *OED*, for example, is yet to include the word.

⁹⁸ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, 'Eco' in *An Introduction to Literature* 4th ed. (London: Pearson, forthcoming 2009).

⁹⁹ Watson, *Op. Cit.*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

one thing that maintains an aesthetic distance between us and them, us and it, us and “over there.””¹⁰¹

How to reconcile such approaches with a study of Shakespeare’s storms? In staging thunder and lightning which is not an indication of supernatural, but a representation of natural phenomena, Shakespeare’s plays offer a critique of the relationship of human beings and their environment. Leslie Thomson’s essay has already been employed with respect to ecocriticism, in Gabriel Egan’s *Green Shakespeare*. Taking Thomson’s conclusion, Egan argues that the fact that the storm in *King Lear* ‘is only a meteorological phenomenon, is a trap that the character and the playhouse audience are led into.’¹⁰² Leaving aside the somewhat troubling notion that a character can be tricked by a device which operates on audience expectations, let us concentrate on what such a conclusion means. Firstly it surrenders the idea that the audience are familiar with plays such as *Julius Caesar* in which the origins and meanings of thunder and lightning are debated without supernatural figures onstage. Secondly it assumes that, having listened to, for example, Lear’s first two speeches in the storm, an audience would still expect a god to descend. In every example we have seen in which the storm and the supernatural are conflated, the amalgamation happens very quickly – within the space of a few lines – if not simultaneously. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Egan’s argument loses sight of the environmental question. *King Lear* need not rely upon theatrical traditions of thunder and lightning and spirits. Rather, Shakespeare stages the problems of constructions of nature as other. In the widespread juxtaposition of storm and the supernatural, is the implicit notion that weather is to be treated with suspicion and to be feared, or else revered. Also, and crucially, for the ecological question, it conceives the weather as *to be controlled*. In Shakespeare’s play, storm and the psyche are figured as interdependent in Lear’s speech:

Thou think’st tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin. So ‘tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fixed,
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou’dst shun a beat,

¹⁰¹ Morton, *Op. Cit.* 204.

¹⁰² Egan, *Op. Cit.* 139.

But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea
 Thou'dst meet the bear i'th' mouth. When the mind's free,
 The body's delicate. This tempest in my mind
 Doth from my senses take all feeling else
 Save what beats there: filial ingratitude.
 (3.4.6-14)

Here, the separation of body and mind is remarkable for many reasons, though perhaps most importantly, for *not* being a separation of body and soul. Crucially, the speech figures the mind as enabling the organs of awareness, 'my senses' to apprehend the weather: 'When the mind's free, | The body's delicate.' The weather, then, depends upon the human perception of it. The important storm in this respect, therefore, is not the one suggested by the stage effects, but the figurative one which interrupts that human perception: 'This tempest in my mind'. These different storms operate as an allegory of the human relationship to the environment. Robert N. Watson's account of early modern epistemology is illuminating here in that the 'prelinguistic access to reality' of the free mind which is the essentialising drive towards the experience of Nature is offered linguistic capability by that experience: the external storm allows for the creation of the internal. Nature remains as 'outside' here, therefore, even in the most extreme representation of its proximity. This is equally clear in the idea that Lear's speech creates the storm just as Lear responds to it. The weather in *Lear* exists only in the apprehension of those who are involved in it, just as we in the audience or as readers must surely realise that we are involved in climate change, just as we constantly refine and redefine our notions of what climate change is and how we are to deal with it. We will return to the performativity of storms – their creation through language as well as through stage effect – in particular when dealing with *King Lear* and *Macbeth*.¹⁰³ It should be remembered when we do so, that the questions raised in such an approach are necessarily ecological.

To read *King Lear*, then, or to stage it in today's theatres, is to approach one of the most pressing responsibilities of humanity in the 21st century, and to represent reactions to it. This is recognisable not only in the lines of Lear. The insistent words of the Fool, for

¹⁰³ See Chapters 2 and 3.

example, offer a context in which to read any anthropocentric claims of those who insist that climate change is not the responsibility of the human race: ‘O, nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o’door’ (3.2.10-11). These words neatly encapsulate the assertion that, however artificial or institutionalised human society is, it is demonstrably different from and superior to Nature. Compare these lines, for example, to the writing of Rush Limbaugh: ‘This notion that we can destroy the planet, this notion that automobiles – I refuse to believe that a God that creates this kind of beauty would create human beings with the ability to destroy the planet while enhancing their lives, while improving their lives, while expanding their life expectancy.’¹⁰⁴ It is this anthropocentrism which much of the body of ecocriticism addresses and, whilst climate change has ensured that this is a political issue, the basis for it is ancient and detectable in literary texts. As the ecological question involves an examination of humanity’s role as a constituent part of the environment, any formulation which posits a hierarchical relationship is necessarily problematic. In staging both this position and that outlined by the lines of Lear’s above, the storm scenes of *King Lear* can be seen to open avenues of enquiry which address the fundamentals of the ecological question.

Storms of Separation.

We split, we split, we split!
The Tempest 1.1.62

If the storm in Shakespearean drama is to be thought of as functional, then its primary function is to separate characters. Most obviously, this separation is achieved when the storm causes a shipwreck, as in *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Pericles* and *The Tempest*. In *Othello*, a storm splits the Venetian fleet without splitting the ships themselves, with the effect that characters are divided briefly. Furthermore, the sea is not necessary for a storm to separate; in *King Lear*, the weather divides characters into indoor and outdoor groups. It is tempting, especially when concentrating on *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*, to view these storms of separation as motifs; a

¹⁰⁴ Rush Limbaugh, ‘The Sun Controls Our Climate’, quoted from
 <http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/home/daily/site_121908/content/01125107.guest.html> Accessed
 27/05/09.

temptation amplified by the chronological detail that these plays occur, respectively at the beginning, middle and end of Shakespeare's playwriting career. When examined, however, it will be seen that these storms cannot be dismissed so neatly. We may argue that Shakespeare, rather than re-writing the same storm for each play, is approaching each play with distinct requirements and concerns, made manifest in the texts and of course the storms themselves. What is ostensibly a recurring motif, then, will reveal a progression from topos to topography and disclose concerns from the classical to the contemporary.

If Shakespeare's sea storms are approached in chronological order then a pattern emerges which shows an increasing interest in bringing the storm into a more immediate, and thereby dramatic and threatening, presentation. In the development of Shakespeare's storms, there is, indeed, a calm before the storm. This is not a complex point but is striking and seldom made. Let us then briefly consider these storms in the order in which they were written.¹⁰⁵

In Egeon's narration in *The Comedy of Errors*, the storm is long in the past. It is digested and given narrative structure with a definite beginning, middle and end. Thus, Egeon starts his story: 'In Syracuse was I born', before eventually devoting thirty lines to the storm (1.1.36; 61-91). Compelling though Egeon's story may be, he has over four-fifths of the lines in the scene. It is perhaps unsurprising that Shakespeare presents the next storm of separation differently. In *Twelfth Night*, then, the fallout of the shipwreck is still happening: it is staged. The narrative is fragmented and the narrators unsure: 'Perchance he is not drown'd: what think you sailors?' (1.2.5). Rather than discover the characters' situations before they appear onstage, as in *The Comedy of Errors*, we see the characters in the immediate aftermath, washed ashore and separated.

In Act 2, Scene 1 of *Othello*, this immediacy is taken one step further: The sea-storm is happening, offstage. Again the narrative is fragmented, but is now also unfinished. For

¹⁰⁵ Although the chronology of the plays is a contentious topic, the plays in question are relatively widely spaced. The only sticking point is in the order of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. I have opted for a more conservative arrangement, in which *The Tempest* is later, in agreement with the Oxford and Arden editors.

the first time, the sea-storm has spectators, both in the characters onstage and in the audience themselves. The next play in this list is *Pericles*, and the process of bringing the storm closer to the dramatic action continues. In Act 2, Scene 1, we have spectators in the Fishermen, and Pericles enters ‘wet’ (2.1.0sd). In Act 3, Scene 1, the sea-storm is staged. Here, the audience experiences the storm, and the separation of characters, along with the characters involved.

When we come to *The Winter’s Tale*, we find the sea-storm happening, offstage. Perhaps it may seem that the increasing immediacy peaked with *Pericles*, but perhaps this is partly the point. The separation of characters in the play is not a consequence of the storm, but rather is figuratively reinforced by the storm: ‘In my conscience, | The heavens with that we have in hand are angry| And frown upon’s’ (3.3.4-6). In any case, the storm is quite immediate: although the shipwreck is not staged, it is foreseen, which is a novelty (3; 8-11). Again, there is a spectator, in the Clown, who provides the story of the death of those on the ship. In his phrases, the immediacy is emphasised: ‘Now, now: I have not winked since I saw these sights: the men are not yet cold under water’ (102-3).

Finally, in *The Tempest*, we have the conflation of everything we have seen so far. The sea storm is staged, the mariners wet. As I have quoted above, the ship is wrecked onstage: ‘We split, we split, we split!’ Following this, several narrators give slightly different versions of the wreck, and each in turn different from the version seen by the audience. There are survivors, of course, who are separated. I deal with these matters in Chapter 5, and so will not elaborate here, except summarily to note that the play’s opening storm consolidates each element of Shakespeare’s earlier storms of separation.

I have tried to show that Shakespeare is invested in developing the dramatic immediacy of the storm of separation. Ultimately, however, the device contains the symbolic possibility of separation from oneself. In *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare makes the connection for the first time; having had Egeon narrate the story of the storm, Antipholus of Syracuse is introduced:

I to the world am like a drop of water
 That in the ocean seeks another drop,
 Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
 Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.
 So I, to find a mother and a brother,
 In quest of them unhappy, lose myself.
 (1.2.35-40)

The divisions which Antipholus notes here are the result of the storm of which the audience learns in the first scene. It is particularly apt, then, that his imagery is focussed on the ocean. The sea, having been complicit in the separation of Antipholus from his ‘fellows’ is now the only medium for imagining the scale of that separation. And yet the speaker’s argument is not related to the sense of division from others, but from himself: ‘a drop ... confounds himself. So I ... lose myself’. Stephen Greenblatt has written that this ‘poignant sense of self-loss... anticipates the alienation and existential anxiety of the tragedies.’¹⁰⁶ Indeed, it is especially touching that a twin emphasises his loss of self by constructing his identity as ultimately inseparable from countless identical others. Furthermore the above speech, a soliloquy, is delivered after the speaker has parted company with a merchant, with the phrase ‘Farewell till then. I will go lose myself’ (30). From the outset, then, before any literal confusion of identity, the concept of individuality is troubled and elusive. Whilst Greenblatt’s contention that Antipholus of Ephesus is ‘confident, well-connected’ in comparison with his ‘anxious, insecure’¹⁰⁷ brother is upheld by the former’s speeches, we may find a similar sense of insecurity thrust upon him by his wife Adriana:

O how comes it
 That thou art then estranged from thyself? –
 Thy ‘self’ I call it, being strange to me
 That, undividable, incorporate,
 Am better than thy dear self’s better part.
 Ah do not tear away thyself from me;
 For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
 A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
 And take unmingled thence that drop again
 Without addition or diminishing,

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Introduction’ to *The Comedy of Errors* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd edition, Greenblatt, Cohen, Howard and Maus eds. (New York: Norton, 2008), 722.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 722.

As take from me thyself, and not me too.
(2.2.128-32)

As Adriana here is mistaking her brother-in-law for her husband, the sense of self-loss is compounded for Antipholus of Syracuse, whose own simile is reconstructed for him. In his own terms, he is 'confounded'; his identity lost because of his proximity to an unknown other. Although this quotation is an excerpt from a longer speech, the sense of confusion on Antipholus' part is evident. He is:

As strange unto your town as to your talk,
Who, every word by all my wit being scanned,
Wants wit in all one word to understand.
(151-3)

A loss of identity, then, which is so severe that it cannot comprehend the same construction of self which its speaker narrated 'but two hours' ago. The echo of simile is, in this respect, an auditory and linguistic confusion of identity to parallel the visual elements on which the farcical comedy of the play relies. A similar effect is achieved in *Twelfth Night*: 'Sebastian, are you? ... How hast thou made division of yourself?' (5.1.217-9).

The storm, then, continues to carry its work out after it has passed. In *The Winter's Tale*, as I have mentioned, the figurative power of this is more important than the practicalities of separating characters. In the play, we encounter the storm through the experience of the participants – Antigonus and the Mariner – but the shipwreck through the account of the spectator, the Clown. The introduction of the reception of the storm is characterised by the classical paradigm: 'I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land! But I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky: betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin's point'¹⁰⁸ (3.3.82-85). The confusion of sea and sky in a storm is a poetic device

¹⁰⁸ Perhaps there is even a little signal of mortality here in Shakespeare's diction. The playwright uses 'bodkin' only three times in his career including here, and each time there is a certain conflation of danger and death involved: ('Dumaine: The head of a bodkin. Berowne: A death's face in a ring'; 'he himself might his quietus make | With a bare bodkin'. *Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.607-8, *Hamlet* 3.1.75-6).

which is as old as poetry itself.¹⁰⁹ In expanding on this, however, the Clown incorporates something which is quite new in Shakespeare's plays and worth quoting at length:

I would you did but see how it chafes, how it rages, how it takes up the shore! But that's not to the point. O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls! sometimes to see 'em, and not to see 'em: now the ship boring the moon with her main-mast, and anon swallowed with yest and froth, as you 'd thrust a cork into a hogs-head. And then for the land-service, to see how the bear tore out his shoulder-bone, how he cried to me for help and said his name was Antigonus, a nobleman. But to make an end of the ship, to see how the sea flap-dragoned it: but first, how the poor souls roared, and the sea mocked them: and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mocked him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather. (87-100)

The spectator of the shipwreck, although not as commonplace as the sea/sky confusion, is also a classical concern. Compare this passage, for example, with the opening of Lucretius' second book of *De Rerum Natura*:

What joy it is, when out at sea the stormwinds are lashing the waters, to gaze from the shore at the heavy stress some man is enduring! Not that anyone's afflictions are in themselves a source of delight; but to realise from what troubles you yourself are free is joy indeed.¹¹⁰

It is likely that Shakespeare would have encountered at least this passage from *De Rerum*: the first two lines (of the original poetic form) are quoted by Montaigne, whose essays are a key source of the playwright's imagery, phrasing and philosophical development at the time of *The Winter's Tale*. Florio's translation of Lucretius (via Montaigne) differs somewhat from the modern one quoted above: 'T'is sweet on graund seas, when windes waues turmoyle, | From land to see an others greeuous toyle.'¹¹¹ The context in which Montaigne quotes Lucretius is an apposite one for the first half of Shakespeare's play:

Our essence is symented with crased qualities; ambition, jealousie, enuy, revenge, superstition, dispaire, lodge in vs, with so naturall a possession, as their image is also discerned in beasts: yea and cruelty, so vnnaturall a vice:

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, H. H. Huxley, 'Storm and Shipwreck in Roman Literature', *Greece and Rome*, 21.63 (Oct., 1952), 117-124.

¹¹⁰ Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. R. E. Latham (London: Penguin, 1951), 60.

¹¹¹ Montaigne, *Essays done into English, according to the last French edition, by Iohn Florio* (London, 1631), 443.

for in the midst of compassion, we inwardly feele a kinde of bitter-sweetpricking of malicious delight, to see others suffer.¹¹²

Regardless of how much familiarity Shakespeare had with Lucretius' ideas, the passage from *The Winter's Tale* embodies the principles of the philosopher poet. The qualification of Antigonus as 'a nobleman' is indicative of the distance which the speaker feels from him: a distance greater than physical and emotional but social too. The scene marks the transition in the play from tragedy to comedy; the abandonment of Perdita is a curse for Antigonus, a blessing for the family. The quotation also expresses the shift from courtly tension to the Epicurean fulfilment which characterises the fourth Act and is also the defining feature of Lucretius' poetic philosophy. As Hans Blumenberg puts it, 'the advantage gained through Epicurean philosophy is solid ground.'¹¹³ Each of these shifts, then, is embodied by the movement from shipwreck to spectator – most fundamentally differentiated in the modulations of focus from pain to pleasure, from winter to spring and from death to life.

By extension, we might read the metaphorical values of this scene into the play's finale, as Leontes finds redemption in an act of spectatorship. Just as the Clown is aware of his own inability to transcend his position of spectator ('I would you had been by the ship side, to have helped her: there your charity would have lacked footing' betrays that understanding as much as a comic touch. 3.3.7-9) so Leontes revels in it: 'What you can make her do, | I am content to look on' (5.3.91-2). Equally, the king is conscious of the state which his experience of the 'statue' leaves him in, and a dialogue of spectatorship is imagined: 'does not the stone rebuke me | For being more stone than it?' (37-8) It is this realisation, of the effect of the power of his beholding, that prompts his own inward looking: 'There's magic in thy majesty, which has | My evils conjur'd to remembrance' (39-40). The influence of spectatorship is also encapsulated by Perdita, in what transpire to be her final words: 'So long could I | Stand by, a looker on.' (85) In considering such language here, it should be remembered, of course, that the very action of the play

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck With Spectator*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 26.

depends entirely on the spectatorship of Leontes in the opening act. From the outset, the king is invested in and affected by the processes of spectating:

But to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practis'd smiles
As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o'th' deer – O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows.
(1.2.115-9)

Here, Leontes builds up his jealous rage, he conflates the emotional and the bodily both in the object of his vision and his own subjectivity. This is the same empathetic vision he experiences in the finale ('being more stone than it'). *The Winter's Tale*, then may be seen as punctuated by crucial acts of spectating. Another notable instance, for example, is the conversation between the three Gentlemen in Act 5. The First Gentleman notes the limits of spectatorship: 'the wisest beholder, that knew no more but seeing, could not say if th' importance were joy or sorrow' (5.2.17-9). The debate on spectating is maintained when the two other Gentlemen appear: 'Did you see the meeting of the two kings?' asks one (40-1). Upon the reply, he follows with 'Then you have lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of', before spending over one hundred words speaking of it (43-59). It is a passage in which the issue of spectatorship and report is implicitly linked to the limitations of theatre, in which a compromising line must inevitably be drawn between what can be staged and what must be related through exposition. Furthermore, the susceptibility of events to alteration through the process of observation is made explicit by Hermione in her trial, as she explains that she is unhappy 'more | Than history can pattern, though devis'd | And play'd to take spectators.' (3.2.34-6) The figure of shipwreck with spectator in the midst of the storm is an integral part of the same structure.

It is, perhaps, the approach to issues of spectatorship which allows the play to develop themes found in *Pericles*. As I have mentioned, the first shipwreck of that work also receives comment from witnesses, albeit in a scene attributed to George Wilkins. As in *The Winter's Tale*, there is a notable comedic vein attributed to the role of spectator, as the fishermen joke and pontificate whilst discussing the storm: 'I am thinking of the poor

men that were cast away before us even now' moves seamlessly to 'I marvel how the fishes live in the sea'... 'as men do a-land: the great ones eat up the little ones' (2.1.18-24) The shipwreck spectators of both plays speak in calculatedly rustic prose. Similar instances of the use of opposites and moral platitudes characterise their conversation. They are, in short, quite alike, although the Clown is somewhat more energetic and moved by what he has seen. Where *Winter's Tale* builds on *Pericles*' foundations of spectatorship is the respective resurrections of heroines. Thaisa is revived almost immediately following her 'death' – in the next scene in fact – whilst Hermione's reintroduction is saved for the finale of the play. In the case of *Pericles*, then, the audience's spectatorship is removed from that of Pericles and Diana themselves when their reconciliation finally occurs; the work of dramatic irony is to alter the position of spectatorship. In contrast, the audience of *The Winter's Tale* is emotionally aligned with Leontes in the witnessing of his wife's revival. Just as Leontes is a spectator, so are the audience – both of Hermione's reappearance and Leontes' observation. The development made, therefore, in the later play, is that the representation of spectatorship is more closely aligned with the aesthetic experience of drama itself. As Blumenberg has remarked, discussing Schopenhauer, the conflation of the nautical and the theatrical 'is entirely plausible if the interiorized double role of the single subject – on the one hand tossed about by storms and threatened by death, on the other, reflecting on his situation – is to be presented.'¹¹⁴ In *The Winter's Tale*, we have the case of this 'double role of the single subject' in the figures in the storm. We also find the figure of Leontes presenting a complementary kind of interiorized spectating as the revival of his wife becomes the platform for his reflection: 'No settled senses of the world can match | The pleasure of that madness' (5.3.72-3). It is the very maddening pleasure of spectating which the experience of *The Winter's Tale* relies upon; indeed, the very maddening pleasure of theatre itself. It is, moreover, the achievement of the storm of separation.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 64.

1.

Storm and the Spectacle: *Julius Caesar*.

Julius Caesar is a crucial text in this study, containing as it does Shakespeare's first staged storm.¹ In the time between the indelicate lightning of the *Henry VI* plays, the narrated sea-storm of *A Comedy of Errors* and this tragedy, the playwright has clearly developed a far more deft approach to the nuances of the device. It is in *Julius Caesar* that we find the underpinning of the later storms of *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale*, in which the portent and significance of the weather are debated. The Roman play, however, goes far beyond simple groundwork and, as with each of Shakespeare's great storm plays, *Julius Caesar* emerges with a singular oragious identity. In this chapter, I will show that the chief characteristic of this identity is the play's engagement with the spectacular, in which the use of the storm plays a major part. The first part of the chapter will be concerned with the questions of the staging of the storm, exploring the opening of the Globe, the legacy of theatrical storm effects and the evidence for their use in the original production of 1599. To this end, I will make particular use of the work of Phillip Butterworth. This section will address the considerable question, 'why is Shakespeare's first staged storm in this play?' I will then outline the possibilities of interpreting the significance of an actual tempest in 1599, drawing on the pertinent example of a noteworthy storm in London in March of that year. Finally, I will draw these two lines of inquiry together to investigate the ways in which Shakespeare depicts weather interpretation in the text of *Julius Caesar*.

The fundamental relationship between spectacle and power, especially with regards to the early modern era, has been thoroughly investigated through the critical movements of recent decades.² The fields of cultural materialism and new historicism are informed by

¹ Though debates on the chronology of the plays have raged for many years and, doubtless, will rage for many more, I think that this viewpoint will find few opponents. David Daniell, in the Arden 3rd series edition, terms it 'Shakespeare's first extended thunder' (London: Thomson Learning, 2005), 3. All quotations are taken from Daniell's text, unless otherwise indicated. I have also made use of A Humphreys (ed.), *Julius Caesar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984) and Martin Spevack's New Cambridge edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

² I cannot hope here to cover the entire body of readings which approach early modern literature in this way. For overviews of the traditions of new historicism and cultural materialism, see Kiernan Ryan (ed.)

many theoretical sources and several areas of study, but perhaps most important in the recognition of the correlations between authority and display has been the work of Michel Foucault. In particular, Foucault's 1975 book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* has provided a succession of critics with a theoretical framework within which – or against which – to analyse the production of spectacle and its relationship to power and authority.³ Though these critical traditions generally provide a wealth of contextual evidence to reinforce their readings of literary texts, *Julius Caesar* itself contains several moments which encapsulate the importance of spectacle in gaining and consolidating power. The conspirators 'bathe' their hands in Caesar's blood to reinforce their cries of 'Peace, Freedom and Liberty' to the citizens (105-11). The self-dramatisation of Cassius which accompanies this act reinforces the significance of the spectacle: 'How many ages hence | Shall this our lofty scene be acted over...?' (111-2). In order to be more powerful than such exhibition, Antony's manipulation of the Plebians must also employ the use of a dramatised spectacle. The will of the people is driven by the production of display: 'If you have tears, prepare to shed them now...' (3.2.167), he says, removing the mantle from Caesar's body. In this way, the power rests not simply in those who theorise the role of theatre in history, as the conspirators have done, but in the recognition of the potential of hierarchical exhibition – the corpse, that is, is a more effective display than the conspirators' 'red weapons' (3.1.109). This efficacy is reinforced by the First Plebian's response: 'O piteous spectacle' (3.2.196). Even without the storm, then, here is a play concerned with the influence of display, and in its language: the political implications of this quality have already been explored.⁴ This

New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: A Reader (London: Arnold, 1996) and H. Aram Veenser (ed.) *The New Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1989), both of which, of course, provide extensive bibliographies. For a range of examples of the work of new historicism and cultural materialism with regards to literature and drama of the period, see Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985); T.G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996); Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (eds.), *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, 2nd edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (eds.), *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama* (London: Longman, 1992); Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

⁴ See for example, Richard Wilson, "'Is this a Holiday?': Shakespeare's Roman Carnival", *ELH* 54 (1987): 31-44.

chapter however is more concerned with the ways in which the storm scenes fit into a wider reading of the play's advertising and empowerment of the new Globe playhouse.

As my argument concerns stage directions and possible theatrical practices of the Elizabethan playing companies, there will be a necessary amount of speculation in this chapter. I assume, for example, that the stage directions in *Julius Caesar* are at least descriptive of the 1599 production of the play, rather than being additions made for the only publication of the text, in the 1623 Folio. It is my contention that the Globe playhouse allowed for certain possibilities in terms of theatrical effect which were not available in earlier auditoria, and that the stage directions of *Julius Caesar* show these possibilities being realised in a play written for a particular space. Although my speculations will be fairly self-evident, I will highlight them as they become important to my argument, and I will explain my reasons for supposing them to be true.

In considering the storm and the spectacular in *Julius Caesar*, it is crucial to bear in mind that it was almost certainly the first play to be performed at the original Globe theatre, when it opened in the early summer of 1599.⁵ We have, of course, the record of Thomas Platter, the Swiss tourist, who saw the play in September of that year, but the arguments that it was the Globe's opening showpiece are reinforced by criticism concerning the text's poetry. Steve Sohmer, for example, in *Shakespeare's Mystery Play* painstakingly aligns images and phrases from *Julius Caesar* with appropriate sections of the liturgy – the latter, of course, being ascribed a specific date for public consumption by the liturgical calendar. Sohmer's argument also includes numerous other details – the propitious astrology of certain dates, for example. I want to add to these lines of enquiry with a consideration of *Julius Caesar* as a prime example of theatrical bravado: it is the work of a playwright with the keys to a new playhouse; one with a fresh and eager audience; the work of a playwright, as we shall see, who is invested in and reliant upon, spectacle.

⁵ See, for example, Steve Sohmer, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play: The Opening of the Globe Theatre 1599* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), *passim*. Sohmer's compelling argument concludes that the most likely date of the theatre's opening is June 12 1599 (Julian) and explores many of the myriad fragments of evidence which suggest that the play was *Julius Caesar*.

The need for an impressive opening show at the Globe is obvious enough. This was to be the third theatre on Bankside alone, an area which also accommodated other public ‘entertainments’, such as bear-baiting. Although the Swan had been forbidden a permanent company since 1597, it still produced plays, and very likely hosted touring productions. Closer to the Globe was the residence of the Admiral’s Men, the Rose; the two theatres, in fact, were less than 50 yards apart. In addition, there were numerous emergent theatres around, and within, the city, some inns and others full-sized playhouses. Furthermore, as James Shapiro notes, ‘troubling still was word that, after a decade’s hiatus, the boys of St. Paul’s would shortly resume playing for public audiences at the Cathedral.’⁶ The indoor venue, Blackfriars, was soon to be opened to another company of boy players. Nor was the Globe a tentative measure for the Chamberlain’s men, but a total commitment for the shareholders. As Andrew Gurr makes clear, 1599 was, for those in the theatrical profession, ‘a time of high investment and high risk.’⁷ This was a period of great theatrical competition, especially for a budding venue, and there was no time for faltering starts. Richard Wilson, noting the apparent iniquity of the Globe’s location, writes that in the new playhouse, ‘the productive subject was defined by isolation from its negative in the sick, the mad, the aged, the criminal, the bankrupt, and the unemployed’.⁸ This may be the case, but it is also apparent that the productive dramatist and shareholder’s cause was to some extent catalysed by the intensity of the theatrical rivalry among existing venues. If the subject defined in the theatre is characterised by the kind of escapism which Wilson suggests, then its clarity is only increased by display of the spectacular, denied as that would be to all of the social groups Wilson lists.

Before we explore the ways in which *Julius Caesar* utilises its particular stage, we might consider the manner in which it showcases the company who were to play it, the Chamberlain’s Men. Not only does the play require four very strong lead actors, in the parts of Brutus, Cassius, Antony and Caesar – which is enough to give impression of the

⁶ James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber, 2005), 126.

⁷ Andrew Gurr, ‘The Condition of Theatre in England in 1599’ in Jane Milling and Peter Thomson (eds.), *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 1: Origins to 1660* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 264-281 (273).

⁸ Richard Wilson, “‘Is this a Holiday?’” *Op. Cit.*, 32.

depth of the company – but these roles span the breadth of personality, according to humours psychology. Thus, each of the main male characters of the play is particularly dominated by one humour: Caesar, phlegm; Brutus, melancholy; Antony, blood; Cassius, choler. In a simple stroke of metaphor, the Chamberlain's Men are constructed as capable of playing any personality type. This presentation of the company does not stop there – there are two strong female roles in Calphurnia and Portia, displaying undeniable faith in the boy actors and effectively pronouncing them every bit the equal of the re-emerging boy companies within the city. Such faith is hardly misplaced, given that these are presumably the same actors who were required to converse and joke in French in *Henry V* (and of course, they would soon repay this faith, in being awarded leading roles in Shakespeare's next play, *As You Like It*). So, four strong male characters, two strong female characters and one further display of the company's virtuosity: Brutus' servant, Lucius. The instrument which Lucius plays and sings himself to sleep with in Act 4, Scene 3 is, apparently a lute.⁹ Whether or not Lucius was doubled by one of the boy actors of Portia or Calphurnia, the point is the same: the lute requires a great degree of skill and nuance to be able to play effectively. In the hierarchy of renaissance musical instruments, the lute is the monarch and so to have a young boy talented enough to perform with one is reason indeed to write such a performance into the play, and impress the Globe's first audience.

I hope that such a brief summary gives an impression of the way in which the abilities of the cast are displayed in *Julius Caesar*. It is, however, in the staging of the play that we can truly start to speak of the spectacular. In modern editions of *Julius Caesar*, little is made of the theatrical effect of the storm. Martin Spevack's gloss of the first incidence of thunder is fairly typical: 'Thunder was produced by rolling a cannon-ball down a wooden trough, the "thunder-run", by drums or cannon-fire; lightning, by some kind of fireworks.'¹⁰ David Daniell, it seems, is alone amongst modern editors in stating that the

⁹ This is a little speculative: there is nothing in the text which specifies the instrument by name, but by implication there are no other instruments which fit. See David Lindley, who refers to 'the unambiguous example of Lucius in *Julius Caesar* to prove that [the lute] certainly was an accomplishment of boy actors'. *Shakespeare and Music* (London: Cengage, 2006), 264.

¹⁰ Spevack, *Op. Cit.*, 67.

thunder is imitated ‘by metal thunder sheets.’¹¹ Often, as in the Oxford edition, mention is made of Ben Jonson’s prologue in *Every Man In His Humour*, in which the playwright dismisses the ‘rolled bullet heard, | To say, it thunders, or tempestuous drum| Rumbles to tell you that the storm doth come.’¹² It seems to me that none of the current editions capture the potential force of a display of theatrical storm. The quotation from Jonson, which is found in at least one edition of every play glossing Shakespeare’s thunder, does little to help this cause, as its tone is purposefully deprecatory and scornful of the practice of, it seems, anything which detracts from a playwright’s words. The same applies to the Induction of *A Warning for Fair Women*, which the Oxford *Julius Caesar* also quotes: ‘a little rosin flasheth forth, | Like ... | ... a boy’s squib.’¹³ This play was published anonymously in 1599, but we know from its title-page that it was acted by the Chamberlain’s Men. The same is true of Jonson’s play, first published in quarto form in 1601, but likely first performed by the same company at the Curtain in 1598. Jonson’s prologue, however, with its dismissive lines was added only in the 1616 Folio text; it is inviting to speculate that both Jonson and the anonymous playwright of *A Warning for Fair Women* were mocking their fellow Chamberlain’s writer and his fondness for fire and noise.¹⁴ Not every playwright wrote about fireworks in the same way, however, and, although it is a later play, the Prologue of the anonymous *Two Merry Milke-Maids* (1619) offers some context:

How ere you vnderstand't, 'Tis a fine Play:
For we haue in't a Coniurer, a Deuill,
And a Clowne too; but I feare the euill,
In which perhaps vnwisely we may faile,
Of wanting Squibs and Crackers at their taile.

¹¹ I suspect that the thunder-sheet is, in fact, a device which postdates Shakespeare by at least several decades, although confirmation is hard to come by. The OED’s first usage of the term is dated 1913.

¹² Humphreys, *Op. Cit.*, 119.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁴ Given that by the time of *Every Man In His Humour*’s publication in quarto, this fondness would have manifested itself only in *Julius Caesar* and the much earlier histories, but by 1616, would have accounted for every one of Shakespeare’s major storms, this is not too far-fetched. Jonson, by report, was certainly comfortable enough mocking the dialogue of *Julius Caesar*. Furthermore, there is room, but not here, for an extensive comparative study of Jonson’s play and *Julius Caesar*, given that both are based firmly on humours psychology.

But howsoeuer, Gentlemen I sweare,
You shall haue Good Words for your Money here.¹⁵

The reasons for this ‘wanting’ become obvious when the evidence for special effects is examined. I think that it should be made clear that thunder and lightning in an Elizabethan theatre would have had the potential to be a hugely impressive and noisy affair, with rockets, fireworks, drums and squibs providing noise and spectacle. It is probable that a cannon, or some other piece of heavy ordinance would also have been discharged to simulate the sound of thunder along with the thunder-run, which itself would make a great deal of noise.¹⁶ In order to offer a context for the Jonson lines, then, here is an earlier description, from the architect Serlio:

You must draw a piece of wyre over the Scene, which must hang jdownewards, whereon you must put a squib covered over with pure gold or shining lattin which you will: and while the Bullet is rouling, you must shoote of some piece of Ordinance, and with the same giving fire to the squibs, it will worke the effect which is desired.¹⁷

Although Serlio, who died in 1554, was Italian, and this work not translated into English until 1611, these techniques or similar ones seem almost certainly to have found their way onto the English stage in the intervening half-century. As Phillip Butterworth notes, such techniques were evident in France, as ‘during the performance of...*Antichrist* in 1580, it is recorded that “they shall project fireworks in the air and along the cord.”¹⁸’ In Dekker’s play *The Roaring Girl* (1611), a character is described as ‘like a fire-work to run upon a line betwixt him and me’ and several other examples from contemporary plays also make note of the technique.¹⁹ Butterworth comments on the quotation of

¹⁵ Anon., *Two Merry Milke-Maids*. Quoted from the Lion database.

<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z200048787:2> Accessed 27/05/09.

¹⁶ Modern replicas of thunder-runs are relatively common (for example the permanent theatre exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum). The noise of the reproductions is both convincing and impressively loud. When the acoustic qualities of a playhouse – rather than the museum isolation in which these replicas are found – are taken into account, it is not difficult to imagine the imposing sound which would result from its use at the Globe.

¹⁷ Quoted by Philip Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1998), 44.

¹⁸ Ibid. 44.

¹⁹ 5.1.13-14. *The Roaring Girl*, ed. David Bevington, *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* (New York: Norton, 2002), 1378-1451. For similar instances, see Butterworth *Op. Cit.*, 151, n18.

Serlio, that ‘the co-ordinated shooting of “some piece of Ordinance” is yet another example of how more than one effect is often required to create an accumulative effect.’²⁰ An example of firework use which is more closely related to Shakespeare – and one that he would almost certainly have witnessed in action – is in the stage directions of Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*: ‘Enter Mephostophilis, who sets squibs at their backs. They run about’ (4.1.66); ‘Faustus and Mephostophilis beat the Friars, fling fire-works among them and exeunt’ (3.3.108).²¹ It is hardly a leap of imagination to suppose that the thunder and lightning towards the climax of *Faustus* (5.1.sd) would have included some dramatic fireworks, or that Shakespeare, heavily influenced by Marlowe, would have noted such use.²² The conflation of dramatic pyrotechny and genuine thunder and lightning was made by John Melton in 1620, referring to the still-popular *Faustus*. Melton, refuting the claims of weather forecasters, writes that

Another will fore-tell of Lightning and Thunder that shall happen such a day, when there are no such Inflammations seene, except men goe to the *Fortune* in *Golding-Lane*, to see the Tragedie of Doctor *Faustus*. There indeede a man may behold shagge-hayr’d Deuills runne roaring ouer the Stages with squibs in their mouths, while Drummers make Thunder in the Tying-house, and the twelue-penny Hirelings make artificial Lightning in their Heauens.²³

Even as it approached 30 years old, the staging of Marlowe’s play was still something to ‘behold’. Furthermore, the use of fireworks is, I think, made clear by some of the diction in the text of *Julius Caesar*. It is possible, of course, that phrases such as ‘tempest dropping fire’, (1.3.10) ‘the aim and very flash of it’, (52) or even ‘gliding ghosts’ (63) are included to evoke the image of lightning rather than to complement the effect of it. However, in addition to the stage direction calling for lightning – a specifically visual effect – we have Brutus’ lines in the following scene in the orchard. Here, Brutus has received the letters compelling him towards the conspiracy and, before reading them remarks, ‘The exhalations, whizzing in the air | Give so much light that I may read by

²⁰ Butterworth *Op. Cit.*, 44.

²¹ Fredson Bowers, ed. *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

²² There are a great many other plays predating *Julius Caesar* which employ the use of pyrotechnics, and Butterworth’s work should be consulted for a comprehensive list. I have chosen to quote from Marlowe as it is virtually inconceivable that Shakespeare would not have seen *Faustus*.

²³ John Melton, *The Astrologaster, or, the figure-caster* (London 1620), 33.

them'(2.1.44). The preceding soliloquy of Brutus is calm, thoughtful and quiet: there is no reference to the weather nor need for one. The word, *whizzing*, however, is particularly evocative of fireworks, more so even than the lightning to which it ostensibly refers. There is no direction for the stage effects to continue in Act 2, Scene 1, and this is Brutus' only comment on the storm which has dominated the previous scene, but whether or not the fireworks continue in the orchard scene, it seems doubtless that they have already been on display.

Brutus' term 'Exhalations', is often, as in the Norton and RSC editions, glossed as 'meteors', rather than lightning. As we have seen, however, lightning is, in early modern terminology, also an exhalation. There is no particular cause for concluding that Brutus is referring to meteors, though if he is, he is still commenting on the weather: meteors are meteorological by the same theory which holds that lightning is an exhalation. Even if we do assume that Brutus' phrase refers to meteors, there is still, in early modern meteorology, an oragious element to shooting stars:

For they say, y^f the starres fall out of the firmament, and that by the fall of them, both thonder and lyghtning are caused: for the lightening (say they) is nothyng els but the shyning of that starre that falleth, which falling into a watric clowde, and being quenched in it, causeth that great thonder, euen as whoat yron maketh a noyce if it be cast into colde water. But it is euident that y^e starres of the firmament can not fall, for God hath set them fast for euer, he hath geuen them a commaundement whiche they shal not passe.²⁴

Even though William Fulke is not convinced by the theory that meteors cause thunder and lightning, his description suggests that he is at odds with some popular belief at least. The chief point, however, rests on 'whizzing', which is still more evocative of the stage display of the previous scene than of meteors which would be being introduced in the play for the first time. Furthermore, whizzing implies a sound, which meteors in England, or indeed Rome do not normally make, but which thunder and lightning and certainly theatrical effects, definitely do.²⁵

²⁴ William Fulke, *Op. Cit.*, 8^r.

²⁵ Meteors do produce sounds, but whether or not that sound is heard depends upon a variety of atmospheric conditions. See, for example, Harriet Williams 'Sizzling Skies', *New Scientist* 2272 (January 6, 2001): 14-19. Whilst it is possible to hear the sounds of meteors, the experience is extremely rare. See

Having taken the examples of firework effects into account, then, I feel that in the glosses of modern editions the impressiveness of these displays is grossly diminished. The quotability of *Every Man In His Humour* is no excuse for lessening the vibrancy of early modern theatrical effect: there is an inherent double standard in the inevitable noting of the deprecatory tone of Jonson or *A Warning for Fair Women* and the reliance on those descriptions as fair and accurate evidence. Moreover, it is clear that Jonson's part in the so-called War of the Theatres led to an increasing polarisation in the aesthetic opinions identifiable, which surely misrepresent each side.²⁶ Juxtaposing Jonson's lines with another partisan view, we can compare the alternative:

So have I seene, when Cesar would appeare,
And on the Stage at halfe-sword parley were,
Brutus and Cassius: oh how the Audience,
Were ravish'd, with what wonder they went thence,
When some new day they would not brooke a line,
Of tedious (though well laboured) Catilines²⁷

Though this extract from Leonard Digges' elegy does not mention the use of fire and noise in *Julius Caesar*, it certainly favours the comparative action of Shakespeare's play over the apparently over-wordy Jonson. If we are to evoke Jonson's phrases belittling the value of theatrical special effects, we must also, surely, remember that there is a counter-argument berating circumlocution in place of brevity of phrase. We must also remember that Jonson himself incorporated, or at least tolerated, directions for spectacular effects, in his collaboration with Inigo Jones. When it suited the text then, or when a particular audience, occasion or venue was involved, an impressive display was required. Although such a requirement was clearly not deemed to be the case for the plays which Jonson wrote for outdoor playhouses, the above factors ensured that his scripts for private

http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2001/ast26nov_1.htm (April 27th, 2009). In either case, Brutus' line is surely hyperbolic or comic: whether by meteor or lightning, the light is impossible to read by.

²⁶ See, for example, Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 156-7.

²⁷ Quoted by Gurr, *Playgoing*, 234. There is some debate about the dating of Digges' poem. See John Freehafer, 'Leonard Digges, Ben Johnson, and the Beginning of Shakespeare Idolatry', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 21.1 (Winter, 1970), 63-75.

performance subscribe to a different aesthetic. In a long stage direction in the masque *Hymenaei* (1606), an extremely spectacular scene is described:

*Here, the vpper part of the Scene, which was all of Clouds, and made artificially to swell, and ride like the Racke, began to open; and, the ayre clearing, in the top thereof was discouered Ivno, sitting in a Throne, supported by two beautifull Peacocks[.]*²⁸

Although Inigo Jones was doubtless responsible for these actions, and though Jonson takes pains to prioritise language over staging in the versions of the masque which were published, such extravagant display cannot go unnoticed.²⁹ As the above direction goes on, Jupiter is ‘*standing in the toppre (figuring the heauen) brandishing his thunder*’ and later in the masque, ‘*on a suddaine, a striking light seem'd to fill all the hall*’.³⁰ Later in their partnership, the work of Jonson and Jones produced a series of entrances in which a storm is represented:

Here the *Scene* changeth, into a horrid storme; Out of which enters the Nymph *Tempest*, with foure *Windes*, they dance. 5. *Entry. Lightnings*, three in number, their habits glistering, expressing that effect, in their motion. 6. *Entry. Thunder* alone dancing the tunes to a noyse, mixed, and imitating thunder. 7. *Entry. Rayne*, presented by five persons all swolne, and clouded over, their hayre flagging, as if they were wet, and in their hands, balls full of sweet water, which, as they dance, sprinkle all the roome.

Whilst these directions are very different from the pyrotechnic effects discussed above, it is clear that Jonson’s attempts to demean the value of spectacular staging practices should be read in their context. However Jonson’s relationship with Jones deteriorated and finished, the playwright evidently wrote texts which incorporated extravagant visual and auditory elements. Perhaps the lines from *Every Man In His Humour* are more appropriately read as one of Jonson’s intemperate attacks on other playwrights, rather than a precise and truthful account of the display of rockets, thunder-runs and drums.

²⁸ Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z100092804:1> (April 27th 2009).

²⁹ In the front matter of the text, first published in 1606 and reprinted in the 1616 Folio, Jonson likens the performance to the body and the written word to the soul.

³⁰ Ibid.

That all the fire effects in the early modern playhouses appear to have been carried with scant regard for health and safety, as apparent in the directions in *Doctor Faustus* – and of course evidenced by the fire, ignited by the use of stage cannon, which destroyed the Globe in 1613 – indicates just how seriously the playing companies took the impact of their fire and sound. There must have been a tangible vein of fear in those present, especially if the well-documented early modern fear of fire is taken into account.³¹ By turns, then, electrifying and terrifying, the noise and the sight of banging and fizzing effects would have been accompanied by a strong smell of gunpowder; truly an assault on the senses. This was certainly a feat which could not be matched by the boys in St. Paul's Cathedral and, very likely, was not to be found, at least on the scale of *Julius Caesar*, anywhere else in or around the city. Of the plays being staged in June 1599, most are lost, but none of those extant match Shakespeare's enthusiasm for thunder and lightning.³² It can be concluded, then, that part of Shakespeare's purpose in writing a storm might well have been to maximise the full sensory impact of the venue and create the impression, and the hype, of the Globe as a vibrant and exciting new theatre with an effects department to outmatch its rivals.

Although the storm is the most obviously spectacular element of the play's staging, further evidence that Shakespeare was utilizing the capability of this new theatre is in his description of flourishes and alarums. The battle scenes of Act 5 of *Julius Caesar* as read in the stage directions show a sensitivity for distance which had not been evident in the playwright's earlier work, written for other playhouses. In *Titus Andronicus*, a play probably performed at the Rose, there are eleven battle calls and flourishes, none distinguished by volume level. In *1 Henry IV*, which was likely staged at the Curtain, the final act stipulates seven calls for trumpets, specified by type (eg. 'Alarum' (5.3.0) or 'retreat' (5.4.157) but, again, not by loudness. The instruction 'Alarum afar off' in 3

³¹ See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971), 15-17 and *passim*.

³² Marlowe's plays might have continued to play at the Rose until the Admiral's Men moved to the Fortune. In addition to *Doctor Faustus*, there is a storm in *Dido* (3.4). I can, however, find no evidence of thunder and lightning in the extant plays which seem to have been new at around the same time as *Julius Caesar*. The Red Bull playhouse, eventually the pinnacle of spectacle, was not yet constructed.

Henry VI (5.2.77) appears in the 1623 text, but not in the 1594 text of the play. The same applies to the direction ‘Drum afar off’ in *Richard III*, which is missing from the pre-1623 quartos, which nonetheless include ‘The clocke striketh’ in the same scene (5.3.338; 277). A renaissance trumpet could only be sounded at one loud volume; in order to create the illusion of distant battles, there needs to be some kind of backstage structure to dilute the sound.³³ Only in *Julius Caesar* does Shakespeare begin to write directions such as ‘Low alarums’ (e.g. 5.5.23).

In the Elizabethan amphitheatre, without a range of volume, nor, it would seem, much backstage space, the trumpets might play through some kind of backstage muting area in order to gradate their tone. If this is the case, then such a system seems to have been built into the Globe, for no other playhouse uses such distinctions of musical directions at the time. If the conjecture is false, it is hard to imagine either the reasons or the techniques behind Shakespeare’s suddenly careful sound directions. Two instances which may refute the conjecture are in *Edward III* (1596) and Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592). In the former, the direction for ‘The battle heard afar off’ (3.1.117) does not mention trumpets, and it is conceivable that the effect could be achieved with careful swordplay, especially as the ‘Shot’ and ‘Retreat’ which follow are not ascribed volume levels (122, 132). Nevertheless, it would be unwise to draw conclusions on a text which is notoriously erratic and peculiar.³⁴ With Kyd’s play, performed at the Rose, ‘a tucket afar off’ (1.2.99) does refer to a trumpet, and is admittedly a challenge to my conjecture. However it is one instance in many extant Rose plays, several of which include less specific trumpet calls, as we have seen with *Titus*, but as is also evidenced by George Peele’s *The Battle of Alcazar*, which calls for trumpets seven times. If, in the performances of Kyd’s play, the trumpet was sounded ‘afar’, then Shakespeare’s interest in the technique, like that of other playwrights, only emerged at the opening of the Globe.

³³ I am grateful to Claire Van Kampen, former musical director of Shakespeare’s Globe, for clarifying this for me. Further elucidation is available in Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999), 219.

³⁴ See *Edward III*, Giorgio Melchiori (ed.) (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 52-53.

Indeed, Shakespeare seems to have taken on the idea of distant battles from *Julius Caesar* onwards, soon including far off sounds in *Hamlet* and *All's Well*. In *Hamlet*, 'A march afar off' signifies the approach of Fortinbras (5.2.332); In *All's Well*, 'A march afar' accounts for the imminent arrival of 'Bertram, Parolles and the whole army' (3.5.37; 74). These uses, coming as they do, swiftly after *Julius Caesar*, lend weight to the argument that the Globe's building influenced the stage effects, and that the stage directions are not later additions.³⁵ Other playwrights also apparently employed the effect, and it is evidenced in plays by Robert Armin, John Marston and Thomas Dekker.³⁶ Later in Shakespeare's Globe career, the nuance of battle sounds becomes even more developed and we find very specific sound directions, as in *Antony and Cleopatra* 'Alarum afar off, as at a sea fight' (4.13). It might seem distinctly un-spectacular to us. Indeed, there is something of a contradiction in the concept of an auditory spectacle. Yet if we are to hold the oft-repeated dictum that an early-modern audience went to hear a play, as we go to see a play, we must also hold that variations in sound-effects, especially ones as novel as this seems to be, would have been remarkable, even spectacular. *Julius Caesar* marks a development in Shakespeare's variations of sound distance – the audience, perhaps for the first time, experienced their battles in a fully multi-dimensional soundscape – and it is likely that the structure of the Globe playhouse is crucial in this development.

Furthermore, a vital factor to take into account, at least in terms of the storm, is that the Globe and the Rose, as I've mentioned, were less than 50 yards apart. A loud noise from one playhouse would have been easily audible in its rival. All plays began at 2pm. It is therefore quite possible that the audience and the players at the Rose would have been disrupted, and intrigued, by the violent sounds coming from nearby. This point extends to audience cheering and applause: it would have been very easy for an audience member, especially one in the yard, to decide that the other playhouse sounded more entertaining

³⁵ *Hamlet*'s usage and stage direction date to the Second Quarto (1604-5).

³⁶ See for example, Robert Armin, *The Valiant Welshman*: 'a Trumpet within' (2.1.48 and 4.1.52); Thomas Dekker, *If It Be Not Good, The Devil is In It*: 'Drommes afar off marching', 'Alarums afar off' and 'A march afar' (TLN 2039, 2145, 2321); John Marston, *The Wonder of Women or The Tragedie of Sophonisba*, Act 5: 'A march far off is heard' (5.1.sd), 'Cornets a march far off' (5.2.sd) and 'The Cornets a far off sounding a charge; (5.3.sd);

and to make the short journey across the road. If on the Globe's opening performance date, an audience member left the Rose halfway through the first storm scene, they would be in the new theatre in time for Brutus' orchard soliloquy, which precedes the introduction of every conspirator (2.1.86-97) and then be treated to more thunder and lightning when Caesar reappears. They would, in short, have missed little in terms of plot and would get more special effects to reward their curiosity. Of course, there is no evidence that such behaviour took place, but the sound of the Globe's cannon and rockets yards away would at least arouse the curiosity of those at the Rose. The new playhouse was still announcing its presence to the audience at its chief and nearest rival.

Fireworks and squibs may make a grand dramatic impression, but there is much more to the storm than a show. Those audience members at the opening of the Globe who were familiar with Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch (there would have been several) or even the basic story of Julius Caesar (which would have been most)³⁷ would know that a great many unusual portents were said to have preceded the assassination. Plutarch, in that translation, writes:

Certainly destiny may easier be foreseen than avoided, considering the strange and wonderful signs that were said to be seen before Caesar's death. For, touching the fires in the element and spirits running up and down in the night, and also the solitary birds to be seen at noondays sitting in the market-place – are not all these signs perhaps worth the noting, in such a wonderful chance as happened?³⁸

'Touching the fires in the element' is as close as Plutarch, Shakespeare's principal source for the play, comes to reporting a storm.³⁹ Indeed, the description is as close to a

³⁷ Caesar had long been represented in the public pageantry in England. See Clifford Ronan, "Antike Roman": *Power Symbolism and the Roman Play in Early Modern England, 1585-1635* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995) 47.

³⁸ T. J. B. Spencer, (ed.) *Shakespeare's Plutarch: The Lives of Julius Caesar, Brutus, Marcus Antonius, and Coriolanus in the translation of Sir Thomas North... with parallel passages from Shakespeare's plays*. (London: Penguin, 1964).

³⁹ Perhaps the effect of Shakespeare's storm is too powerful on some, who contend that Plutarch does report lightning here. The Oxford editors, for example, write 'As for the portents preluding Caesar's murder (in 1.3 and 2.2) most are in Plutarch – thunder and lightning, fire-charged tempest...' 28 (although they later gloss to the contrary (1.3.9-28n)). The closest I can find to confirming this is the report of thunder and lightning (along with earthquakes and other 'wonders') as portents of murder in Plutarch's *Cicero*, but this has nothing to do with Caesar.

theatrical storm – heavy on gunpowder and flames – as it is to an actual tempest; the playhouses might have had rockets for lightning, but relied on poetry for rain, which is notably absent in *Julius Caesar*.⁴⁰ It is from this passage that Shakespeare takes material for Casca's speech in the storm. The playwright was, in all probability, also drawing on other descriptions here. Ovid and Lucan both describe the scene, as does Virgil:

Nere flew more lightning through a welkin faire,
Nor mo portentous comets fill'd the aire. (24)⁴¹

It is clear, then, that Shakespeare was not the first writer to make use of thunder and lightning when listing his ominous signs. Literate members of the audience would have expected storms as a result of this. It is, then, perhaps already invalid to assume Thomson's conclusion that an audience would expect the supernatural when hearing the sounds of thunder, when the play is an adaptation of Caesar's story. We will however, as noted, explore how Shakespeare's play works with regards to the relationship which Thomson has identified. Before that, however, it is necessary to look in more detail at the theatrical legacy, rather than the literary, that the stage effects of *Julius Caesar* draws upon. Phillip Butterworth's monograph, *Theatre of Fire*, from which I have already quoted, is itself a testament to this legacy, being a meticulous exposition of pyrotechny in medieval and Tudor theatre. In drawing from Butterworth's research we find that similar effects were used in medieval mystery cycles and other religious drama. In *The Conversion of St. Paul*, for example, which dates from the early sixteenth century, there is a stage direction reading 'Here comyth a feruent, with gret tempest'.⁴² *Fervent* is not listed as a noun in the OED, but the modern adjective meaning *zealous* and *ardent* did not become widespread until the 17th Century. It is most likely here that *fervent* refers to an effect both glowing and hot, suggesting a flame effect.⁴³ In the same play, there is also a direction for the entrance of 'a dyvel with thunder and fyre'. As Butterworth notes,

⁴⁰ Perhaps the closest the play comes to mentioning rain is towards the very end, as Titinius mourns the loss of Cassius: 'Our day is gone: | Clouds, dews and dangers come.' (5.3.61). There is no mention of precipitation during the storm and the word 'rain' does not appear in the play. This is quite unlike the rest of Shakespeare's staged storms. *King Lear*, for example, has the exchanges of Lear and the Fool intimating rain, and the line of the Gentleman: 'the to and fro conflicting wind and rain' (3.2, *passim*; 3.1.11).

⁴¹ Thomas May, trans., *Virgil's Georgicks Englished* (London, 1628), 23.

⁴² Butterworth, *Op. Cit.*, 6.

⁴³ See *O.E.D.* a. FERVENT.

elsewhere, it is angels who are portrayed as fiery: ‘The *Mystery of the Acts of the Apostles* at Bourges in 1536 required angels to “throw” lightning at the Jews in an attempt to stop them removing the body of the Virgin Mary.’⁴⁴ Just as the roots of theatre are entwined with religious display, so, then, it seems that the effects of stage fire and thunder have an ecumenical branch in their ancestry. It is important too for our purposes, that both good and evil forces are associated with these effects: good by the *Mystery*’s angels and later, for example to accompany Talbot’s oath in *I Henry VI*; evil by *The Conversion*’s devil and later by Faustus and Mephistophilis.⁴⁵ Needless to say, the boundaries are seldom so easily defined, especially in Shakespeare, where *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, as well, of course as *Julius Caesar* all make a mockery of such simplicity. Moral ambiguities in interpretation may be avoided with the portrayal of angels and devils, but are otherwise likely to arise when either may employ the same effect. The audience, therefore, even if expecting to see lightning and hear thunder, would not have been readily disposed to make assumptions about the ethical signification of these spectacles.

So, if moral judgments were elusive, how might a contemporary audience have reacted to a storm? How would their reaction to a staged storm be different from that to a real storm? Before addressing the question of the audience’s expectation of the supernatural, it is important to relate their experience of the natural, especially with regards to this play. In March of 1599, whilst the Globe was being built and *Julius Caesar* was very likely being written, there was a storm in London which would find a place in the writings of several contemporary chroniclers. Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, was departing the city with his officers and cavalcade.⁴⁶ This was the first stage in the

⁴⁴ Butterworth, *Op Cit.*. 45.

⁴⁵ *I Henry VI* (1.5.97). ‘Good’, of course, is limited to in the text’s own terms – I don’t wish to advocate the throwing of fire at Jews, or anyone else. Nor, for that matter, the swearing of revenge on the French.

⁴⁶ Many critics have drawn on the parallels of Essex’s biography and Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, and have attempted to pair that play with *Henry V* as commenting on the Earl. Whilst this has often proven fruitful ground, it is not my intention here: I wish only to draw attention to the storm and its interpretations. For readings on the play in light of Devereaux, see Daniell, 22-9; Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Arden Shakespeare 2003) 68, 149; For *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V* as companion pieces, see especially Judith Mossman, ‘*Henry V* and *Plutarch’s Alexander*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994), 57-73. Recently the parallels have been seen to extend to *As You Like It*, which

Earl's journey to Ireland, where he aimed to crush the rebellion of Tyrone. The fluctuating relationship between Devereux and Queen Elizabeth had resulted in the Earl's appointment in this challenging and dangerous role. There had been some delay in his departure and the rebellion was gathering strength; put bluntly, this was an eagerly anticipated moment of great significance. There would have been many who wished Devereux success, and many who hoped that his ambition, if not his life, be curtailed by the enterprise. The historian John Stow (1525-1605) provides the most complete contemporary description of the day's events:

The 27th of March, about two of the clock in the afternoon, the right honourable Robert earl of Essex, lieutenant general, lord high marshall, etc. departed from Seething Lane, through Fenchurch Street, Grace Street, Cornhill, Cheap, etc. towards Sheldon, Highgate, and rode that night to St. Albans, towards Ireland, he had a great train of noble men, and gentlemen, on horseback before him, to accompany him on his journey, his coaches followed him. He had also (by the pleasure of God) a great shower, or twain, of rain and hail, with some claps of thunder as he rode through the city.⁴⁷

Stow's language evokes a great spectacle. There is a certain reverence in his listing of Devereux's titles, of his companions and of the streets through which they passed. The description of the weather employs a similar syntax and thereby hints at a similar reverence. It is made explicit in the parenthetical 'by the pleasure of God'; the display is a divinely staged backdrop to the hero's departure. Note also the phrase 'He had', which, being echoed in the description of the weather from that of the company, goes further to consolidate the notion that the environment (and, therefore, God) is on the Earl's side. If there is portent to be found in this weather, it seems, Stow would have it be positive. For the sake of contextualising Stow's comments, we may contrast this description with his account of a "tempest of wind" in November 1574:

The eighteenth day at night, were very stormy and tempestuous winds out of the south... These are to be received as tokens of God's wrath ready bent

probably followed *Julius Caesar*, and which Katherine Duncan-Jones reads as concerned with the Essex rebellion. *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes From His Life* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), 123-6.

⁴⁷ John Stow, *Annales* (London: 1601), 1304.

against the world for sin now abounding, and also of his great mercy, who doth but only show the rod wherewith we daily deserve to be beaten.⁴⁸

Here, we may see that Stow's accounts of storms are, at least occasionally, dependent on his interpretation of God's intentions as manifest in the weather. Although both storms are unexpected, they are both harmless and Stow records no damage caused by them.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the two storms are presented very differently. There is certainly no mention of God showing 'the rod' in the Devereux account, nor indeed, any of 'grace' in the earlier narrative. It does not seem sustainable, in light of this, that Stow wished Devereux anything bar support and admiration. It is, I feel, significant that one writer should appraise two harmless storms so differently. The fickle character of weather interpretation seldom depends solely upon that weather but is bound up within other issues: from the political to the religious, the literal climate is invariably aligned with a metaphorical climate. Stow's description of the sudden storm of Devereux's departure tells us about the weather, but his inclination to view it as bountiful tells us about his veneration of, or hope for, the Earl of Essex. Even if Stow is writing ironically, or with political reasons in mind, the point is largely similar: the description would simply be a more nuanced account of the popular apprehension of Devereux's spectacle. As Shakespeare has Cicero note when Casca is harbouring the doom of the storm: 'men may construe things after their fashion | Clean from the purpose of the things themselves' (1.3.34-5). Cicero's comment reinforces what the Stow reports confirm: meteorology is malleable in highly idiosyncratic ways and empiricism has only a minor role to play.

Stow with his religious language was hardly being unusual in his descriptions. It is the significance attributed to these storms which is important. Even if there is no significance characterised by religious belief, then there is invariably still a superstitious perspective involved. An example of such superstition is provided Leonard Digges, writing in his *Prognostication Everlasting of Right Good Effect*:

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1149.

⁴⁹ Stow certainly relates far more damaging storms in his *Annales*. The comparison here is purely to judge the author's tone with regards to harmless, but notable weather.

Thunders in the morning, signify wind: about noon, rain: in the evening great tempest. Some write (their ground I see not) that Sunday's thunder, should bring the death of learned men, judges and others.

Monday's thunder, the death of women.

Tuesday's thunder, plenty of grain.

Wednesday's thunder, the death of harlots, & other bloodshed.

Thursday's thunder, plenty of sheep and corn.

Friday's thunder, the slaughter of a great man, and other horrible murders.

Saturday's thunder, a general pestilent plague & great death.⁵⁰

Digges's suspicion of such beliefs ('their ground I see not') is clear, but the fact that he records them regardless is significant, and suggests that they have not vanished completely.

Another writer who notes superstitions based on thunder is Thomas Hill, whose *Contemplation of Mysteries* was published in 1574. The work is a compilation of the meteorological observations of many thinkers, edited by Hill, who notes:

The learned *Beda* wryteth, that if thunder be first heard, comming out of the East quarter, the same foresheweth before the yere go about or be ended, the great effusion of bloud.

That if thunder first heard out of the West quarter, then mortalitie, and a grieuous plague to insue.

That if thunder be first heard out of the South quarter, threatneth the death of many by shipwrack.

That if thunder be first heard out of the North quarter, doth then portend the death of wicked persons, and the ouerthrowe of many.⁵¹

Again, death is the main emphasis here; thunder portends bloodshed or disease whichever direction it comes from. Hill, in a later work on dream interpretation, writes as though to confirm the above passage: 'besides wheresoeuer the fyre [in the skye] shalbe or where it is carried vp, as from y^e North, South, West, or East, & from thense enemyes come, or els neare those regions or cuntryes, dearth shall be.'⁵² Those who feared the omens of

⁵⁰ Digges, *A prognostication euerlasting of right good effectt* London: 1605 p. 7. Incidentally, the 27th March 1599 (using the Julian calendar) was a Tuesday, one of the two days not to bring death. The Ides of March, 44 B.C. would have been a Wednesday, not, as I'll admit I hoped, a Friday. Not even Cassius would argue Caesar's case as a harlot. Even so, a connection of thunder and premonitions of murder in early modern superstition here is clear.

⁵¹ Thomas Hill, *A Contemplation of Mysteries* (London: 1574), 52.

⁵² Thomas Hill, *The Moste Pleasuante Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (London: 1576), 160.

storms and dreams of storms cannot have been calmed by the progress of Devereux, whose crossing to Ireland was beleaguered by tempest.

The superstitions outlined by Digges and Hill, and others like them were surely held by many as parameters of the thunder which accompanied the Earl of Essex, whilst others would have adopted the sceptical position of Digges himself. Among the superstitious, moreover, some of the observers that Devereux's company attracted would have, like Stow, taken the day's weather to be a good omen, and many others, one of evil. In several biographies of Elizabeth I and Devereux, a paragraph can be found which paraphrases Stow's description before noting that the storm 'seemed to the more suspicious a bad omen.'⁵³ Although the majority of these are not forthcoming with evidence to support this claim, Alison Weir notes that Francis Bacon, writing many years afterwards, said that the storm 'held an ominous prodigy' and that he 'did plainly see [Essex's] overthrow chained by destiny to that journey.'⁵⁴

The combination of strange weather and significant event ensures that both are more likely to be remembered. As Shapiro notes, the afternoon's weather:

made so powerful an impression on the translator John Florio that, over a decade later, he included it in a dictionary as the definition of the word 'Ecnéphia': a kind of prodigious storm coming in summer, with furious flashings, the firmament seeming to open and burn as happened when the Earl of Essex parted from London to go for Ireland'⁵⁵

Nor does it appear to concern Florio that the storm by which he defines the word does not come in summer – a condition of the definition – but in March. I would argue that this is testament both to the impression that the storm made on Florio but also that which he implicitly acknowledges it has made on his reading public. It makes much more sense to use an example which is ingrained in living memory, whether or not it fits in snugly with

⁵³ G.B Harrison, *The Life and Death of Robert Devereux Earl of Essex*. (London: Cassell and Co. 1937), 216. See also R. Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex: An Elizabethan Icarus* (London: The History Book Club 1970) 190.

⁵⁴ Alison Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 441.

⁵⁵ Shapiro, *Op Cit.* 117-8.

the definition. Such is the power of remarkable weather, especially when it occurs at dramatic moments which can be easily recollected by witnesses.

Writing in his casebooks of Devereux's departure, Simon Forman gives the scene a rather different description:

[I]t began to rain and at three 'till four there fell such a hail shower that was very great, and then it thundered withal and the wind turned to the north and after the shower was past it turned to the south-east again, and there were many mighty clouds up, but all the day before one of the clock was a very fair day and clear, and four or five days before bright and clear and very hot like summer.⁵⁶

Here, the veneration Stow displays for Essex's march is absent. Instead, the emphasis is on the strangeness of the weather in the episode. From the description, it seems that Forman found this particular piece of weather more remarkable than did Stow. There is no divining of meaning from the sky, merely exact description. Weather does not have to be ascribed meaning to be noteworthy, even when celebrity aristocrats are marching out to preserve the outposts of Elizabeth's empire. Unexpected weather has a hold on the human imagination and this has continued into the modern era; as recently as June 13th 2006, the *Daily Mail's* front page headline was "After the Sunshine, Bolts from the Blue", reporting unexpected lightning.

Regardless, then, of how it was construed by those who observed it, here was certainly a piece of weather which, by virtue of its suddenness, its scope and its timing, would have inhabited the imagination of Londoners and remained there for some time. In short, there can not have been a better time for Shakespeare to take theatrical thunder to hitherto unexplored realms of expression and symbolic resonance. We will perhaps never be certain that he saw, or did not see Devereux's cavalcade, but it is certain that many of the playgoing public would have experienced the storm and debated its significance, and still more would have heard about it. As the storm of 27th March 1599 shows, however the weather is interpreted, and with whatever omens it is said to bring, there is likely to be

⁵⁶ Simon Forman, (Bod. Ashmole. MS 219/31r) I am indebted to James Shapiro for supplying a transcription of this part of the text. Professor Shapiro acknowledges Robyn Adams for locating the text and deciphering Forman's hand.

disagreement. Furthermore, there is always the likelihood that the weather will be remembered long after those interpretations and omens have faded from memory. This notion has its parallel in the extended use of special effects in *Julius Caesar* which must at least in part have been written to ensure the lasting reputation of the Globe as an exciting venue.

Much has been written on the self-consciously theatrical element of the play, with Cassius' lines over Caesar's corpse often cited: 'How many ages hence | Shall this our lofty scene be acted over | In states unborn and accents yet unkown?' (3.1.111-3). Anne Barton, for example, writes that the passage 'serves, pre-eminently, to glorify the stage'.⁵⁷ Thus the notion that metatheatre is apposite for a self-elevating work is made clear, but Cassius' lines are not the play's sole indicator of the metadramatic, nor do they exhaust the device's possibilities. Richard Wilson, for example, contends that 'The opening words of *Julius Caesar* seem to know themselves... as a declaration of company policy towards the theatre audience.'⁵⁸ In this latter part of this chapter I will show how Shakespeare's use and treatment of the storm can be read alongside these metatheatrical aspects. I will begin with an appraisal of the storm's poetic context in relation to its physical context. I will then develop a reading which shows how the remarkable character of the storm lies in its refusal to usher in the supernatural and, in so refusing, to trouble the expectations of the audience, as outlined in my introduction. The representation of the characters' reactions to the storm, therefore, also operates as a representation of the audience's reaction to the stage effects.

Casca's first speech in the storm makes it clear that the weather is remarkably unusual:

Are you not moved when all the sway of earth
Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero
I have seen tempests when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen
Th'ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam
To be exalted with the threatening clouds;
But never till tonight, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.

⁵⁷ Anne Barton, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962) 139.

⁵⁸ Wilson *Op. Cit.*, 32.

Either there is civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction.

(1.3.15)

Having seen in detail above the ways in which extraordinary weather is apprehended by witnesses, it should be readily apparent that Casca categorises the storm as atypical by referring to other tempests. In considering the poetry of the storm scenes in relation to the special effects, a striking detail emerges. The fieriness of Casca's description matches the effects of the squibs and rockets. Only later in Shakespeare's career do we find the language of storms complementing rather than matching the special effects. This distinction is evident in the fact that there is no rain in Casca's speech; indeed, as I have pointed out, there is no rain in the play. Rather, the focus of Casca's speech, and of Cassius' when he enters, is fire, the elemental opposite of water. One way of reading this detail is to suggest, as I have, that the language of fire reflects the fireworks. The phrases of Cassius, 'very flash of it' (52), 'sparks' (57) and 'all these fires, all these gliding ghosts' (63) certainly seem to reinforce the stage effects of the scene. After the apparent quiet of the orchard scene, these phrases reappear, this time through Calpurnia: 'Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds' (2.2.19) and 'ghosts did shriek and squeal' (19). For Calpurnia, more specifically, and allied to the drum beat of the stage thunder: 'The noise of battle hurtled in the air' (22).

Another reading is through elemental philosophy and humour psychology. The influence of humours is cited by Portia as she attempts to talk to Brutus: 'an effect of humour, | Which sometime hath his hour with every man' (2.1.249-50). Moments later, Portia makes explicit the link between climate and temperament: 'is it physical | To walk unbraced and suck up the humours | Of the dank morning?' (260-3). As I have mentioned, each of the main male characters of the play is particularly characterised by one humour: Caesar, phlegm; Brutus, melancholy; Antony, fire; Cassius, choler. Each of the humours, as they were understood by the audience, is aligned with one of the four elements and its characteristics. Thus Caesar, being phlegmatic, is affiliated both with wet and cold; Brutus with cold and dry, and so forth. The storm, as described by Cassius

and Casca, is hot and dry – the elemental affiliation of the choleric. Thus, the threat of the storm is not Caesar, as Cassius misconstrues (‘a man most like this dreadful night’ 1.3.72), but Cassius himself. In this light, the conclusion which Cassius reaches seems different:

And the complexion of the element
In favour’s like the work we have in hand,
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.
(127-9)

Cassius’ ‘bloody’, as he seems to use it, refers to the murder of Caesar, yet it could equally suggest the sanguine humour, as *fiery* does the choleric. His phrase ‘the complexion of the element’, meaning, as the Norton editors note, ‘the disposition of the sky’, also, in its other sense, concentrates the emphasis on the only element named: fire. Blood, hot and wet, similarly emphasise the sanguine humour and thus hint at Cassius’ eventual downfall through evoking the characteristics of Mark Antony. Indeed, elementally speaking, the hot and dry storm is the very opposite of the phlegmatic Caesar. Cassius’ prediction here, then, might be an example of Tatinius’ lament over Cassius’ corpse: ‘thou hast misconstrued everything’ (5.3.83). Cassius may see the chief threat as Caesar – ‘fearful, as these strange eruptions are’ (1.3.77) – but an elemental reading must conclude that the storm is strictly the preserve of himself and Antony.

Although, as I have stated, I do not wish to enter the debate on how *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V* may be read together, particularly with regards to Devereaux’s biography, the plays share many inviting qualities. One which is too tempting to ignore here concerns the quality of greatness verging on tyranny, and its figurative alignment with the storm. Henry’s wrath is described: ‘Therefore in fierce tempest is he coming | In thunder and in earthquake, like a Jove’ (2.4.99-100). Henry, here, is oragious, just as Caesar is figured, at least by Cassius: ‘Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man | Most like this dreadful night | That thunders, lightens...’ (1.3.71-3). Later in his career, Shakespeare would again write from this viewpoint with Isabella in *Measure for Measure*:

Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would never be quiet,

For every pelting petty officer
 Would use his heaven for thunder, nothing but thunder.
 (2.2.112-5)

Isabella makes the relationship between storm, violence and power simultaneously extremely vivid and utterly vacuous. Considered alongside Henry, the images of Angelo and Caesar are damning ones and are commentaries on the storminess of tyranny. Again, we see the protean nature of the storm and are reminded that the ways of thinking about Shakespeare which it provides are never straightforward. Just as we have seen angels and devils ‘throw lightning’, the imagery too is malleable. Hence my inclination to avoid the life of Essex in reading *Julius Caesar*, however well those examples may function with his story as context. Texts as complex as *Julius Caesar* invariably demand that we look beyond these parallels with Elizabethan society if we are to draw conclusions about what, and how the plays signify. Indeed, as Andrew Hadfield puts it, such parallels ‘were routinely made in the drama of the 1590s and would have done little on their own to distinguish the play from numerous other works competing for the attention of the theatregoing public.’⁵⁹ What does distinguish this play is, as we have seen, the extended use of staged storm.

Moreover, it is the sensory presence of the storm which encourages its symbolic nature to be discussed. It is a play which comments on the strange nature of prognostication and its obsessive desire to look forward. Brutus’ soliloquy depicts not Caesar, but the Caesar that may come: ‘And therefore think him as a serpent’s egg | Which hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous, | And kill him in the shell.’⁶⁰ The grim accuracy of the Soothsayer’s date compares starkly with the ambiguity of the storm interpretations offered by the characters who appear whilst the thunder is staged. This ‘strange-disposed time’ of the play extends to the Citizens’ response to Antony’s funeral speeches, in which the resonant words suggest all of past, present and future simultaneously: ‘We *will* hear the *will*.’ But what of the prognostication based on the storm itself? From Stow, Digges, Hill, Bacon and Forman, we know that weather, especially when strange and dramatic, is

⁵⁹ Hadfield, *Op. Cit.* 148.

⁶⁰ A language of ‘preemptive strike’, as Christopher Pelling has recently put it. See Maria Wyke (ed.) *Julius Caesar in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell 2006), 4.

a significant milieu to important events and that interpretations of that significance can vary widely. In *Julius Caesar*, the same phenomenon is displayed. The very process of divining interpretation according to status is made explicit:

CAESAR: Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Caesar.

CALPURNIA: When beggars die there are no comets seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.
(2.2.28-31)

The storm, and indeed the numerous portents which are listed by Calpurnia are not specific enough to persuade Caesar of his fate. “The world in general” is subject to thunder and lightning – this is why Caesar has his “priests do present sacrifice” (2.2.5); there is purpose only in reading futures if one knows whose future is being read. Calpurnia’s objection is designed both to flatter Caesar and reinforce the hierarchy inherent in such a brand of divination. Observers, likewise, feared or celebrated for Devereux: it is not surprising that there are no examples of the observers regarding that storm as significant for themselves. Just as Calpurnia elevates Caesar to be associated with the portents, so, in a different way, does Cassius:

you shall find
That heaven hath infused them with these spirits
To make them instruments of fear and warning
Unto some monstrous state.
Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
Most like this dreadful night
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars.
(1.3.68-74)

We see, then, that the play utilizes the practice of individual weather interpretation – the like of which we have observed in the accounts of Devereux – and that the subjectivism of such interpretations is dramatically effective. Cassius is fully aware of the metaphorical potency which the storm provides. As Calpurnia envisages Caesar's death,

so Cassius presages Caesar's life; the storm is too sudden and slippery a sign to be construed evenly by each character. What is also happening here, however, is that the audience witnessing the stage effects of the storm are being reminded of the symbolic weight of expectation which those effects have been shown to carry. Cicero's remark, which I have already noted, 'men may construe things after their fashion | Clean from the purpose of the things themselves' (1.3.34-5), may be seen to function as a caveat to the audience. Similarly the phrase of Casca's to which Cicero is replying, 'let not men say | "These are their reasons, they are natural"' (29-30) keeps alive the possibility of the supernatural, but also stages the anticipation of the supernatural which is allied to theatrical storm.

In the language of the play, moreover, a transition takes place from supernatural judgement to the human punishment by vigilante. Thus, just as Cassius has 'bared [his] bosom to the thunder-stone' (1.3.49), so Brutus, attempting to swear his constancy, says:

When Marcus Brutus grows so covetous,
To lock such rascal counters from his friends,
Be ready gods with all your thunderbolts,
Dash him to pieces!

(4.379-82)

Brutus' lines iteraphonically recall the rallying cry of the vigilante Plebians who set upon Cinna the Poet in Act 3, Scene 3.⁶¹ 'Tear him to pieces', says one, 'Tear him, tear him!', another, and 'Come, brands, ho! Firebrands! To Brutus', to Cassius', burn all!' say all together. Thunderbolts and fire have been physically – visually – conflated on the stage, to the extent that one may stand for the other. Thus, Brutus and Cassius, in calling upon the storm to prove their justifiability, slip into a category error: the thunder they invoke is explicitly supernatural, yet there is a viscerally functional human thunder in the hands of a frenzied crowd.

Should an audience at the Globe have assumed the arrival of the supernatural with the sound effects of thunder, then, such assumption would have gradually eroded in the

⁶¹ For an account of the iteraphonic in *Julius Caesar*, see Nicholas Royle, 'The Poet: *Julius Caesar* and the Democracy to Come' *Oxford Literary Review* 25 (2003): 39-62.

action of the play. The killing of the innocent Cinna the Poet does more than signify the extremity of mob violence: it stages the claim of the crowd to wield fire and consequently, thunder and lightning. It stages, that is, the absence of the supernatural as associated with storm. Thus the Globe's opening figures the new playhouse not only as stage for the spectacular, but as a place in which the expected is not given. Rather than the association of storm and the supernatural, storm is explicitly linked to human violence. In this way, it takes on board the resonances of determinism that structures all of the so-called history plays.

We have seen how Casca is frightened at what the storm portends, and that Cassius is empowered: each crucially misreading their environment as something other than natural. In this play which is often strikingly aware of the potential of theatre, then, the conspirators, even though they are explicitly aligned with the creation and the action of the drama, are paralleled with a naïve and basic audience response: storm equals supernatural. *Julius Caesar* is a comment on this response, its crudity and its dangers, most severely in the death of Cinna. In this way, as much as in the use of spectacular effects, it establishes the basis of the rest of Shakespeare's storms.

2.
King Lear and the Event of the Storm.

Well, well, th'event.
(*King Lear* 1.4.344)¹

The quotation with which I begin may seem an utterly innocuous one. Spoken by Albany at the end of a scene in which his marital relations with Goneril begin their inexorable deterioration, the words slip past almost unnoticed. They are supplementary in essence, following Albany's own formulaic rhyming couplet which has all the formal structure of a scene ending: 'How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell; | Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.' (341-2). Goneril's reply – 'Nay then –' – is unexpected, a seemingly artificial prolonging of a scene which has reached its natural conclusion. Albany immediately interrupts with the quotation above. To begin a chapter on *King Lear*'s storm with such superfluity is manifestly odd, when, after all, the play is arguably the most tempestuous in the history of English literature. I want to explore, however, the ways in which *King Lear* is dominated by the event. The event in *Lear* is unavoidable: there is no location, there is only event. Indeed, there is just one 'event' in the play: remarkably, Albany's line is the only instance of the word. This singularity, as we shall see, is no obstacle to the strange logic of the event characterising the play.

In this chapter, I will outline the ways in which *King Lear* is subtly but consistently misunderstood by the tendency to imagine the storm happening in a particular place. I propose that the storm itself is, aesthetically and structurally, what sustains the play. In the course of my argument, we will see how the storm in *King Lear* is characterised by an absence of location and the ways in which this absence is crucial to the play and its process of meaning. I will show that responses which bypass this absence of location, however briefly, necessarily fail to address the text on its own terms. We will, moreover, see how *King Lear* continues and develops Shakespeare's characteristic approach to storm, namely the systematic troubling of the expectation of the supernatural. As this

¹ All references to *King Lear* are taken from R.A. Foakes' 1997 text, reprinted as the Arden Third Series, ed. Foakes, (London: Arden, 2007), unless otherwise noted, and are included in the text. I have also made frequent use of the Oxford edition, based on the Quarto text, ed. Stanley Wells, (Oxford: OUP, 2001). I have also used Kenneth Muir's Second Series Arden text, (Methuen, 1952).

aspect of the play is explored I will draw on the work of critics who seek, or perhaps expect, to find the residue of supernatural cause where storm is concerned. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the conclusion of Leslie Thomson, whilst pertinent and valid with regards to other dramatic work of the period, is problematised by the works of Shakespeare. To repeat one formulation of that conclusion here: ‘In the case of *thunder and lightning*, the audience was almost invariably prompted to expect the supernatural – and got what it expected.’² We will see how an appreciation of this view contributes to a reading of *King Lear*. I will also explore the work of Janet Adelman, whose work on the play draws on the association of storms and witches (discussed in the present work with regards to *Macbeth*) and seeks to apply it to the storm. It will be shown that *King Lear* resists such readings, and that, whilst the audience may indeed expect the supernatural, in common with other plays I have considered, *King Lear* subverts that expectation. In this case, the subversion is carried out in particular through Lear’s question ‘What is the cause of thunder?’ (3.4.151). The question not only introduces a sense of naturalistic meteorological inquiry, but opens the play to an investigation of the work of one of its most resonant words: ‘cause’. Such questioning will form the last part of this chapter, as we explore the ways in which cause and event inform our understanding of *King Lear*.

Why the event? To begin to think about the ways in *King Lear* is subject to the logic of the event, let us turn to some definitions. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers ‘The (actual or contemplated) fact of anything happening; the occurrence of.’ Even in this ostensibly basic definition, the event already seems strange, occupying the real and the imaginary: the ‘occurrence of’ the ‘contemplated’ suggests that the event is a basic condition of human thought.³ A more obscure usage – one present in early modern English – sees event defined as ‘What “becomes of” or befalls (a person or thing); fate.’⁴ Thus, the event bears finality and what Jacques Derrida might term the ‘to come’. Indeed, it is this quality of the event that Derrida draws upon in his own explication: ‘The event must be considered in terms of the “come” ... Without this “come” there could be no

² Leslie Thomson, ‘The Meaning of *Thunder and Lightning*: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations’, *Early Theatre* 2 (1999) 11-24, citing 14.

³ OED EVENT n., 1a.

⁴ OED EVENT n., 4.

experience of what is to come, of the event, of what will happen and therefore of what, since it comes from the other, lies beyond anticipation'.⁵ This 'experience' is what I will argue characterises *King Lear*. In the play, the event 'lies beyond anticipation'. Albany's phrase, with which I began, is an encapsulation of this idea: an admonition of Goneril's threat to anticipate. In several plays, Shakespeare is alive to the eccentricities of the event. Nicholas Royle has recently addressed uses of *event* in Shakespeare, contending that 'its appearances are consistently associated with a sense of strangeness.'⁶ The three suns of *Henry VI Part 3* are 'but one lamp, one light, one sun. | In this the heaven figures some event' (1.2.31-2). Indeed in several of Shakespeare's plays, the event verges on the announcement of the supernatural. Hence, in *The Tempest*: 'These are not natural events: they strengthen | From strange to stranger' (5.1.228-9) and in *Macbeth*: 'dire combustion, and confus'd events, | New hatch'd to th' woeful time' (2.3.57-8).

R.A. Foakes, unlike many editors, glosses Albany's phrase – th'event – and does so with unerring, unnerving simplicity: 'the outcome; equivalent to "we'll see"'. I want to suggest that this gloss is coloured by the logic of play – a logic which marries blindness and sight, daylight and night, 'matter and impertinency mixed,' as Edgar says, 'Reason in madness' (4.1.170-1). That the event, in this idiomatic context, is revealing and structured as a promise – 'we'll see' – happily aligns it with madness, blindness and night.⁷ Furthermore, there is a subtle difference between the Quarto and Folio versions of Albany's line: the former has 'the euent', whilst the latter has 'the'vent'. Foakes' 'th'event' is a medium between the two. The Folio's version prompts consideration of another definition, under *e'vent*: 'To expose to the air; hence, to cool.'⁸

For these reasons, Albany's line is the ideal starting place for a discussion of the storm in *King Lear*: to the events of blinding, maddening and darkening in the play, we may add the storm: the ironic exposure to the air of Lear's event, which does not cool, but maddens. In the case of *King Lear*, the sense of strangeness in the storm as event is

⁵ Quoted by Nicholas Royle, in 'Derrida's Event', *Derrida's Legacies: Literature and Philosophy*, eds. Simon Glendinning and Robert Eaglestone (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008) 36-44 (38).

⁶ Nicholas Royle, 'Derrida's Event', *Op. Cit.*, 39.

⁷ Perhaps an alignment brought out as Cornwall blinds Gloucester: 'Lest it see more, *prevent* it.' (3.7.82).

⁸ OED EVENT v2.

brought out in its status as outcome and as occasion: it informs the meaning of the lines which run through it, sometimes seemingly in dialogue with them, yet confined to one insistent effect. It is, to apprehend the language of the stage direction, *still*, both in the sense of continuing and unchanging. I choose the word *event* to consider *King Lear* in general and the storm in particular to evoke the sense that ‘what is happening’ and ‘what has happened’ is prioritised in the play over issues of location. How to address the storm in *King Lear*? Only by first addressing also a tradition which depends upon the storm’s marginalisation; only thereby teasing the ‘we’ll see’ from the event. This tradition has to do with the superfluous location of the heath. The storm has often been interpreted as an external symbol of Lear’s internal distress⁹, itself an indication that critics are open to readings of the play, or at least its title character, based on the event of the storm. However, rather than simply offering the storm as context, whether by aligning it with the depiction of Lear’s psyche or by, for example, the gradual decline of providential pagan belief, critical responses have almost inevitably localised the storm, and hence failed to address the play on its own terms.

In using a phrase such as ‘the play on its own terms’, I am conscious that I leave myself open to rebuke from positions such as that of Terence Hawkes, who, in writing about *King Lear*, has expressed his view that there is ‘no such thing as the “real” or the “right” version of the play: not even ‘Shakespeare’s’ version could make that claim.’¹⁰ What I hope to show, however, is that, far from attempting to reclaim a pre-critical, pre-editorial incarnation of the play, it would benefit us to recognise that criticism and editorial practices frequently represent *King Lear*, however subtly, as reliant on the poetics of location. Hawkes suggests that we focus ‘on the ways in which *King Lear* is processed by a society...rather than on any mythical “play itself”.’¹¹ I would submit in response that the play with which we interact, that is, the play which, as a society, we engage in processing, is one inherited from a society – the scenic theatre of the Restoration – which

⁹ See for example, George W. Williams, ‘The Poetry of the Storm in *King Lear*,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2.1 (1951): 57-71.; E. Catherine Dunn, ‘The Storm in *King Lear*,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 3.4 (1952): 329-333.; Josephine Waters Bennett, ‘The Storm Within: The Madness of Lear,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 13.2 (1962): 137-155. The arguments of these works will be introduced and commented upon below.

¹⁰ Terence Hawkes, *William Shakespeare: King Lear* (Plymouth, Northcote House, 1995), 62.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 62.

operated under inherently different principles and conditions than either our own or the early Jacobean theatrical culture. And whilst it is undeniable that we cannot claim a 'real version' of the text in this way, if we are to continue to 'process' it, then we ought at least to delineate the origins of what we are processing and, as much as we are able, recognise the material conditions of its original production. The phrase 'the text itself' is meant only to indicate this indented recognition.

King Lear is, both popularly and critically, imagined as moving through madness and realisation on a heath. Articles have already been written which address the fallacy, notably by James Ogden, whose 'Lear's Blasted Heath' was first published in 1987, and by Henry S. Turner, whose '*King Lear* Without: The Heath' appeared a decade later.¹² It is a problem, however, which remains, as, even in critical discourse, when Lear is described as at a location, it is almost inevitably a heath. Or rather, *the* heath, as only the right heath will do: 'When he is on the heath, King Lear is moved to pity', writes Jonathan Dollimore, as though it were a place to visit for reawakening, a kind of spiritual retreat.¹³ Hugh Grady, meanwhile, argues that 'modern subjectivity, in the guise of Cordelia, Edgar and the transformed Lear from the heath scenes on, is also the *locus* for the workings of the utopian.'¹⁴ Again, the heath becomes complicit in the shifts in Lear's language and takes on a central role in any attempt at reconciliation which the play may be seen to hint at. Those shifts in language are characterised chiefly by their relationship with the storm and the night, that is, by the external events, not by location. Despite this, the heath seems boundless in the argument of Arthur Kirsch, who mentions 'Gloucester's state of mind on the heath, after his blinding.'¹⁵ The heath then, continues beyond the storm – and becomes, in Kirsch's reading, a figure for the sense of forlorn revelation which characterises the latter half of the play. For Ian W. O. House, also, the heath plays

¹² James Ogden, 'Lear's Blasted Heath', *Durham University Journal*, 80 (1987), 19-26 (later reprinted in James Ogden and Arthur H. Scouten, *Lear from Study to Stage: Essays in Criticism* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997): 135-46.); Henry S. Turner, 'King Lear Without: The Heath', *Renaissance Drama* 28 (1997): 161-93.

¹³ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 186.

¹⁴ Hugh Grady, 'On the need for a differentiated theory of (early) modern subjects' *Philosophical Shakespeares* ed. John J. Joughin (London: Routledge, 2000) 34-50, (47).

¹⁵ Arthur Kirsch, 'The Emotional Landscape of King Lear', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No 2. (Summer, 1988), 154-70 (160).

a part in characterisation, as Edgar's 'most effective disguise is to be quite openly part of the heath on which he lives'.¹⁶ Stephen Greenblatt offers another perspective: 'In the strange universe of *King Lear*, nothing but precipitous ruin lies on the other side of retirement, just as nothing but a bleak, featureless heath lies on the side of the castle gate.'¹⁷ Here, the heath is more suggestive of banishment.¹⁸ Greenblatt's conflation of location with the wider 'universe' of the play invites us to contemplate the text's characteristic absence of locality, although his employment of it as a point of comparison implies that the featurelessness of location is somehow important in the play's meaning. There is, perhaps, also an indication here that critics are, at least in their scholarly writings, beginning to move away from the fallacy: Greenblatt does not favour the heath in his more scholarly works, but seems happy to use it in popular biography, which nonetheless offers readings of the plays.¹⁹ I would suggest that a conscious avoidance, if such is the case, of the heath in academic texts should not be coupled with a resurrection of it in popular works. Indeed, this is rather sinister, as though the heath should be a step-ladder for those unable to gain an unobstructed view of the play. A critical awareness of an imposition should, if one is to raise it, lead to a recognition of it *as* an imposition, unless we are resigned to repeating it. There is a disturbing and distorting act of displacement at work in localising meaning in *King Lear* and nowhere is this more pronounced than in the repetition of the heath. There is no location, there is only event.

It might be contended that others have hinted at the powerful work of the event in *King Lear*. Lisa Jardine, for example, writes that the play presents us 'with the prospect of a world in which real affection is deprived of instrumentality (the ability to influence the outcome of actions and events) precisely to the extent that a cynically operated technology of affect – of warmth and intimacy generated by letters – debases the heart's

¹⁶ Ian W. O. House, "'I know thee well enough': The Two Plots of *King Lear*", *English* 170.41 (1992): 97-112 (110).

¹⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World : How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2004), 358.

¹⁸ Banishment itself being subject to a strange logic of displacement from an early point in the text: 'Freedom lives hence and banishment is here.' (1.1.182)

¹⁹ Greenblatt also mentions the heath in his introduction to the play text in *The Norton Shakespeare* Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus and Stephen J. Greenblatt eds. (New York ; London: W.W. Norton, 1997), the so-called 'International Student Edition' 2311.

expressive resources, leaving “nothing” to be said.’²⁰ Rather than humans influencing events, then, the events are seen negatively to influence what we understand as human: warmth and intimacy, for example, or speech. Jardine’s argument is concerned with ‘the textual construction of feeling’ and not with the event, but it is notable that the play is nonetheless couched in these terms. However, Jardine’s ‘events’ are surely different from ‘th’event’, with the singularity of the latter a distinguishing feature: *Lear*’s event is simultaneously occurring and to come. Similarly, something of the storm scenes’ concentration on event is also captured by Janet M. Green:

Apocalyptic events (as just described, and in Revelation and Daniel) take place, like the major events of *King Lear*, in a certain kind of time. Ordinary measured time ... is replaced by a period of massive change and danger, in which the sense of time is concentrated, quickened, and heightened because of the dramatic and important events that happen within it.²¹

Green here uncovers the process by which the dramatic experience of time is influenced by the severity or unusualness of the event within it. That the aesthetic methodology of *King Lear* is centred on event is later formulated by Green as she writes that ‘The quality of apocalyptic finality has occurred throughout the play – in trumpets, in thunders, in tempest.’²² More importantly, the importance of the event and its bearing on modes of human understanding is written into the play early on: ‘These late eclipses ... portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects’ (1.2.104-6).²³ Gloucester’s lines evoke the sense that, however events are reasoned (which, of course is what he goes on to do), they are unavoidable. The lines seem to place a limit on the possibilities of natural philosophy or science, or indeed ‘wisdom of human nature’ to influence events. It is too much to say, despite the attractive analogy, that the importance of location diminishes in the play as soon as Lear divides the map. Surely, however, Gloucester’s lines prioritise event and

²⁰ Lisa Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London: Routledge, 1996), 79.

²¹ Janet M. Green, ‘Earthy Doom and Heavenly Thunder: Judgement in *King Lear*.’ *The University of Dayton Review*, 23 (Spring 1995): 63-73 (69).

²² Ibid.

²³ I have departed slightly from Foakes’ edition here, preferring that the first ‘nature’ remains in lower case: this is as it appears in the first Quarto, whereas the Folio has both instances capitalised. I prefer the lower case as it is not clear that Gloucester is referring to the goddess (as is the case with Edmund at 1.2.1, which Q and F capitalise).

establish the idea both of a lack of control over the event, and the human tendency to pontificate on it regardless.²⁴ Green's argument also makes use of the idea of an 'apocalyptic event'. Derrida's work has taken up this notion, exposing 'apocalyptic event' as, in certain respects, a tautology. With regards to the Book of Revelation, Derrida remarks that nothing 'is less conservative than the apocalyptic genre': an author writing in 'an apocalyptic tone', implies that the truth is decided and universal, and that the author may access it.²⁵ It is, then, the arrival of that which is characterised by the 'to come'. The irony of this, with regards both to genre and the apocalypse, is played upon by Shakespeare after Cordelia's death: 'Is this the promised end?' (5.3.261).²⁶ 'Apocalyptic event', may be read as tautological, then, for as Derrida asserts elsewhere, the event 'is another name for the future itself', but 'if I am sure that something will happen, then it will not be an event.'²⁷

The tradition of the heath has, in turn, its own tradition, one that credits the superfluous location to Nicholas Rowe's edition of 1709. This has been addressed by Ogden, who argues, convincingly, that Rowe derived the heath from the painted scenery used in the staging of Nahum Tate's version of the play.²⁸ The same scenery, indeed, was used for Tate's play *The Loyal General*, and, as Ogden has shown, 'There are several similarities between [*The Loyal General*] and Tate's version of *King Lear*, which was the next play he wrote'²⁹. That the idea of Lear on the heath originates in a specifically visual theatrical setting, rather than the bare stage of the Jacobean amphitheatre, should itself be a clue that when we speak of the heath, we are not addressing the text on its own terms. Why has the tradition of the heath in *King Lear* endured? Ogden's essay goes on to suggest that, in addition to originating from a visual development on the Restoration stage, the heath was perpetuated by illustration, beginning with the image in Rowe's volume (See

²⁴ A tendency embodied by Edmund, of course, moments later, as he pontificates on pontification.

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, 'Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy', trans. John P. Leavey, *Oxford Literary Review* 6, no. 2 (1984): 24.

²⁶ A line which surely refers both to the apocalypse ('Or image of that horror', as Edgar's reply has it) and to the promise of genre, with *King Lear*, at least in the Quarto, a history play.

²⁷ 'The Deconstruction of Actuality: An Interview with Jacques Derrida', trans. Jonathan Rée, in Martin McQuillan, (ed.), *Deconstruction: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 534; 536.

²⁸ Ogden, *Op. Cit.* 137.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

Figure 1).³⁰ This practice at which Ogden hints finds its current most obvious incarnation on the cover of the 2007 Arden edition of the play, which depicts an open tract of land with a bare tree (See Figure 2).³¹



Figure 1. Illustration from Nicholas Rowe's 1709 Volume.

³⁰ Ibid., 138-144.

³¹ Foakes (ed.) *Op Cit.* To quote the credit: 'Cover design: interbrand Newell and Sorrell. Cover illustration: The Douglas Brothers'.



Figure 2. The Arden 3rd Series Cover, 2007.

There is, however, as we will see, something more alluring about the heath that has enabled it to endure. What is it about the image that appeals to our sense of understanding of the play? Can it be that, with its notions of wilderness, it carries the context of isolation in which Lear is imagined to be? The concept of wilderness itself is a fascinating one and readily fits in with the now outmoded Christian reading of the play. Christ, led by the Spirit of God, enters the wilderness and resists the temptations of the Devil.³² Christ's wilderness fast lasts for forty days: an explicitly stormy duration, given that the rains of the Flood fall for the same length of time.³³ The heath, the wilderness, the storm and the epiphanic moment all seem happily to fit together.

³² Matt 4: 1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13. When quoted, all Bible extracts are taken from the Geneva version unless otherwise stated.

³³ Genesis 7:4. Also, Moses remains on Sinai for the same length of time (Exodus 24:18), after '*God appeareth vnto Moses vpon the mount in thunder and lightning.*' (Exodus 19: introduction). Forty days is also the time allotted to Pericles by Antiochus, during which the first storm of the play occurs.

To localise Lear in the storm is to acknowledge an acute difficulty in approaching those scenes, a difficulty which can be sidestepped by forcing aesthetically apposite supplements upon them, thereby altering the meaning, and the way of meaning. There are undeniable attractions in the heath as wilderness in reading *King Lear*. In the Christian readings of the play that dominated critical approaches until comparatively recently, the logic of suffering and redemption finds its ideal counterpoint in ‘an extensive wasteland’³⁴. In the Old Testament, the heath and wilderness are conflated in a fashion particularly apposite to *King Lear*:

Thus saith the Lord, Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arme, and withdraweth his heart from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the wilderness, and shall not see when *any* good commeth, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited.³⁵

It seems to me that this is very same conflation which appeals to the implicit localising of the event which we see in the above quotation from Greenblatt, or prioritising location in the way which Grady does. As Greg Garrard has noted, wilderness is not only the location for Christ to be tempted by the devil, but also the place of exile from Eden, and, furthermore, recognisable in early examples of monasticism as a place of retreat.³⁶ This is part of the symbolic heritage upon which formulations such as those of Dollimore or Kirsch draw. ‘The Judaeo-Christian conception of wilderness, then,’ writes Garrard, ‘combines connotations of trial and danger with freedom, redemption and purity, meanings that, in varying degrees, it still has.’³⁷ Those meanings are also to be identified in modern employment of the heath in *Lear*. If the logic of suffering and redemption is no

³⁴ OED: HEATH. By ‘the Christian readings’, I mean, chiefly, works which figure the play as illustrative of the power of redemption through suffering as thereby related to the teaching of Christ. Such works are too numerous to list fully here, but an illustrative roll might include G. Wilson Knight’s *Principles of Shakespearean Production with Especial Reference to Tragedies* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), in which each Shakespearean tragic hero is viewed as ‘a miniature Christ’; J. Dover Wilson, *Six Tragedies of Shakespeare: An Introduction for the Plain Man* (London: Longmans, 1929) 32-46; J F. Danby ‘*King Lear* and Christian Patience’, *Cambridge Journal* I (1948), 305-320; Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the mystery of God’s Judgements* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 183-96; Herbert R. Coursen, *Christian Ritual and the World of Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (Lewisburg, PA.: Bucknell University Press, 1976), 237-313.

³⁵ Jeremiah 17, 5-6.

³⁶ Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2004) 59.

³⁷ Ibid, 59.

longer characterised as Christian allegory by critical consensus, it is nonetheless a logic which persists in some form, as Dollimore's essay goes on to show, indeed, suffering is essentialised in such interpretations as the aim of existence.³⁸ As such, that logic is often grounded by the force of the metaphorical inertia of the heath: that Lear's belated realisation of social responsibility – 'I have ta'en too little care of this... (3.4.32-3)' – is imagined to take place in a wilderness allows the thought that in order for civilisation to function, we must contend with and acknowledge its limitations in the face of nature. Contained in the notion of the heath is the attractive paradox that the further Lear recedes from civilisation and companionship, the more he understands his humanity and that of others. Wilderness is, of course, an extremely important concept for ecocriticism. Garrard writes 'wilderness has an almost sacramental value: it holds out the promise of a renewed authentic relation of humanity and the earth, a post-Christian covenant, found in a space of purity, founded in an attitude of reverence and humility.'³⁹ It is not difficult to see why the heath is still construed as an apposite location for the humbling of a remorseful king. The danger of a 'post-Christian covenant' attracting and endorsing further and deeper misreadings of the play based on the regurgitated fallacy of the heath, should explain why a move away from considering the play in terms of location is to be advocated.⁴⁰

There is a further danger, if we persist with the heath and its associative implications. Implicit in Turner's argument is the notion that to imagine Lear on a heath is to circumvent the very process by which the king is understood to be mad.⁴¹ Lear's journey is one of dislocation in every sense of the word: just as his followers attempt to relocate him – either out of the storm, or, in Turner's language, to 'the world of the play' – Lear's manifest refusal to recognise the locations, or the possibility of location, serves not only to dislocate him from space but from the followers themselves.⁴² Thus the notions of isolation, remoteness, or seclusion for which the heath stands are diminished as soon as

³⁸ Dollimore, *Op. Cit.*, 189-203.

³⁹ Garrard, *Op. Cit.*, 59.

⁴⁰ I address ecocriticism specifically because a) wilderness is a recurring concept in the field and b) as we have seen, work which may be bracketed as ecocriticism is increasingly turning to early modern studies, and to Shakespeare.

⁴¹ See Turner, *Op. Cit.*, 176.

⁴² *Ibid*, 176.

the possibility of the heath – or any other location – is imagined. To locate Lear is to save him from madness. That the phrase ‘Lear on the heath’ has acquired the surrogate meaning of the progression of Lear’s insanity is contradictory to the fact that Lear’s mental state is not only catalysed by displacement but envisaged and articulated through the impossibility of re-placement. Only if Lear fails to accept his surroundings can the sense of isolation sought by the imposition of the heath be realised. Moreover, the notion that Lear is physically isolated in the storm, as only one in a wilderness can be, is manifestly false and recontextualises the scenes in an utterly unhelpful way. Lear is not alone in the storm. Indeed, Lear is never alone on the stage. This is the one title role in Shakespeare’s tragedies which has no soliloquies.⁴³ To add to Turner’s argument on the representation of madness in *King Lear*, the king’s peculiar state is that he soliloquises but his soliloquies are witnessed by others onstage: this is dramatic madness – we might remember Ophelia and Lady Macbeth for other examples of these witnessed soliloquies.⁴⁴ Edgar as Poor Tom, of course, makes use of the notion, and his feigned madness would be meaningless if he were onstage alone.⁴⁵ The phrase ‘on the heath’ encourages us to think of Lear as physically isolated – alone – and thereby bypasses the dramatic context of the representation of the king’s increasing insanity.

By stressing the fallacious nature of the heath, my intention is not to nitpick, but to adhere to the demands of the text itself. Before examining the play in closer detail, it is necessary to ask the question: is it important to know where the action is taking place in a Shakespearean play? A comparison might be made with *Romeo and Juliet*: a reader’s search for mention of a balcony in the text (or even a stage direction which places Juliet ‘above’ or ‘aloft’) will prove fruitless. It would be doctrinaire, however, to draw conclusions from such an absence, as the demands both of the text and its staging are that Juliet is above Romeo, at a window. What is traditionally referred to as the balcony scene, then, has a perfectly appropriate, if supplementary name. The same cannot be said of the so-called heath scene in *King Lear*. So, how crucial is location in a Shakespearean

⁴³ Admittedly, this claim is based on what, in our 21st century apprehension, are currently called tragedies. To those plays, the First Folio adds *Cymbeline*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. The latter two characters both have soliloquies, but *Cymbeline* does not.

⁴⁴ See *Hamlet* 4.5.16-75 & 160-193 and *Macbeth* 5.1.36-71.

⁴⁵ See 3.4.45-179 and 3.6.passim.

play? We might, in addition to the canard of *Lear*'s heath, remember the castles of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*; the various battlegrounds of the histories – Shrewsbury, Harfleur, Orleans, Agincourt; *The Tempest*'s island; forests in *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. We may recall the many ports of *Pericles* as well as Venice, Verona, Cyprus, Bohemia, Belmont and the oddly unobtainable Milford Haven. There are, of course, many more such instances, and alongside them belong myriad scenes in bedrooms, courts, taverns, brothels, streets, gardens, ships, prisons and caves. We recognise these locations, as readers especially but as audience members also, not simply through editorial glosses but by the same system of contextual signs that tell us that it is 'bitter cold' at the opening of *Hamlet* (1.1.6), or that 'The moon shines bright' in the last act of *The Merchant of Venice* (5.1.1). In the storm scenes of *King Lear*, there is a similar array of contextual signs: we are repeatedly told that a) Lear and his followers are outside, but that shelter is not far; b) that the weather is dreadful in every sense and c) it is night.⁴⁶ Aside from the close proximity of the hovel, there is no contextual sign during the storm which indicates the whereabouts of the characters. In each of the above examples of place, the location of the characters adds nuance to their lines. In *The Merchant of Venice*, 'What news on the Rialto?' (1.3.33, 3.1.1) does more than ally place with communication; it creates a sense of a bustling mercantile community which the play's other instances of 'the Rialto' take advantage of. Location informs meaning. Similarly, in *Cymbeline*, Aviragus' lines convey a strong sense of experience shaped by environment: 'how, | In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse | The freezing hours away? We have seen nothing. | We are beastly.' (3.3.37-40) Without the image of the cave, restricting and cold in the double sense of pinching, Aviragus' speech loses much of its potency in conveying a life outside of civilisation. As it is, the concluding 'beastly' is reached through a construction of place which limits the speaker's humanity: the 'pinching cave' imposes a limit on 'discourse'. Belarius' response is also marked by an understanding of location's influence on the imagination:

⁴⁶ See 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4 passim. The night is another event in *King Lear* which might justifiably be seen, like the storm, as an organising principle of the play. The two are often juxtaposed ('what i'th' storm, i'th' night, | Let pity not be believed!' 4.3.29-30), but each has various subtle idiosyncrasies. It is notable, moreover, that, although the night is virtually as insistent in the storm scenes as the storm itself (the stage effects excepted) the work of the night in the play is underestimated by critics. Shameful though the irony is of confining this statement to a footnote, there is not sufficient space in this chapter to give the night the attention it merits.

‘Did you but know the city’s usuries, | And felt them knowingly’ (45-6). When place is a significant factor in a character’s meaning or circumstance, then, place is woven into the diction. If there is no such indication of place, it is not too much to say that the character’s meaning and situation depend on other factors, whether they be another character’s speech, the recognition of their own subjectivity⁴⁷ or an event not specific to location: the night, for example, or a storm. Indeed, in response to Kent’s urgent question, ‘Where’s the King?’, the Gentleman does not respond helpfully, but poetically: ‘contending with the fretful element’ (3.1.2-3).⁴⁸ This response, and the description which follows it, is made even odder when, less than 50 lines later, the two characters split up to seek Lear, and odder still when Kent finds him first (49, 3.2.39). If the Gentleman knows the king’s whereabouts, such a progression is ridiculous, unless the notion of a whereabouts is – as is made clear by his answer to Kent – acutely troubled. Thus, as the play moves into the third Act, the importance and even validity of location continue to be undermined and destabilized.

This same scene also sees the emergence of Dover, the name which echoes through the play: ‘make your speed to Dover’ is Kent’s line (32). It might be imagined that such an occurrence invalidates my argument, but that would be to misunderstand the way in which the town’s name is used. With the exception of the final instance – Gloucester’s ‘Dost thou know Dover?’ (4.1.74) – every mention of Dover is prefaced, as Kent’s is, either by ‘to’ or ‘toward’.⁴⁹ Dover is a location to come, never a location which informs the play. Gloucester’s phrase captures the finality of the idea inherent in reaching the location to come: ‘From that place | I shall no leading need’ (4.1.80-1). Following this, the name of Dover is not mentioned again: location, even in the act of naming places, remains tantalising, but intangible. Hence the *possibility* of location informs meaning, but only in the sense of a determinate negation: not, as in *The Merchant of Venice* or *Cymbeline*, defined by where the lines are spoken, but where they are not.

⁴⁷ It is hard not to think of Hamlet’s soliloquies here, which are imbued with his particular sense of place: ‘Horatio: Where, my Lord? Hamlet: In my mind’s eye, Horatio’ (1.2.183-4).

⁴⁸ I have departed from Foakes here in calling the character ‘Gentleman’. As used in both the Quarto and Folio texts, it makes much more sense to me than Foakes’ substitution of ‘Knight’.

⁴⁹ There are ten such cases: 3.1.32; 3.6.88; 3.7.18, 50-54, 93; 4.1.45, 58.

The paucity of place signs in the play was noted over a century ago, when A.C Bradley wrote that in *King Lear*, ‘the very vagueness in the sense of locality ... give[s] the feeling of vastness, the feeling not of a scene or particular place, but of a world; or, to speak more accurately, of a particular place which is also a world’.⁵⁰ Even as Bradley acknowledges the absence of ‘particular place’ in the play, then, he is moved to suggest that a ‘particular place’ is nonetheless conceived. Although he goes on to concede that the suggestion of vastness has ‘a positive value for imagination’, Bradley’s overall position on *King Lear*’s characteristic ‘indefiniteness’ is that it is a ‘defect’ of the play.⁵¹ Perhaps, then, his ‘feeling’ a ‘particular place’ is intentional, affected by the modern approach to drama which Alan Dessen has described: ‘Thanks to generations of editing and typography, modern readers have ... been conditioned to expect placement of a given scene (“where” does it occur?), regardless of the fluidity or placelessness of the original context or the potential distortion in the question “where”?’⁵² It is this fluidity of location which Dessen describes that characterises much of *King Lear*. And yet the various realisations and psychotic episodes which Lear goes through in Act 3 are characterised not by a fluidity of location but by a singularity of event. Whilst the ‘placement of a given scene’, that is, remains slippery, the event which forms the context of those scenes – that is, the storm – is constantly reiterated. The crucial aspect is that such events may always be approached and re-imagined in the language of characters, to inform and shape their meaning. In this way, the fixedness of the storm may be seen to constitute both the expected ‘placement’ of a scene which Dessen describes and the definiteness which Bradley craved, in that it alters only in the language of those who apprehend it. In this way, the storm is different from the night, as the latter is represented solely by the language of those who apprehend it, whereas the storm is figured as resolute by the stage machinery, and by the direction ‘*Storm still*’ (3.1.0, 3.2.0, 3.4.3, 3.4.61, 3.4.98).

A similar clarification of the notion of ‘a singularity of event’ may be offered when Lear awakes after the storm. Indeed, the king asks his own distorting question of where:

⁵⁰ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 213-14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 214; 212; 213.

⁵² Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 84.

‘Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?’ (4.7.52). The fair daylight, that is, introduced as the opposite to the ‘tyrannous night’ (3.4.147): once more, it is a language which seems to be invested in the powerlessness of location to suggest meaning. That the daylight is questionable – phrased *as* a question – that the fundamental sequence of night followed by day has become, in Lear’s language, problematic, is suggestive itself of the circumstances in which the king awakes. That such singularity of event, that is, shown to be beyond the domain of the human in the storm scenes, retains the power to become slippery and doubtful in the language used to apprehend it, points indeed to the relationship of character and event in the play.

In critical work on the storm scenes, the importance of event is sometimes acknowledged. ‘In no other play of Shakespeare’, writes Susan Viguers, ‘does such a sustained event of nature share the stage with the characters.’⁵³ Viguers certainly explores the significance of the storm in detail, although she also has much to say about location, devoting part of her argument to ‘the fact that there are two shelters, one referred to numerous times in the text as a hovel and the other, a more substantial structure, which I have called Gloucester’s cottage.’⁵⁴ The publication of such an argument as recently as 2000 is testament to the fact that the identification of locality in *King Lear* is a process requiring detailed textual analysis, the clues for which have apparently remained invisible to many. It is no accident, then, that the superfluous heath provides an attractive alternative. And yet Viguers is not conclusive that her distinctions of locations contribute to a critical understanding of the play. Citing Leah Marcus, who misses her division of shelters, Viguers concludes that ‘this apparent merging of hovel and cottage has no bearing on [Marcus’s] argument’.⁵⁵ Viguers’ careful dedication to separating the two shelters is also marred somewhat by her willingness to resort to critical and popular consensus when describing the movement of characters: ‘Scene 6 of Act 3 begins with the characters who were on the heath entering Gloucester’s cottage’.⁵⁶ Even when location is found out, then, it still requires a supplementary location to reach it. If Viguers were to write, for example,

⁵³ Susan Viguers, ‘The Storm in King Lear’, *CLA Journal*. 43 (March 2000): 338-66 (60).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

‘...characters who were in the storm entering Gloucester's cottage’, then she would be implicitly acknowledging the importance of event in the storm scenes, rather than imposing location, apparently to enable movement.

If, as I propose, it is crucial to approach *King Lear* in terms of the event, not location, then we must begin to explore how development of Lear’s character in the storm scenes is achieved through the storm itself. Let us then turn to Lear’s first speech in Act 3:

Blow, winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow,
 You cataracts and hurricanes, spout
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
 You sulph’rous and thought-executing fires,
 Vaunt-couriers of oak cleaving thunderbolts,
 Singe my white head: and thou all-shaking thunder,
 Strike flat the thick rotundity o’th’ world,
 Crack nature’s moulds, all germens spill at once
 That makes ingrateful man.

(3.2.1-9)

If I have introduced these familiar lines rather late in this chapter, it is because they *are* familiar. By quoting them here, my intention is that my argument on location and the event will allow them to be considered anew. In the wealth of critical responses to this speech, it is rarely conceded that Lear maintains his imaginary authority over the elements.⁵⁷ One of the few writers to acknowledge this is George Williams, who notes: ‘These wild lines then must be understood as direct orders to the winds, the waves, the thunder, and the lightning. Such an interpretation accords well with what has been seen of the character of the king.’⁵⁸ In response to Williams’ article, E. Catherine Dunn writes that this speech and the following one ‘appear to be curses *upon himself*, primarily.’⁵⁹ Rather than continue such debate, however, there is now a pattern of general agreement.

⁵⁷ The critics I have found who come closest to this in more recent works are those who acknowledge, at least, that Lear is shown to be revelling in the storm, rather than opposing it. Tamise Van Pelt, for instance, terms Lear’s speech ‘his imagistic, orgiastic rant filled with the pounding masculine magnificence of "oak-cleaving thunderbolts"’. See ‘Entitled to be King: The Subversion of the Subject in *King Lear*.’ *Literature and Psychology*. 42. (1994): 100-12 (108).

⁵⁸ Williams *Op. Cit.*, 65.

⁵⁹ Dunn, *Op. Cit.*, 331.

Usually, as in the case of Martin Rosenberg, there is a formulation such as ‘Lear *contends against* the storm, with many subtle weapons.’⁶⁰ If it is not a matter of contending against, then it is one of defiance, or contending despite. The Gentleman’s speech from the preceding scene gives something of the same context: as we have seen, he speaks of Lear ‘Contending with the fretful element’. Indeed, it may be the case that this answer informs the reading of critics: Stephen Booth mentions that the audience have heard the description of the king contending, ‘and seen him do so at the beginning of this scene.’⁶¹ However, the Gentleman’s following lines suggest a character who is actively willing the storm on: ‘Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea, | Or swell the curled waters ‘bove the main, | That things might change, or cease’ (3.1.5-7). Soon, conversely, the speaker offers the image of a Lear who ‘Strives in his little world of man to outscorn | The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain’ (10-11)⁶², one that is who apparently seeks command over his own actions before those of the weather. In Lear’s opening speech in the storm, there is no such antithesis. The storm here is Lear’s ally; he seeks destruction and the weather is his means to it. There is the notable irony of Lear’s language performing the storm, just as the stage effects do, so that the arrival of his realisation comes about through the missing messianic qualities of his apocalyptic tone. He comes to terms with his own powerlessness at the same time as his language creates the event. Furthermore, the speech follows on perfectly from that with which he exits Regan’s house at the end of Act 2. There he promises ‘such revenges’ on his daughters ‘That all the world shall – I will do such things – | What they are, yet I know not’ (2.2.447). It is moments later that the first sound of ‘storm’ is directed (on this occasion, interestingly, the direction is for ‘storm and tempest’, 2.2.472).⁶³ In the next scene, the stage machinery of the tempest fills in the gaps of Lear’s aposiopetic curse: the storm constitutes, in the context of the speech of the king,

⁶⁰ Martin Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) 188, my emphasis.

⁶¹ Stephen Booth, *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition and Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale, 1983), 18.

⁶² To read, as Kenneth Muir did, *outscorn* as *outstorm* is tantalisingly helpful in thinking about the performative quality of Lear in the storm: the notion that Lear attempts to become greater than that which he is implicit in creating, *by creating it*, is a fascinating one. It must be said, though, that *outscorn* makes perfect sense, and the editorial substitution is superfluous, but for the fact that it highlights an attractive response to our reading of Lear’s character.

⁶³ It is not possible to know if a unique effect is called for here, but the stage direction ‘storm and tempest’ can be read as implying two types of sound at once. Certainly the direction is unique in Shakespeare’s works, and there is no other instance of it in the extant plays dating 1580-1642. See also, Thomson, who notes that ‘8 plays [from the period] have a signal for *storm*.’ See 23 n14.

the ‘terrors of the earth’ which he had promised. It might be remembered that in the original ‘part’ of Lear – the cue-script for the actor to learn – this continuity would have been readily apparent, for the gap between the curse speech and the storm speech would have been separated only by a direction to exit and enter. The passion and thoroughness implicit in the lines in the storm are indicative of the appropriateness of this completion.⁶⁴ It is crucial that the speech contains the first explicitly Christian imagery of the play – ‘drenched the steeples’ – as though Lear’s ‘revenges’ extended into an era far beyond his own. Other Shakespearean instances of anachronistic Christianity do not constitute curses, especially one which evokes the Biblical image of the Flood: ‘What they are, yet, I know not, but they shall be the terrors of the earth’. The text, then, insists that we take the storm as complicit in Lear’s meaning, whilst dismissing any impulse which would have us ask, to echo Dessen, the distorting question of *where*.

Lear’s attempted command of the weather in the storm is, as we have seen, anticipated somewhat ambiguously by the Gentleman’s speech to Kent. It is, however, also foreshadowed much earlier in the play, usually taking the form of a curse. ‘Blasts and fogs upon thee!’ (1.4.291) is one such instance, with ‘blasts’ open to a variety of interpretations: thunder, lightning, infection and winds, for example. Lear hints at his potential power again in rebuking Goneril: ‘I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,| Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove’ (2.2.415). These curses are indicative of Lear’s notion of his identity, that is, as one who can command weather – *bid*, crucially, is very different, qualitatively, from *ask*.⁶⁵ At their most developed, Lear’s curses take account of Neo-Platonic meteorology⁶⁶ as well as pagan mythology:

You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
 Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
 You fen-suck’d fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,
 To fall and blast her pride!
 (2.2.368)

⁶⁴ It might be said that any interval posited after the end of Act 2 severs this continuity somewhat. Foakes, for example has written ‘an interval may be inserted here to allow Lear a respite before his rages in the storm scenes.’ (‘Performance and text: King Lear.’ *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 17 (Jan 2005): 86). The very point, I propose, is no respite at all.

⁶⁵ Lear uses ‘bid’ again later, albeit, perhaps, somewhat fallaciously, ‘when the thunder would not peace at my bidding’ (4.6.101-2).

⁶⁶ See above, 1-13.

The fogs here are vapours, raised by the sun, but the fact that they are raised from fens makes them more noxious and harmful, thus with the potential to blast (or, in the Quarto, 'blister'). The minute detail of this part of the curse surely testifies to Lear's proclaimed faith in the power of weather, whether or not it evinces his belief that he truly can summon that power. The curse is all the more effective when it is acknowledged that it is governed not by imagery, but by scientific consensus. The pagan mythology of the quotation resides in Lear's invocation of the lightnings. In pre-republic Rome, it seems kings had pretensions of god-like grandeur and perhaps thought themselves able to mimic Jupiter/Jove in creating storms, and Pliny suggests that Numa actually had such power.⁶⁷ Lear has imagined himself in this Jove-monarch mould. The image-making of the above passage should be considered in conjunction with the earlier curse:

Hear, Nature, hear! dear goddess, hear!...
 Into her womb convey sterility.
 Dry up in her the organs of increase;
 And from her derogate body never spring
 A babe to honour her.
 (1.4.270)

Here invoking Nature, rather than Jove, Lear's curse is nonetheless commensurable with his later bidding of lightning. Jove's thunderbolt, those 'nimble lightnings', had the power to 'melt the blade, yet pass the scabbard; kill the child yet spare the mother'. Lear's curse of sterility is therefore much the same as his later curse: the lightning of Jove would not change the outer appearance, but would kill within. 'All the stored vengeance of heaven fall | On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones, | You taking airs, with lameness!' (2.2.354-6) is how Lear begins his 'nimble lightnings' curse, belying the later 'I do not bid the Thunder-bearer shoot'. The curse on fertility reaches its zenith in the storm as Lear demands the lightning 'Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world | Crack nature's moulds.' Again, the lightning, like Jove's, is intended to 'kill the child, yet spare the mother'⁶⁸: in this case rid the world of 'ingrateful man' yet leave the world intact. The term rotundity is clearly a reference to pregnancy – the implicit image of the ever-

⁶⁷ See George W. Williams, *Op. Cit.*, 65. Whether they actually believed in these powers or simply saw their potential in their image-making is debateable.

⁶⁸ See Williams, *Ibid.*, 70.

expecting Mother Earth. The ‘terrors of the earth’ then, is finally imagined as the rendering of the earth impotent, without killing the earth itself. As Lear commanded Nature to ‘convey sterility’ into Goneril, so the curse is here extrapolated to cover the entirety of the human race, just as the wrath following the ingratitude of his daughters is ostensibly visited upon the whole world. The conclusion of the earlier curse is arguably still relevant here:

If she must teem,
Create in her a child of spleen, that it may live
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her.
(1.4.273-5)

The echo of this curse is resonant in the storm. If Lear does not realise his wish for a sterile earth, the consolation is a world of ‘disnatured’ and tormenting children. The notion of nature itself producing disnature, points to the inherent dystopian quality of the lines. If we are to extrapolate the conclusion of the curse as Lear himself does the beginning, then, the inference is apocalypse. Just as the storm informs meaning in the language of curses, therefore, so it magnifies it when those curses are contextualised by the storm as an event.

The curse on the earth has been read by Janet Adelman as the point at which the masculine influence of the pagan aesthetic is destabilised by female authority:

Despite Lear’s recurrent attempts to find a just thunderer in the storm, that is, its violence ultimately epitomizes not the just masculine authority on which Lear would base his own but the dark female power that everywhere threatens to undermine that authority. No longer under the aegis of a male thunderer, the very wetness of the storm threatens to undo civilization, and manhood itself, spouting rain until it has ‘drench’d the steeples, drown’d the cocks’, its power an extension into the cosmos of Goneril’s power to shake Lear’s manhood.⁶⁹

Such a reading of the storm, authorizing, as it does, Goneril with the power of the weather, effectively makes the same move of pathetic fallacy as Lear himself does. As

⁶⁹Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to the Tempest* (Routledge, 1992), 110. See also Rosenberg, *Op. Cit.*, 191-2.

outlined by William R. Elton, it is the process of demystification of the storm which correlates to Lear's own process of forlorn realisation and acceptance.⁷⁰ In the first speech in the storm, which Adelman is citing, Lear does not concede authority over the elements to his daughters. Only as Lear declares to the storm, in his next speech, 'But yet I call you servile ministers | That will with two pernicious daughters join' (3.2.21-2), has he indeed moved from his self-conception of commander of the weather. Rather than being, as Adelman would have it, 'an extension into the cosmos of Goneril's power', however, Lear is insisting that it is an extension of his own inability to command. Adelman refuses to acknowledge that 'the very wetness of the storm' is the aspect which Lear most explicitly attempts to control: the attempt to drench the steeples and to drown the cocks is explicitly Lear's, and therefore male. The fact that the storm is not 'under the aegis of a male thunderer' is what accounts for the fact that civilisation is not undone, as Lear has threatened or sought. Furthermore, constructions of the storm as an explicitly female power have to contend with the unfortunate metaphor of spilling germens. If one truly wishes to sexualise the storm itself and not Lear's own misogyny, it becomes a kind of apocalyptic coitus interruptus with Mother Nature: 'all germens spill at once | That make ingrateful man.' Adelman's formulation of the storm as female here is surely preparatory work for her argument connecting it with witches, which we will discuss below. However, the will to connect the event of the storm in its entirety, whether causally or metaphorically, to any character of the play, or indeed gender or god, loses sight of an important fact. It is precisely such connection which Lear repeatedly undertakes, with changing emphasis or direction, and this is how the representation of his character is developed. The storm is consistently *just a storm*: the interpretation machine which seeks its origins and meaning as a storm is the domain of the characters. If we as critics engage in the same interpretation, we inevitably alter the means by which the characters are to be imagined.

The mention of witches brings us to our consideration of the storm's relationship with the supernatural in *King Lear*. Given that the play's closest neighbour in the Shakespearean chronology is *Macbeth* – and, indeed, that the Witches' heath of *Macbeth* has

⁷⁰ William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1966).

successfully infiltrated readings of *King Lear*⁷¹ – it is unsurprising that witches have been introduced into commentary:

...if the storm is classically the domain of the male thunderer, it is simultaneously the domain of disruptive female power: associated both with the storms that witches were commonly suspected of raising and with the storms that conventionally figure the turbulence of Fortune (the ‘arrant whore’ who – like Lear’s daughters – ‘ne’er turns the key to th’ poor’ [2.4.52-3]), this storm becomes in effect the signature of maternal malevolence, the sign of her power to withhold and destroy.⁷²

Adelman points towards a puzzling crux here. The work of the supernatural remains a constant point of reference when considering the storms in Shakespeare’s plays, and, as we have seen, the playwright is constantly at pains to problematise the straightforward anticipation of it which was the common dramatic consensus. The representation of Lear as a thunderer is, as noted, consistent with the pagan setting of the play. It is arguable that the supernatural aspect of Lear’s character is, then, a feature of Shakespeare’s historical aesthetic rather than a means to create an aura of the otherworldly in the storm. Such an argument would be sustained by the king’s gradual realisation of the storm’s natural origins. The notion that witches are somehow implicit in the makeup of the storm, however, is an attractive one, particularly, as Adelman notes, given Lear’s invocation of Hecate.⁷³ ‘The mysteries of Hecate and the night’ speaks to exactly the aura of otherness that the night of *King Lear* maintains during Act 3, and the supernatural elements of the night are certainly carefully maintained. However, before looking towards witches as having domain over *Lear*’s storm, we must consider two sizeable objections to Adelman’s argument. The first is that Lear’s invocation of Hecate is as transparent and straightforward as his attempted command of the storm. Hence ‘the domain of the male thunderer’ is rather untroubled: it is the self-imaged male thunderer who calls on Hecate and invokes the supernatural power of the night. If ‘domain of disruptive female power’ is to hold sway in the storm, then it must do so not only silently, but manifestly in opposition to Lear’s command. Such an objection to Adelman’s argument might in itself

⁷¹ See, especially, Ogden’s essay, the title of which, ‘Lear’s Blasted Heath’, of course borrows from *Macbeth*.

⁷² Adelman, *Op. Cit.*, 112.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 111.

be insignificant: there is clearly enough of the unspoken and subversive in the night to oppose it. However, my second reservation is that Adelman cites Edgar as Poor Tom in support of the influence of witches. ‘As Poor Tom reminds us, this storm is witch’s turf, where “Swithold ... met the nightmare, and her nine foal,| ... and aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!”’⁷⁴ It is unfortunate that the argument which would construe the storm as the work of witches lies in the words of one who is in disguise and chooses his speech so as to remain unrecognisable. Furthermore, it is the representation of a representation, the idea, that is, of what a privileged, educated male impersonating a madman might say. In this way, the influence of witches appears to be not meteorological, nor indeed supernatural, but rather the depiction of the social stereotyping character traits of the heir of a powerful patriarch. This speaks more about the placement of Edgar’s character and his notions of social identity than it does about the aspects of the storm and the night which might be supernatural. In opposition to arguments citing Edgar in support of the presence of witches is the notion that by revealing his true identity, the witches are exorcised: the domain of the witches is that of the depiction of the insane. If witches have any domain in *King Lear*, it is less the domain of disruptive female power, less still, as Adelman would have it, the turf of the storm, and more inherent in the imagined imaginations of the vagrant classes. Even when re-contextualising the storm as the supernatural, and hence *of another world*, it is curious that Adelman uses a word – ‘turf’ – which betrays an implicit will to localise, to *ground*. Following another quotation of Poor Tom’s, Adelman refers to the lexis as ‘The *landscape* of the witches’ cauldron’.⁷⁵ Witches, and their disruptive power, are marginalised, not empowered by Poor Tom’s invocation of them.

If the play’s original audience expected the supernatural when the stage machinery of the storm was utilised, such expectation might have been merited given the play’s source. The conflation of storm and the curse in *King Lear* owes something to one of Shakespeare’s sources, the anonymous chronicle play *King Leir*, which was first

⁷⁴ Ibid., 110, citing 3.4.117-20.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 111, my emphasis.

published in 1605.⁷⁶ In the source play, there are flashes of lightning and rumbles of thunder, but no sustained storm. As William Elton has made clear, *Leir*'s thunder is rather explicitly depicted as a divine voice:

'Thunder and lightning' create panic in the would-be murderer's intention and awaken his conscience. Noteworthy is the crucial difference between Lear's defiant challenge to the thunder, culminating in a naturalistic question regarding its origin, and the Messenger's stupefied terror:

Oh, but my conscience for this act doth tell,
I get heavens hate, earths scorne, and paynes of hell.

(ll. 1646-47)

'They bless themselves', the directions read, both assassin and victim sharing the religious mood engendered by the thunder.⁷⁷

The storm in *Leir*, then, encourages resolution, whilst the storm in *Lear* gives succour to curse. Thus much is indisputable. Earlier in the play, Edmund plays on the naivety of Gloucester by appealing to the same correlation of storm as divine voice that occurs in *Leir*: 'I told him the revenging gods | 'Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend' (2.1.44-6). In Psalm 83, the parallel of storm and the anger of God is invoked in the same way:

As the fyer burneth the forest, and as the flame setteth the mountaines on fyre: So persecute them with thy tempest, & make them afraied with thy storme. Fil their faces with shame, that thei maie seke thy Name, ö Lord.⁷⁸

The extraordinary marginal note which accompanies these verses in the Geneva edition is 'That is, be compelled by thy plagues to thy power.' This codicil, presumably, refers to the 'thei' who are to be the subjects of the storm, that are to be converted. There is a defiant, almost colonial ferocity to its tone; the language, that is of invasion (a term which, as discussed in the introduction, Lear uses to describe the storm). Against this grain, however, the note might be read in the same imperative vein in which the rest of the extract is written. Such a reading invokes an equally ferocious, but self-fulfilling God, encouraged by his own capacities of storm to express them further. There must always be the acknowledgement that, whenever postulating the audience's expectation of the

⁷⁶ *Leir* was probably revived around the time of its publication, having been performed at least as early as 1594.

⁷⁷ Elton, *Op. Cit.*, 67.

⁷⁸ Psalm 83, 14-16.

supernatural upon hearing and seeing the special effects of thunder and lightning, that each storm is necessarily invested with the supernatural in that it is understood as the work – the judgement – of God. As Elton notes, ‘Marlowe employs thunder and lightning as a sign of divine anger: in *Faustus* the power of generating thunder and lightning is, as in Job, a divine attribute, and Faustus’ ability to “rend the clouds” and produce the effect will unseat Jove and gain him “a deity” (1.1.60-64)’⁷⁹ Unlike Faustus, Lear’s impulse is not to unseat Jove, but to invoke him, and his tempestuous instruments. Although Lear’s ability to control the storm is imaginary, there is little qualitative difference in his summoning Jove and summoning the weather directly. This is the understanding with which Lear enters the storm: thunder and lightning, wind and rain, are agents of his and subject to his command, and to them he turns whenever he wishes to address the various dilemmas of his existence. His first speech in the storm is also characterised in precisely this way, but, as Elton postulates, it is a belief to which Lear cannot cling: ‘By the end of Act 4 Lear’s madness has run its course, as have also the tension and breakdown caused by the failure of belief on all levels; and he is ready for belief of some kind, though not, of course, for anything resembling his previous tenets.’⁸⁰ Lear’s ‘belief’, that is, is represented in terms of his acknowledgement not only of his lack of power over the storm, but of a willingness to conceive of the notion that there may be no possibility of such a power.⁸¹

The ‘naturalistic question’ to which Elton refers occurs at 3.4.151: ‘What is the cause of thunder?’ It is a question which reflects on Lear’s understanding of his own being, as well as that of his environment: both of which have become problematised. I will conclude this chapter by exploring this question in terms of my argument so far. Before I do, however, let us examine one of its most insistent words: *cause*.

Unlike *event*, *cause* occurs as if quite relentlessly throughout *King Lear*, and in many different ways. In Goneril’s use, it is both secretive and dangerous: ‘Never afflict

⁷⁹ Elton, *Op. Cit.*, 203.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 262.

⁸¹ The complex relation of storm and the Christian god is explored fully below, in Chapter 4.

yourself to know the cause' (1.4.238).⁸² For Lear, it is bodily and emotional: 'Old fond eyes | Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out' (1.4.293-4); 'No, I'll not weep. | I have full cause of weeping...' (2.2.472-3). Elsewhere in the play, *cause* is both crime ('what was thy cause? Adultery? 4.6.109) and vindication ('your sisters | Have, as I do remember, done me wrong. You have some cause, they have not' 4.7.72-4). Perhaps ultimately, *cause* is a special kind of impossibility: 'Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?' (3.6.74-5). *Cause*, like *event*, is a word invested with ambiguity by Shakespeare, throughout the plays. In *Othello*, for example, the final scene's minatory opening line operates through the word's cryptic qualities: 'It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul!' (5.2.1). In *Troilus and Cressida*, an inherent illogicality is made explicit: 'O, madness of discourse, | That cause sets up with and against itself!' (5.2.149-50). On occasion, *cause* and *event* are juxtaposed. In *King John*, this is overtly meteorological: 'No common wind, no custom'd event, | But they will pluck away his natural cause | And call them meteors, prodigies and signs.' (3.3.155-7). In *Antony and Cleopatra* the two words are linked again:

All strange and terrible events are welcome,
But comforts we despise. Our size of sorrow,
Proportioned to our cause, must be as great
As that which makes it.
(4.15.3-6)

It is this protean quality of *cause* in Shakespeare, and its relationship to the event, which I want to focus on in Lear's question, 'What is the cause of thunder?' Several editors point out that it is a question which harks back to ancient philosophical discussions about meteorology. Wells quotes Ovid here: 'Whether Jove or else the wind in breaking clouds do thunder'.⁸³ There is, however, a depth to the line greater than that conventional question. 'What is the cause of thunder?' can be understood as seeking out the atmospheric conditions which produce storms, but also questioning which side is taken by thunder, which purpose thunder is advocating: it can, in short, be understood as

⁸² This instance is only in the Quarto text. The Folio (and Foakes) has 'Never afflict yourself to know more of it.'

⁸³ Wells, ed. *Op. Cit.*, 194.

‘*whose* is the cause of thunder?’ Read either way, Lear’s question is indicative of the process of disillusionment that he has gone through in the storm. The more familiar reading accepts that the elements are not subject to human command and Lear seeks a reconfigured view based on that acceptance. The latter reading can be aligned with the earlier ‘yet I call you servile ministers’; that is, Lear accepts that the elements are not subject to *his* command and seeks a reconsidered view based on the notion that they are subject to someone else’s.

If we are to read *King Lear* with attention to its meteorology, then, ‘What is the cause of thunder?’ is one of the most pertinent and poignant lines in the play. To characterise the journey of Lear’s personality in the storm as a descent into madness is, of course, to oversimplify. Rather, the structures of the king’s belief are fractured. Comment has been made on how such fracturing enables Lear, apparently for the first time, to be aware of a wider societal concern which has developed under his reign: it is at this point, for example, that we may rejoin Dollimore: ‘When he is on the heath, King Lear is moved to pity’.⁸⁴ The meteorological aspect of Lear’s demystifying inheres in a lapse from solipsism and develops into a wider understanding of the forces of nature which prompt him to pray for his lost, weather-beaten subjects. From the starting position that *he* is the cause of thunder, and that *his* is the cause of thunder, the simple stock philosophical question opens an array of implications when that premise is dismissed. In questioning the cause of thunder, Lear is humanised, paradoxically refusing to seek shelter from the storm in the very moment that he fully acknowledges his powerlessness over it.

However the double meaning of *cause* underlies a crux on which the experience of the play rests. If Thomson’s thesis is correct, if the audience expect the supernatural at the sound and sight of theatrical storm, then Lear’s question proves a tipping point. Either this provides the naturalistic sign around which an understanding of the play can be formed with no room for the supernatural, or it provides an indication that the storm yet has the potential to take sides. Or rather, yet has the potential *to be understood* as taking sides: that is, as still with otherworldly power, with knowledge, with sway, with cause.

⁸⁴ Dollimore, *Op. Cit.*, 186.

Lear's question is left unanswered, though within ten lines the storm sounds again. 'What is the cause of thunder?' is a question which penetrates the phonic system of signification in early modern theatre. It does so, moreover, by demanding that the audience react to, understand through, the event of the storm.

3.

Macbeth: Supernatural Storms, Equivocal Earthquakes.

There is something magnificently appropriate in the cry ‘Blow, wind! Come, wrack!’ with which Macbeth, turning from the sight of the moving wood of Birnam, bursts from his castle. He was borne to his throne on a whirlwind, and the fate he goes to meet comes on the wings of storm.¹

In an important sense, as the above quotation from A.C. Bradley suggests, *Macbeth* is Shakespeare’s stormiest play. For all of the climactic force of *King Lear*’s third Act, and for the powerful terseness of the overture of *The Tempest*, it is in *Macbeth* that we find a language dominated by storm. Here, we have the meaning of remarkable weather, signs and portents debated, as in *Julius Caesar*; we have magical, conjured thunder and lightning, as in *The Tempest*; we have, as in *Lear*, the intimation of apocalypse and fatalistic doom. Unlike these plays, however, there is something peculiarly unsettling, subversive even, about *Macbeth*’s incidences of storm. The debates of remarkable weather follow the rebellious murder, rather than forewarn it. Whilst in one sense, the play exhibits the familiar and obvious relationship of storm and the supernatural, in another the magic is secretive: at the conclusion it is not only un-renounced but defiant, furtive, even victorious. Thus that particular impression of fatalism which characterises *Lear*’s storm is kept unresolved. The naivety of the victorious characters at the end of *Macbeth* can be seen as reflected in their inability to recognise the supernatural identity of the weather. In this chapter, I will explore examples of how this can be seen to work through the play. That *Macbeth* stages storms which conform to the theatrical status quo, in that they provide a backdrop for the supernatural figures, is worthy of detailed investigation. It is then, more widely, the sense of the supernatural storm which I will examine, along with the alternative meteorologies propounded by the characters who do not meet or know of the Witches. The constant tug between these extremes is reminiscent of the play’s renowned espousal of equivocation and, as my title suggests, this is dealt with in relation to a particularly violent phenomenon: the earthquake. As we shall see, the

¹ A.C. Bradley *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 281.

early modern distinction between storm and earthquake is not a decisive one; the two phenomena are fundamentally related.

Macbeth's stormy opening is an obvious place to begin. Perhaps less obvious is the extent to which these familiar lines, along with their concurrent effects, constitute a distinctly strange instance of storm:

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?²

The use of thunder and lightning to open a play is unusual. This is Shakespeare's first such usage and *The Tempest* is the only other. Nor is there a great deal of precedent for such an opening. Those who have followed Shakespeare in beginning with storm have revelled in the sudden, unexpected brutality of the effect. This is especially pronounced in Verdi's *Otello*, in which the first act of the source play is cut and the storm-struck crossing to Cyprus constitutes the overture. Perhaps Shakespeare, after writing *Lear*, once more recognised the dramatic potency of the stage effects and thought the idea of a loud, pyrophoric assault an excellent attention grabber. Perhaps the playwright saw the implicit connection of storm with the battleground of the following scene, as Ronald Watkins and Jeremy Lemmon have suggested:

The noise of storm, the cries of the familiar spirits that attend upon the Witches, above all the dialogue of the Witches themselves invest the battle of the play's opening with a greater and more fateful significance than the simple issue of military victory and defeat.³

The relationship of storm and battle is intriguing, and may offer an insight into why Shakespeare opens with the storm. The opening of a play with a battle is far more common, and the noise of thunder and that of the battle drums must have sounded fairly

² *The Tragedy of Macbeth* ed. Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 1997) 1, 1, 0sd. All *Macbeth* quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Norton edition and are included in the text. I have also made use of the Arden 2nd Series text, Kenneth Muir ed. (London: Methuen, 1959) and A. R. Braunmuller's New Cambridge edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³ *In Shakespeare's Playhouse: Macbeth* (London: David & Charles, 1974), 35.

similar.⁴ Moreover, as we shall see, the Captain in the second scene explicitly likens the battle to a storm. Although I will offer possible answers below, the question as to why Shakespeare decides to open with storm effects is not one which we can answer with certainty. What we can say, however, is that from this arresting opening, the storm is explicitly linked with the supernatural. In this, *Macbeth* is already qualitatively different from the other plays which we have thus far examined.

The rhyming trochaic tetrameter in which the Witches speak is itself evocative of the workings of magic: we might remember that the same poetic structure characterises, for example, the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The use of this form intensifies an element already present, for the connection of storm and magic, especially 'dark magic' was of course a well worn one. As I have already noted, evil spirits and supernatural events on the Renaissance stage are frequently accompanied by thunder and lightning. Although I have been arguing that Shakespeare's plays do not automatically engage in the relationship of storm and the supernatural, it must be said that *Macbeth* is not the first instance in which we find the correlation at work. Indeed, in one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*,⁵ the connection is made. During the play, as Roger Bolinbroke summons the spirit Asnath through the witch, Margery Jordan, the spirit is accompanied by one of the earliest examples of storm in Shakespeare's work:

The time when screech-owls cry and bandogs howl,
And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves -
That time best fits the work we have in hand....

*Here do the ceremonies belonging, and
make the circle. Southwell reads
'Coniuro te', &c. It thunders and lightens
terribly, then the spirit [Asnath] riseth.*
(1.4.17-21)

⁴ Especially since, as we have seen, drums were used as part of the thunder effects. See above, 44-5.

⁵ Following the quarto of 1594 rather than the Folio text, this is the name which the Oxford and Norton editors give to 2 *Henry VI*.

As the Norton editors point out, Asnath is an ‘anagram of “Sathan”, a variant form of “Satan.” Demons were supposed to be invoked by anagrams.’⁶ For these editors, and those of the Oxford edition, this is Shakespeare's first staging of thunder and lightning. Storm, then, is immediately endowed with a sense of the supernatural by Shakespeare and when this sense is problematised, as we have seen and will continue to see, it is done so vigorously and for aesthetic effect. Asnath is an explicitly evil spirit, as evidenced by his name and the ‘burning lake’ from which he arises (37). The structure of the renaissance playhouse is also applicable here, divided as it is into three sections: the Earth of the stage between Heaven and Hell. Evil spirits, as in these examples, nearly always rise from below. Margery Jordan, though the text names her as a witch, invokes ‘the eternal God’ to persuade Asnath to answer (24). Though a conduit for an evil spirit, then, and thereby associated with storm, the witch is seen to contain the evil which the presence of the spirit threatens. Asnath speaks on her terms, and on those of God. This is manifestly different from the Witches of *Macbeth* who are very quickly established as servants to their spirits: ‘I come, Grimalkin’, ‘Paddock calls’ (1.1.7-8) and who certainly do *not* appeal to God, but who do have an oragious entrance of their own. In beginning with a storm and with the incantatory chants of the Witches, Shakespeare is drawing on a vein of reference which immediately contextualises the thunder and lightning. The weather is constructed as supernatural from the outset. That the connection of storm and the supernatural is common adds to the effect of its strangeness: the storm is thereby both usual, in that the audience recognise the context, and unusual, in that it begins the play, and in that the remarkable weather is not treated as supernatural by any of the other characters. While we cannot, of course, expect characters in plays to be ‘aware’ of the theatrical conditions of their representation, part of the method of *Macbeth* is to draw attention to the different levels of meaning between characters, and indeed, audience: we may usually refer to this as dramatic irony. It is often commented that the Witches’ ‘Fair is foul and foul is fair’ (1.1.10) is echoed by Macbeth’s ‘So foul and fair a day I have not seen’ (1.3.36). Such an echo is indicative both of the pervasive effect of the Witches on the climate and of the invisibility inherent in their conjuring. Macbeth ‘has not seen’ such weather, but also ‘has not seen’ a cause for such weather. Indeed, with Banquo and,

⁶ Greenblatt, ed. 1.4.21n.

indirectly, Lady Macbeth, he is one of the people who do see this cause. All other characters 'have not seen' and are not capable of seeing; the supernatural identity of the catalysts of the play's action remains invisible. This is a very precise dramatic irony given that the connection between storm and the supernatural had been made truly visible on the stage for many years before.

Of course, the alliance of supernatural and storm is not solely the preserve of the dramatic. Indeed, it seems likely that the above stage instances were inspired and informed by popular belief. King James, famously, was highly suspicious of witches (we shall explore a particular manifestation of this suspicion later) and wrote weighty and detailed works against them. In his *Daemonologie* (1597), he writes 'They can rayse stormes and tempestes in the aire, either vpon Sea or land, though not vniuersally, but in such a particular place and prescribed boundes, as God will permitte them so to trouble.'⁷ William Perkins (1558-1602), in drawing the difference between a 'bad witch' and 'good witch' notes that the former can 'raise tempests by sea and by land'⁸. In *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (1616), Alexander Roberts concludes: '[As f]or the Elements, it is an agreeing consent of all, that they can corrupt and infect them, procure tempests, to stirre vp thunder & lightning, moue violent winds, destroy the fruits of the earth.'⁹ Reginald Scot, a noted skeptic, begins his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) with the subtitle *An impeachment of Witches power in meteors and elementary bodies, tending to the rebuke of such as attribute too much vnto them*. Scot's lengthy work, then, is itself testament to the belief in the meteorological power of witchcraft, and he makes the point clear in his opening chapter, which is labeled 'Credulitie'. 'But let me see', writes Scot 'anie of them all rebuke and still the sea in time of tempest, as Christ did ; or raise the stormie wind, as God did with his word; and I will believe in them.'¹⁰ Such seeing – every sensationalist aspect of it – was clearly happening in the theatres of London and, Scot aside, there does not seem to have been much disbelief to suspend.

⁷ James Stuart, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597), 46.

⁸ William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: 1608) 173-4.

⁹ Alexander Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (London, 1616), 19-20.

¹⁰ The chapter title and quotation are found in the 1584 text on page 2. Also found, without the chapter title, in H. R. Williamson ed. (Arundel: Centaur Press, 1964).

Given this contemporary climate, then, both in the playhouses and in the literature, the association of witches and storm in *Macbeth* is not surprising. Critics have long argued over what power exactly the Witches possess. A.C. Bradley, for example, contends that

The Witches ... are not goddesses, or fates, or, in any way whatever, supernatural beings. They are old women, poor and ragged, skinny and hideous, full of vulgar spite, occupied in killing their neighbours' swine or revenging themselves on sailors' wives who have refused them chestnuts.¹¹

A reading such as this requires the accompanying notion that the Macbeths would still pursue their murderous path without the predictions which the Witches offer. The logic of free-will and determinism is never fully articulated in the play and so such notions can be proffered without too much fear of contradiction. However, 'supernatural beings', as we have seen, are invariably allied to storms. The fact that the Witches and thunder and lightning always appear at the same time suggests an early modern signifier – which has kept some of its identity, if not its potency – of the supernatural.¹² Bradley's 'old women', whatever power they are endowed with, are at least constructed as being something *other* than old women by the effects of light and sound. This, furthermore, in a play run through with storm and wind imagery, which Bradley himself is adept in pointing out.¹³ Another possible reading of the Witches is through the phrase 'weird sisters' M. D. W. Jeffreys, for example, contends that 'The three weird sisters are not witches'.¹⁴ And yet Peter Stallybrass has reminded us that '[Weird Sisters], witches or warlocks or norms' were 'distinctions which were rarely observed by Tudor and Stuart witchcraft treatises or reports of trials.'¹⁵ *Weird*, as several editors have noted, is not the term used in the Folio. There, the word at 1.3.30 and at 2.1.18 is *weyward*, from the Old English *wyrd*, which the OED defines as: 'Having the power to control the fate or destiny

¹¹ Bradley, *Op. Cit.*, 285.

¹² We might think of Gothic fiction, here, or indeed horror films, in which the storm is often indicative of the workings of the supernatural. The connection is not confined to the clumsy symbolism of Hammer horror, but can be found in more complex and effective works, such as Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980).

¹³ Bradley, *Op. Cit.*, 281-3.

¹⁴ M. D. W. Jeffreys, 'The Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*,' *English Studies in Africa* 1 (March 1958): 53.

¹⁵ Peter Stallybrass, 'Macbeth and Witchcraft' in *Focus on Macbeth* ed. JR. Brown (London: Routledge, 1982): 189-210.

of human beings, etc.; later, claiming the supernatural power of dealing with fate or destiny.’ If *weird* frees the characters from the definition of witches, it does nothing to stop them being explicitly aligned with the supernatural. Perhaps Stephen Booth’s approach is the most inviting: ‘What matters...is not hunting down an answer to the question ‘What are the witches?’ All the critical and theatrical efforts to answer that question demonstrate that the question cannot be answered... The play does not require that it be answered. Thinking about the play’s action does.’¹⁶ Surely, if the play does not require that the question of *what* the Witches are be answered, it at least demands that we inform any reading of the play’s weather with an acceptance of their role in it. This is what is required by ‘thinking about the play’s action.’ In answering the questions ‘what are the implications of the storm in figuring the theistic identity of the Witches?’ and ‘how are those implications to be read in the rest of the play?’ then, it is crucial to bear in mind the *supernatural* force of weather which proves an immediate point of reference.

Whatever power the Witches have, the extensive correlation of their appearance and the thunder and lightning identifies both them and the storm as supernatural. As we have seen, this correlation is not solely a dramatic construct. However, it is also important to remember that, for the Jacobean, weather, may be thought of as being caused either by natural or by supernatural causes.¹⁷ ‘Natural’ causes – those attributable to ‘meteors’ – were deemed explainable by science or natural philosophy, which of course, witchcraft was not. Although they may have portended the same omen, storms were frequently attributed to one source or the other; the two weather systems seemed to have been imagined to work in tandem, without functioning at the same time. Hence, when King James describes the storms for which Witches are responsible, he declares they are

verie easie to be discerned from anie other naturall tempestes that are
meteores, in respect of the suddaine and violent raising thereof, together
with the short induring of the same. And this is likewise verie possible to

¹⁶ Stephen Booth, *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 102.

¹⁷ It may seem that this division ignores Christian belief. However, the meteorological texts which explicate the ‘natural’ causes of weather never fail to make it clear that God is responsible for each of those processes. Thus, when weather is ‘supernaturally’ caused, it is an interruption or invasion of God’s power.

their master to do, he hauing such affinitie with the aire as being a spirite, and hauing such power of the forming and moouing thereof, as ye haue heard me alreadie declare.¹⁸

This distinction between a natural and a supernatural storm is critical in a meteorological reading of *Macbeth*. Although James thinks it ‘verie easie’ to distinguish between the two, there do not seem to have been clear guidelines offered by the king or his contemporaries and there are certainly accounts of storms both ‘suddaine’ and ‘short induring’ which were not deemed supernatural.¹⁹ However, as has been made clear by many critics, the presence of witches and storms in *Macbeth* may well reflect a very particular resonance for James. In 1589 Anne of Denmark was due to sail to Scotland to marry the king. This plan had to be abandoned, however, when a tempest struck. James, in the autumn of that year, set sail in the opposite direction to complete the marriage, and stayed at the Danish Court throughout the winter. When the newlyweds sailed for Scotland in the spring, their ships were again subject to storms – one ship was lost – and witch-hunts on both sides of the North Sea began. As Stephen Greenblatt has written, ‘One of the accused, Agnes Thompson, confessed to the king and his council that on Halloween 1590 some two hundred witches had sailed to [North Berwick] in sieves.’²⁰ It seems highly likely, then, that Shakespeare had heard of this incident, or read about it in the pamphlet *News from Scotland* (1591), for when the Witches in *Macbeth* are plotting their sea-tempest on the Tiger, one says ‘in a sieve I’ll thither sail’ (1.3.7).²¹ Numerous critics have remarked on the relationship between the king and the Witches.²² The important point here is that storms may be understood by Jacobeans to be the result of

¹⁸ James Stuart, *Op Cit.*, 46.

¹⁹ We have already seen, for example, the storm which offered a backdrop for the Earl of Essex’s departure to Ireland 56-7.

²⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York, Norton, 2004), 346. Halloween 1590 postdates James’ storm-struck return – the ‘witches’ were apparently gathering for another purpose – but the use of the sieves is still significant.

²¹ Further credence to the argument that Shakespeare was alive to contemporary reference for this scene is lent by the name of the ship, the Tiger. cf. M.A. Taylor, ‘He That did the Tiger Board’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15 (Winter, 1964) 110-13; H.N Paul *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (London: Macmillan, 1950), 302-3.

²² See, for example, Alan Sinfield, ‘*Macbeth*: History, Ideology and Intellectuals’, *Critical Quarterly* 28.1 (1986), 63-77.

supernatural or natural causes. The language and the actions of the Witches in *Macbeth*, dramatic and memorable as they may be, are only one side of this dichotomy.

The incarnations of the Witches and their relation to the weather dominate the opening and the third scene. In the intermediate scene, however, a different stance is taken:

As whence the sun 'gins his reflection
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,
So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come
Discomfort swells. (1.2.25-8)

The Captain here is relaying to Duncan the story of the battle. At this point in his narration, Macdonald has been slain - the 'comfort' in the simile – and the Norwegian lord is about to begin his 'fresh assault'(33). The imagery the Captain uses to introduce this assault is strictly meteorological: the storms are natural. The 'reflection' of the sun refers to its return from the zenith of the spring equinox²³; *spring* is used here to mean both the season and *origin*. At this point in the year, it was believed that violent weather should be expected. Hence the OED, in defining *equinox* cites Richard Bentley (1692): 'The months of March and September, the two æquinoxes of our year, are the most windy and tempestuous.' Rather than the immediate pleasantness of late spring and summer, then, there is a likely period of chaos. 1692 is admittedly a late date with regards to *Macbeth* and the OED's offering might therefore seem anachronistic.²⁴ However, even if the meteorology does not reinforce the reading of the line, the Captain's phrasing still makes use of a kind of poetic truth. Thus, 'As whence the sun 'gins his reflection | Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break' implies that this process is a given – a received truth which the audience will recognise and upon which an extended metaphor can be established. Although the Captain is using the belief as an elaborate trope and the elucidation of summer storms is not his aim, there is a subtle significance to his speech. Implicit in the understanding of weather systems on display here is the notion that storms and thunders are predictable. The equinox is a reliable, immovable point in the year and,

²³ See the OED, *reflection* 4.c (which cites the Captain's use): 'The action of turning back from some point; return, retrogression'.

²⁴ I have been unable to find better contemporary evidence on the theory that equinoxes and storms are linked.

therefore, so is the weather that it is thought to generate. In this way, storms become to some extent foretold, which is to say that, rather than making predictions based on the portent of thunder, thunder is already thought to have been in place. One would not readily imagine a Jacobean praising the occasion of the equinox as sign of God's benevolence, for example to signify plentiful harvest for the year, because the equinox is a predictable, calculable event. Similarly, then, an equinoctial storm should engender few predictions, because it would have occurred 'in place'. This is a far cry from the thunder and lightning of the Witches, who seem to create the weather to suit their own malevolent sensibilities. Indeed, part of the fearfulness of the weather of the Witches is in its unpredictability and its capacity to alter the environment suddenly: fair is foul and foul is fair. Moreover, if the Captain's meteorology is descriptive and inherited, there is space in the text, surely, for a reading of the Witches' thunder and lightning as *performative* storms. 'I'll do and I'll do and I'll do' (1.3.9). It is this performative aspect of the Witches' weather, this promise of storm, which endows their identities with further supernatural power. Although the drums, the thunder-run and the fireworks begin the Witch scenes, it is their language which continues to perform the storm, 'In thunder, lightning or in rain', 'fair is foul', 'tempest-tossed'. Their capacity to perform this storm in language sets them apart from Margery Jordan, for example, and other stage witches, who do not maintain the oragious character of their magic in their speech. *Macbeth's* Witches are in complete control of the weather, and this is consolidated in their use of language to perform the storm.

It must be noted, however, that the difference between the Captain's storm and those of the Witches is neatly defined in their origins but not so neatly in their effects. Indeed, the use of the modifiers 'direful' and 'discomfort' are indicative of the location of thunder in *Macbeth's* aesthetic: even the most predictable storm does not lose its prophetic implications. Greenblatt has contended that, in engendering the language of *Macbeth* with storms and magic

Shakespeare was burrowing deep into the dark fantasies that swirled about in the king's brain. It is all here: the ambiguous prophecies

designed to lure men to their destruction, the ‘Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders’ that once threatened Anne of Denmark.²⁵

As we have seen, however, the storms that Greenblatt cites here are manifestly different from those which led to James’ honeymoon witch hunt. The captain explicitly mentions a natural reason for the bad weather, however dangerous (shipwrecking) and terrible (direful) they might be. Even though James’ ships set sail from Denmark at around the spring equinox of 1590, the storms that sank one of them and endangered the rest were immediately attributed to witches in Denmark and soon after in Scotland. Put bluntly, the Captain’s storms are natural; King James’ storms are supernatural. This is not to say that Greenblatt is mistaken in his appraisal of James’ ‘dark fantasies’: from the available evidence on James it seems highly likely that the king would have found *Macbeth* unsettling, and clearly leapt to conclusions about storms and witches. The dramatic irony discussed above, then, must have been especially poignant for James, for the unnatural or supernatural malicious sorcery of the Witches remains as an undercurrent to all but a few characters of the play. A reading of the Captain’s imagery which, like Greenblatt’s, concentrates on James’ reaction, misses this irony. The Captain’s understanding of storms is very different from James’, especially as these are *shipwrecking* storms. The construction of these as natural, given that James contends the opposite, creates a tension which is not resolved until the Witches are seen, in the following scene, plotting a shipwreck. For those, like the Captain, who do not encounter the Witches, storms remain calculable phenomena, attributable to natural origins. This suggestion is analogous with the fact that the Witches are not even acknowledged, let alone punished in the play’s conclusion: their powers and their efforts, meteorological or otherwise, are undisclosed to any character still living.

The incidents in *Macbeth* of weather being attributed to natural causes are invariably from characters who are not involved with the Witches. As we have seen, the Captain speaks of equinoxes resulting in storms, and yet those storms retain a certain foreboding. Similarly, Lennox, upon reaching Macbeth’s castle after Duncan is murdered, does not

²⁵ Greenblatt, *Op. Cit.*, 349.

leap to conclusions about the causes of the remarkable weather, yet is fearful of what it might portend:

The night has been unruly: where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i'th air; strange screams of death,
And, prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
New hatch'd to th' woeful time, the obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth
Was feverous, and did shake.
(2.3.50-7)

It is not uncommon for critics, presumably encouraged by this description, to note that there was a 'frightful hurricane of the night when Duncan was murdered'²⁶ The connection between storm and omen is, of course, nothing new. The link is most explicitly drawn in *Julius Caesar*, in which Casca, in the midst of a storm, is troubled that 'prodigies | Do so conjointly meet'(1.3.28-9). In the same scene, Casca, like Lennox, seems to report an earthquake: 'all the sway of earth | Shakes like a thing unfirm' (3-4). Despite appearing in both plays, of all of the prodigies which Lennox lists, this last is surely the most unusual, if not the most fearful. In early modern England, an earthquake was thought to prognosticate a time of terrible upheaval. As Abraham Fleming wrote in 1580:

But of what sorrowes to come are Earthquakes foretokens? First, to beginne, of warres, whereby it is most certaine pestilence and famine are ingendered: pestilence by the aire poisoned with the stinch of dead carcasses lieng vburied: famine by reason of husbandrie, when plough landes lie vnmanured: besides other calamities full of feare, horror, and desolation.²⁷

It is clear, then, that earthquakes are not to be taken lightly, whether obscure birds are clamouring or not. Although they are hardly common, it is quite possible that Shakespeare would have experienced an earthquake himself: the earthquake of 6th April

²⁶ Bradley p. 281. For other instances, see H. Hawkins, *Strange Attractors: Literature, Culture and Chaos Theory* (Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall, 1995), 80.

²⁷ Abraham Fleming, *A Bright Burning Beacon* (London, 1580), 15.

1580 which prompted Fleming and many others to write was apparently felt throughout England.²⁸ Perhaps a more immediate source of reference for the significance of earthquakes, though, was the story of Jesus on the cross. If, as has been argued, Shakespeare had access to the Geneva Bible,²⁹ in it he would have read:

Then Iesus cryed againe with a loude voice and yelded vp the gost. And beholde, the vaile of the Temple was rent in twayne, from the top to the bottome, and the earth did quake, & the stones were clouen, and the graues did open them selues, and many bodies of the Sainctes whiche slept, arose. (Matthew 27:50-52)

Fleming interprets earthquakes, not unreasonably given this context, as a sign of ‘the wrath of almightie God, therewithall admonishing vs to amende our euill life’. The same had been said of thunderstorms by contemporary commentators, but, as Fleming goes on to demonstrate, the Biblical allusion imbues the theory with a grim authority:

otherwise such sorrowes are like to light vpon vs, as shall turne to our most miserable ouerthowe and lamentable destruction: and here vpon it came to passé, that when our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, the earth quaked and trembled.³⁰

Such a parallel, of course, is even more relevant when, as in 1580, the earthquake occurs in the week of Easter. Nor is Matthew’s account the only Biblical reference to earthquakes; in Revelations, the apocalyptic imagery abounds with them: ‘And I behelde when hee had opened the sixt seale, and loe, there was a great earthquake, and the sunne was as blacke as sackcloth of heare, & the moone was like blood’ (6:12). This same darkening of the sun precedes the earthquake in the Book of Joel, where we find ‘the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand: A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness’ (2:1-2) Indeed, this darkening of the sun will have an eerie familiarity to those who recall Ross’ words in *Macbeth*:

²⁸ See R. Mallet, *Catalogue of Earthquakes from 1606 B.C. to 1755* (London, 1853) p.61 which lists other, more localised English earthquakes. It is possible also that Shakespeare would have been in London for the earthquake which struck the city on Christmas Eve, 1601. Fleming lists eight other writers who published ‘reportes’ of the ‘Easter Earthquake’, some of which are now lost. Furthermore, it is likely that many others wrote about the phenomenon after Fleming had printed his work, as he published it in 1580, when contemporary reports might not have reached him, or not yet been completed.

²⁹ See, for example, Naseeb Shaheen, ‘Shakespeare’s Knowledge of the Bible – How Acquired’, *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1988): 201-14.

³⁰ Fleming, *Op. Cit.*, 15.

Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
 Threatens his bloody stage. By th' clock 'tis day,
 And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.
 (2.4.5-7)

Ross here is responding to the Old Man, who, like Lennox, is in the unfortunate position of noticing prodigious 'things strange' in hindsight rather than premonition. The sun, the travelling or *travailing* lamp,³¹ is subsumed by the night, in the exact way which the Bible shows should be treated as foreboding. Drawing carefully from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Shakespeare took as his model for Duncan's murder that which Donwald arranges of King Duff. Consequently, then, after Duff's murder, 'there appeered no sunne by day, nor moone by night ... and sometimes such outrageous windes arose, with lightnings and tempests, that the people were in great fear of present destruction.'³² Again, then, the portents appear rather too late. In *Macbeth*, the Witches seem able to foresee many things, and create storms, and so their supernatural qualities are augmented by the fact that most characters – 'natural' characters – display knowledge of meteors only in hindsight. And yet the Witches remain silent on the subject of the darkness which foretells an earthquake. Indeed, if anyone in the play shows prescience of this, it is Lady Macbeth:

Come, thick night,
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
 To cry 'Hold, hold!'
 (1.5.48-52)

It might be argued that Lady Macbeth here is implicitly linked with the Witches, in that she calls upon the heavens to align themselves to her own malicious purposes. This invocation of deviant darkness resonates with the supernatural and evil, especially in the light (so to speak) of its Biblical precedents. It is not too much to say that Macbeth is linguistically integrated in this effect later in the play, when he echoes the summons:

³¹ See Muir ed. 72, n.7.

³² Quoted in G. Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1973) Vol. 7, 483-4.

‘Come, seeling night, | Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day’ (3.2.47-8). In case this ricochet of syntax is not enough, Macbeth, telepathologically perhaps, constructs the opposite of his wife’s ‘thick night’ as a threat to their dynasty: ‘Light thickens’ (51).³³

After the earthquake of 1580, the Church of England published *The order of prayer, and other exercises, vpon Wednesdays and Frydayes, to auert and turne Gods wrath from vs, threatned by the late terrible earthquake: to be vsed in all parish churches and houtholdes throughout the realme*. This document contained the Book of Joel in which can also be found ‘The earth shall quake before them; the sun and the moon shall be dark’ (2:10).³⁴ Presumably from reading Joel or from hearing these state-ordered sermons, Fleming goes on to write:

Before the end of the world come (saith Christ) iniquitie shall abound, there shalbe rumors of wars, there shalbe Earthquakes, there shalbe famine & troubles: all which if they be but the beginnings of sorrowes, alas what calamities will followe?

*The Prophet saith that Before the great and terrible daie of the Lord come, wonders shalbe seene in the heauens and in the earth, bloud and fire, pillars of smoke, the Sunne darkened, and the Moone turned into bloud, &c.*³⁵

Fleming’s work, like the church document and several contemporary writings on the earthquake, contains a prayer specifically designed to be enunciated in times of disaster. Indeed, although Fleming’s work contains passages which attempt to elucidate the *causes* of earthquakes rather than what they signify, it is clear that so-called ‘naturall reasons’ are, in the case of the quake of 1580, dismissed. In none of the extant documents relating to the earthquake does the author contend that the disaster is down to natural causes, although the majority of them list what these ‘natural’ causes - in the case of other

³³ For an investigation of the work of telepathy in Shakespeare see Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), in which Royle offers ‘the irresistible hypothesis: Shakespeare is telepathy’ (158). See also Royle’s ‘The Poet: *Julius Caesar* and the Democracy to Come’ *Oxford Literary Review* 25 (2003): 39-62.

³⁴ Published in 1580, the document was ordered by Elizabeth I and the Privy Council. In addition to Joel, it is comprised of Isaiah Chapter 58, two prayers, a ‘godlie admonition for the time present’ and several psalms (including Psalm 46: ‘...Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swellings thereof’ (2-3)). It also contains Arthur Golding’s report of the earthquake, though it does not print Golding’s name.

³⁵ Cf. Joel 2: 30-31.

earthquakes - must be. In Lennox's speech, the adjective 'feverous' is most telling: the earthquake is understood to be of natural origin. There is no element of the supernatural here, nor mention of God or the Bible, although both would offer a fearful context in which to understand the earthquake. It must also be pointed out that, for early modern thinkers, an earthquake was not due to plate tectonics. Rather, following Aristotle, Pliny and other thinkers of the Classical era, the earthquake is considered a form of storm. The general principle upon which the theory of earthquakes is based is that wind, trapped beneath the surface of the earth, rushes and swirls underground, causing the earth to shake. As Fleming writes, a natural cause of an earthquake would be 'all the winds being gotten into certeine veines, holes, and caues of the earth, and there mooued by there secrete rusling.'³⁶ Likewise, Arthur Golding notes that

naturally Earthquakes are sayde to be engendred by winde gotten into the bowels of the earth, or by vapors bredde and enclosed within the hollowe caues of the earth, where, by their stryuing and struggling of themselues to get oute, or being haled outwarde by the heate and operation of the Sun, they shake the earth for want of sufficient vent to issue out at.³⁷

In Aristotelian terms, the wind is attempting to return to its rightful place in the air, so that the elements are again in a balanced state.³⁸ Similarly, the element of fire, trapped in the watery and airy vapour of a cloud, is compelled by friction to be discharged as lightning. Pliny the Elder, from whom as much of the early modern meteorology is derived as from Aristotle, contends that

Neither is this shaking in the earth any other thing, than is the thunder in the cloud: nor the gaping chinke thereof ought els, but like the clift whereout the lightening breaketh, when the spirit enclosed within, struggleth and stirreth to goe forth at libertie.³⁹

Following on from this comparison, Simon Harward, in 1607, also makes the link between earthquakes and storms when describing thunder and lightning:

³⁶ Fleming, *Op. Cit.*, Chapter 2.

³⁷ A. Golding, *A discourse vpon the earthquake* (London, 1580) 4.

³⁸ See Aristotle *Meteorologica* and Seneca, *The Workes Both Morrall and Natural* trans. Thomas Lodge (London: 1614).

³⁹ Pliny, *The Historie of the VVorld* (London, 1601) 37.

This hotte exhalation...courseth vp and downe in the clowd, seeking
some passage out, which when it cannot find, it maketh a way by force,
and being kindled, by the violent motion it breaketh through the
clowde.⁴⁰

Moreover, this was not simply a scientific analogy confined to the natural philosophers, but found its way into literature. In Thomas Dekker's *A Strange Horse-Race* (1613), we are told of 'thundring velocity, lightning-like violence, and earthquake.' In Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Qveen*, we find the description 'trembling with strange feare, did like an earthquake show. | As when the almightie *Ioue* in wrathfull mood |... Hurles forth his thundering dart.'⁴¹ What we have, then, is an event rich in ecclesiastical resonance and which might carry such meaning for anyone who experiences or hears of it. Rather than drawing upon this resource, however – and with the implications of the death of Christ and the apocalypse, it is a rich one – the earthquake is constructed as natural. As Harold Bloom has written: 'Macbeth rules in a cosmological emptiness where God is lost, either too far away or too far within to be summoned back.'⁴² Booth has shown us how Macbeth, in contrast to young Siward, is denied expository rites.⁴³ God is almost absent from *Macbeth* or, perhaps, Macbeth eradicates belief: 'I could not say 'Amen'| When they did say 'God bless us'', he says of the guards he kills (2.2.26-7).⁴⁴ The impact of the earthquake cannot be free from Biblical overtones: we might call to mind one of the play's allusions: the Captain describes Macbeth and Banquo, who 'meant to bathe in reeking wounds | Or memorize another Golgotha' (1.2.39-40). Booth, interestingly, writes that the Golgotha image is a 'stylistic analogue to the perverse meteorological commonplace' of the Captain's equinoctial storm.⁴⁵ Of course, *meteor* is a narrower term now – as Booth uses it – than it had been, but once included earthquakes. Golgotha, the site of Christ's crucifixion, which is to say, an earthquake's epicentre, is indelibly linked with violence and with death but also the heroism of victorious leaders. Despite

⁴⁰ Simon Harward, *A discourse of the seuerall kinds and causes of lightnings* (London, 1607).

⁴¹ *The Fairie Qveen* Book 1, Cant. 8, 76-9; Dekker *A Strange Horse-Race* (London: 1613).

⁴² Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead, 1998) 525.

⁴³ Booth, *Op.Cit.*, 93.

⁴⁴ Furthermore Macbeth is responsible for the death of two of the other characters who invoke God: Banquo and Lady Macduff: see 2.3.126 and 4.2.59. The other incidences are Malcolm and Lady Macbeth's Doctor and Gentlewoman and Siward.

⁴⁵ Booth, *Op. Cit.*, 97.

occurrences such as this, however, there is something quite systematic about the absence of faith in the text. Indeed the lack of any mention of God in relation to the storms and the earthquake, if anything, augments the supernatural power of the Witches to control the earth and the skies and to see the future.

The trapping of winds was evidently a theory to which Shakespeare gave credence. In *Venus and Adonis*, lines describing the goddess's feelings on seeing the injured youth display both the early seismology and the emotions which earthquakes engender in the victims. Venus

quakes;
As when the wind, imprison'd in the ground,
Struggling for passage, earth's foundation shakes,
Which with cold terror doth men's minds confound.
(1045-8)

Lennox's 'feverous' is indicative that he is subscribing to the scientific explanation of the earthquake, rather than attributing it to supernatural causes. The personification of the Earth was a common notion, with its fever's symptoms being the trapped wind and the shaking. We find the same personification, and fever, articulated in *1 Henry IV*:

GLYNDŴR	I say the earth did shake when I was born.
HOTSPUR	And I say the earth was not of my mind If you suppose as fearing you it shook.
GLYNDŴR	The heavens were all on fire, the earth did tremble -
HOTSPUR	O, then the earth shook to see the heavens on fire, And not in fear of your nativity. Diseased nature oftentimes breaks forth In strange eruptions; oft the teeming earth Is with a kind of colic pinched and vexed By the imprisoning of unruly wind Within her womb, which for enlargement striving Shakes the old bedlam earth and topples down Steeple and moss-grown towers. (3.1.19-31)

Although Glyndŵr's aggrandising of the portentousness of this earthquake is met with mockery by Hotspur, the latter's comments still betray something of the fear of the earthquake phenomenon. The 'colic' and 'unruly wind', as well as aligning Hotspur's

speech with Lennox's 'feverous', point towards a fear arising from the meteorology of earthquakes. As S. K. Heninger (1968) has noted, 'not the least terror invoked by earthquakes was the possibility that stagnant infectious airs ... might be released by this rending of the earth's surface.'⁴⁶ This calls to mind the phrase of Fleming's, quoted above, 'most certaine pestilence... is ingendered.'

However, if we are to take the influence of contemporary meteorology into account, we must also point out that there is still something rather unusual about Lennox's description. To illustrate this, here are some quotations concerning the weather conditions which were thought to accompany a feverous earth:

Againe, wheras in Earthquakes that procéede of naturall causes, certaine signes and tokens are reported to go before them, as, a tempestuous working and raging of the sea, the wether being fair, temperate, and vnwindie, calmenesse of the aire matched with great colde: dimnesse of the Sunne for certaine dayes⁴⁷

the earth is neuer wont to quake, but when the sea is so calme, and the aire so still, that nether ships can saile, nor birdes flie.⁴⁸

If any earthquake bee at hand, the Sea will giue manifest tokens thereof vnto the skilfull Marriner, for though no wind be stirring, the sea will swell and mount with billowes and great waues as in a Tempest and storme.⁴⁹

It is clear, then, that for these thinkers the air must be still for the earth to quake, whilst the sea either rages in the still air or remains still itself. Nowhere in contemporary theories of earthquakes is there any parallel to Lennox's opening gambit: 'The night has been unruly' or 'chimneys were blown down' and certainly not anything approaching the 'hurricane' of Bradley. Indeed, the very opposite is almost always the case. Motionlessness, silence, immobility. Lennox's earthquake, then, is a kind of hyper-storm. That which afflicts the earth and makes it feverous has also afflicted the air. Neither

⁴⁶ S.K. Heninger, *A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology* (New York: Greenwood, 1968) 128-9. Heninger cites Seneca's *Naturall Questions* as a source for this fear.

⁴⁷ Golding *Op. Cit.*, 5.

⁴⁸ Fleming *Op. Cit.*, 6.

⁴⁹ Kinki Abenezrah, *An euerlasting prognostication of the change of weather* (1625).

element is safe. The chimneys that were blown down, the ‘Lamentings heard i’t’h air; strange screams of death’, the ‘accents terrible | Of dire combustion and confus’d events’, this is not the calm of which the natural philosophers write. The images are vivid enough for a modern audience to appreciate, but for a Renaissance audience, who believed their wind to be moving through one realm at a time, the impact of the final omen of the earthquake must have been truly apocalyptic. Casca, in *Julius Caesar*, had the words to express this impact: ‘Let not men say | “These are their reasons”, “they are natural”’ (1.3.29-30). This is not expressed as succinctly in *Macbeth*, but is shown through the overwhelming horror of Lennox’s description. Lennox’s ‘natural reasons’, though he strives to maintain them, are undone by the completeness of the disasters he describes. The dramatic irony of the Witches’ complicity in the weather – the fact that there are two meteorological levels of meaning in the text – allows, or even persuades the audience to dismiss Lennox’s naivety: these storms, like the events they relate to, are strictly supernatural in their origin. Whilst in *Julius Caesar*, the possibly supernatural storm is eventually worked out not to be betokening a spirit, devil, a god or God, in *Macbeth* the opposite is the case: the ostensibly natural storms in descriptions are troubled by the supernatural storms onstage.

In Lennox’s speech, this strange sense of augury after the fact is deeply ironic. For him, ‘th’ woeful time’ is indeed one of violence and rebellion, but Macbeth, through his violent prowess, is the curtailer of rebellion, not its instigator.⁵⁰ In the face of all of the portents he lists, then, Lennox must feel secure to reach the castle of the King’s most celebrated defender. This irony, obvious though it is, is nonetheless underlined by Macbeth’s lines as he leaves the stage to kill Duncan:

Now o’er the one half world
Nature seems dead...

Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps which way they walk, for fear
The very stones prate of my whereabouts
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it.

⁵⁰ For an account of Macbeth’s violence and its relation to the state, see A. Sinfield *Op.Cit.*

(2.1.49-50, 56-60)

These lines seem to offer a complete contradiction to Lennox's. Nature seems dead: the silence that is described here is, as we have seen, that very state which is opposed in Lennox's description. Furthermore, the speech has several more quiet qualifiers: 'stealthy', 'Moves like a ghost', 'Hear not' and 'Hear it not' are all within the space of ten lines (54-63). Moreover, 'present horror' is generally taken to be indicative of 'terrible stillness'⁵¹: the New Cambridge edition glosses the phrase as 'the silence that would be broken by speaking stones'⁵². The sounds which Macbeth mentions - the wolf and the bell - both act as 'alarum' calls (53 and 62) for him to act. There is nothing, to use Lennox's vocabulary, strange or clamouring about these noises. Rather, they have a direct and specific purpose. Even more brazen than these oppositions, however, is the image of the 'firm-set earth'. In the history of *Macbeth* criticism, a well worn theme is that of equivocation.⁵³ The equivocality of the earthquake is explicit in the examples of the speeches of Macbeth and Lennox: the earth described as firm-set and simultaneously as shaking. Equivocation, like the earthquake, can be construed as a catalyst of terror. The infamy of the gunpowder plotters and their equivocal defence is generally taken to be the foremost reason behind the play's concern with the equivocal.⁵⁴ If we take the earthquake lines to be indicative of Lennox's fear of the 'woeful time', then it is clear that Macbeth is speaking out of 'fear' of the very portent of which Lennox has heard. That Macbeth should mention the earth in his expression of this fear is distinctly unusual, as earthquakes and speaking stones are particularly rare.⁵⁵ When Macbeth delivers his lines, if dwelled upon, they seem strange and curious. Prating stones? Macbeth's plea for silence rests on ordinary things: an earth which doesn't move, a night which is quiet, stones which don't gossip easily. Lennox's speech is characterised by the unusual, particularly the noisy unusual. His description seems to will the very silence which Macbeth is invoking. Yet for all of Macbeth's fear, even the exact opposite of the climate

⁵¹ See Greenblatt, ed. *Op. Cit.* 2.1.59n

⁵² Braunmuller. *Op. Cit.*

⁵³ See for example, Frank L. Huntley, 'Macbeth and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation' *PMLA* 79.4 (Sept. 1964): 390-400; William O. Scott, 'Macbeth's--And Our--Self-Equivocations' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer, 1986): 160-174.

⁵⁴ See Huntely. *Op. Cit.*, 390.

⁵⁵ For notes on the uncommonness of speaking stones, see Braunmuller, ed. 141 n.58.

he wished for has betrayed neither his intentions nor his actions. The earth has shaken and he is undiscovered. Curiously, this might call to mind another Biblical quotation: 'There shall come as an earthquake, but the place where thou standest, shall not be moved.'⁵⁶ Macbeth, with his supernatural seismograph alert, has enough foresight to fear the prognosticatory potential of the earthquake but does not feel its effect, either literally or metaphorically. The action which the audience understands to cause the earthquake requires a firm-set earth.

The contrast with Lennox's speech is profound and yet, the effect of that contrast rests on the order of the statements: had Lennox's lines been placed before Macbeth's, the result would be noticeably different. The firm-set earth is innocuous, it is lodged at the end of a highly decorative speech, a part of Macbeth's self-propagandising invective, and the audience may be forgiven for still musing on the phantom dagger. This would not be the case if Lennox had already mentioned the earthquake. Context and linearity here are crucial. And yet Macbeth's 'firm-set earth' does provide a context in which to hear of Lennox's portents. Aside from the contradiction of the description of the earth itself, Lennox's words are haunted by Macbeth's. The virtue of the steadiness of the thane's lines, their calm decisiveness, their unshakeability. And yet Macbeth's phrase has the effect of a ghostly presence, haunting the invocation of the earthquake. Macbeth himself opens the possibility of the firm-set earth being disrupted, being shaken, being heard again in a new context. Macbeth requires an inhabiting of the equivocal in order to bring himself to regicide: 'The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be | Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.' (1.4.52-53) The full impact of the earthquake, then, might be felt in the extent to which Macbeth succumbs to meteorological equivocation, seeming to will the earth to be still as it is later said to be shaking. The thrill of this particular case is that we are carried along on Macbeth's firm-set earth, only afterwards to be exposed to the fissures and faultiness of his tumultuous quake.

Lest this is thought slender textual evidence or merely a solitary chance reference, we see that later in the play, when Macbeth himself is shaking, he once more invokes the surety

⁵⁶ Apocrypha, II Esdras, 6.14.

of the earth: 'Then comes my fit again; I had else been perfect,| Whole as the marble, founded as the rock' (3.4.20-1). Yet the ambiguity is also apparent later in the same scene: 'Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak,| Augurs and understood relations...' (122-3). The distinction between the shaking earth and the founded one is one of the many things over which Macbeth loses control.

When the Witches vanish before Banquo and Macbeth, the former's thought is a line which is eerily informed by the science of the earthquake: 'The earth has bubbles, as the water has,| And these are of them' (1.3.77-8). Science in *Macbeth* is established in opposition to the supernatural, or indeed God. The pull of equivocation permeates the language of the play in this opposition as well as the other, more notable equivocal instances. Here, however, the scientific cause is given a supernatural flavour – not one of wrath or benevolence, but one of knowing, of disappearance, of something to come. The storm of the Witches in the air, but then the sea and then the ground. They continue to perform their storm, even in the language of characters who do not know of their existence. An iterable storm. A storm to transcend elements. This troubling, unsettling quality of the storm in *Macbeth* is, indeed akin to the quality of equivocation which has been shown to characterise the play. Banquo's shift from a witness of the Witches to a victim of their supernatural directive is, appropriately enough, finalised in a weather-based phrase: 'It will be rain tonight' (3.3.16). The reply he receives from his unknown audience, the murderers, is one which furthers, or re-iterates, the malevolence of *Macbeth's* storm, one which fulfils Banquo's part in the Witches' prophecy, one which modifies Banquo's naturalistic meaning and draws blood: 'Let it come down.' Weather dominates *Macbeth*, and its origins, its effects and its meaning are always subject to the equivocal play of terror.

4.

‘The Powers above us’: Storm, Scripture and Collaboration in *Pericles*.

We cannot but obey
The powers above us. Could I rage and roar
As doth the sea she lies in, yet the end
Must be as ’tis.

(3.3.9-12)¹

These lines find Pericles at his nadir. Having lost his wife, Thaisa, he here leaves his new born daughter Marina at Tarsus, with words of pure fatalistic defeat. In the quotation, we may see Pericles’ character encapsulated: not a prince, but a subject, subject that is to the forces which have brought him to this point. ‘The powers above us’ here seems to tie together the sea and storm of ‘rage and roar’ and the forlorn determinism of the conclusion, ‘Must be as ’tis.’ The storm is undeniably crucial in the play, and I hope to show both the extent of and the reasons for this importance. In so doing, however, I will also be attempting to offer a new way of approaching *Pericles*. It is my contention that, in the practice of archaeological editing, digging for clues which may disclose the author of a particular phrase, too much discarded topsoil has been thrown on the play as a whole. I hope to show that the opportunity to compare the storm of the Shakespearean section of the play with the storm which belongs to George Wilkins is too inviting to simply be approached with the question of authorship in mind. In exploring the different ways in which the two playwrights develop storms in the play, we may discover conclusions greater than the details of each writer’s phraseology. The storms in the play enclose both ideological and aesthetic stances, which will become clear. Rather than simply identifying *that* one playwright wrote one particular phrase, or *how* one dramatist took on another particular scene, we should now begin to ask *why*.

In beginning the section of *The Shakespearean Tempest* which deals with *Pericles*, G. Wilson Knight maintains that ‘To analyse the tempests in *Pericles* would be to analyse

¹ Quotations from the play are, unless otherwise noted, taken from Suzanne Gossett’s Arden 3rd series edition (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), but I have also made use of the Arden 2nd series, F.D. Hoeniger ed. (London: Methuen, 1963), Roger Warren ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and DelVecchio and Hammond eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

the whole play.’² More recently, with regards to the setting of the two main storms, the sea has been described as ‘the play’s second protagonist, facilitator of and actor in Pericles’ imperial story.’³ Each of these remarks points to a continuity in the play which may otherwise be thought lacking: in diction, aesthetic and a retrospectively judged quality, it is obviously in two sections, that of George Wilkins preceding that of Shakespeare. In *tempest and sea*, however, the play has its constants and each is employed effectively by each writer. In *Pericles*, then, we have the opportunity to compare Shakespeare’s use of storm with that of Wilkins, more closely than with any other playwright, for both are involved in the same play.⁴

Such comparison will form the basis of this chapter, and thus it is necessary that Wilkins’ scenes are examined at length. To the constants of sea and storm, I will introduce another, the Bible, for it will be shown that scripture informs and colours more in the play than has previously been addressed in the necessary detail. Furthermore, it is appropriate that if we are to examine Wilkins’ and Shakespeare’s use of common elements, we should also take into account their common reading. The source, John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, notwithstanding, the Bible is one text which can be said with a relative degree of certainty to have been read by both playwrights.⁵ I will begin, then, with an exploration of Wilkins’ use of the storm, and its relationship to the Bible. We will also see Wilkins’ storms in a less allusive way, particularly relating to the human breath. We will then examine the Shakespearean examples in the same light, both as biblically resonant and as secularly conceived. It will be seen that, although the relevant sections share a great deal in terms of trope and allusion, the way in which each playwright develops them is distinctive.

² G. Wilson Knight, *The Shakespearian Tempest* (London: Methuen, 1953), 218.

³ Bradin Cormack, ‘Marginal Waters: *Pericles* and the Idea of Jurisdiction,’ Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein (eds.), *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155–80 (157).

⁴ I am operating on the necessarily simplistic assumption that George Wilkins is responsible for all of the first two acts and the chorus to the third, with Shakespeare responsible for the rest. Whilst this conforms with critical consensus it does not take into account the minutiae of the collaborative process – whether one author amended the other’s sections, and so forth – which will forever remain the subject of speculation. As we shall see, the use of the storm is clearly different in each section, and operates according to two distinct aesthetics, and I am content with conclusions based on this, if nothing else.

⁵ To avoid confusion, I will refer to the poet himself as John Gower throughout, using ‘Gower’ to refer to the character in *Pericles*.

When Biblical influence on *Pericles* is brought to attention, a common focus is the correlation of Antiochus in the play and Antiochus IV in II Maccabees.⁶ As I have shown already, the connection between the strike of lightning in *Pericles* and the plague in II Maccabees is firmly established, but the differences significantly defined. It is obvious, moreover, that each example depicts the work of heavenly vengeance. Helicanus prefaces his account of the lightning: ‘the most high gods, not minding longer | To withhold the vengeance that they had in store’ (2.4.3-4), leaving no room, at least in this particular narration, for ambiguity. The same degree of judgement is found in John Gower: ‘That for vengeance, as god it wolde’, is how the lightning strike is introduced.⁷ Similarly, in Laurence Twyne’s version the lightning is a severe sentence: ‘by the iust iudgement of God’ is the description used twice, in separate accounts of the lightning.⁸ In his own prose version, Wilkins builds upon the work of Twyne and John Gower: ‘For as thus they rode, gazing to be gazed vpon, and prowde to be accompted so, Vengeance with a deadly arrow drawne from foorth the quiuer of his wrath, prepared by lightning, and shot on by thunder, hitte, and stricke dead these prowde incestuous creatures’.⁹ Furthermore, like the swiftness of their deaths, the completeness with which Antiochus and his daughter are eliminated is even clearer in Wilkins’ prose than in *Pericles*. The narrator describes how the lightning left ‘their faces blasted, and their bodies such a contemptfull object on the

⁶ See above, 8-13. In considering the Bible in relation to *Pericles*, I am following a trend of literary criticism found, for example, in Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); *The Literary Guide to the Bible* [with Frank Kermode] (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). Harold Bloom, *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); *The Book of J* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990). Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982); *Words with Power* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990). Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Marx’s study does not extend to *Pericles*.

⁷ John Gower, *Op. Cit.*, Book 8, ii, 998.

⁸ Laurence Twyne, *The Pattern of Painefull Adventures*. Quotations taken from the Lion database: http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:Prose:Z100028524:1 accessed 22/04/09, 34 and 75.

⁹ Wilkins, *Op. Cit.*, 41.

earth ... an insteede of kingly monument for their bodies left, to be intoomed in the bowelles of ravenous fowles, if fowles would eat on them.’¹⁰

That vengeance should be associated with storm, thunder and lightning, and indeed, as in II Maccabees, plague, is a characteristically Old Testament notion. Most obviously, it is formulated in Exodus, as hail is the seventh of the ten plagues of Egypt: ‘*for vpon all the men, and the beastes, which are found in the field, and not brought home, the haile shal fall vpon them, and they shall die. [...] Then Moses stretched out his rod towarde heauen, & the Lord sent thunder and haile, and lightening vpon the ground: and the Lorde caused haile to raine vpon the land of Egypt.*’¹¹ However, the further one explores the similarities between the heavenly retribution of the Biblical God and that of *Pericles* and, especially, *Painful Adventures*, the more it is apparent that the examples of Wilkins are extreme. In Exodus, the ten sequential plagues provide a platform for God to deliver his message – ‘that thou mayest knowe that there is none like me in all the earth’ – the successful transmission of which, is, after all, one of the overarching themes of the entire Old Testament. In Wilkins’ examples, there is no room for that message to be apprehended by the recipient, and this is made explicit, especially in comparison to John Gower, who relates the end of Antiochus ‘as men mai wite’ and little more.¹² Wilkins’ description of Antiochus’ display builds a narrative tension so that, rather than being offered forgiveness, he is struck ‘in the height and pride of all his glory’ (2.4.6). Perhaps this is a feature of the author’s representation of a pagan world, one, that is, that operates under the principle that pre-Christians need not be offered Christian redemption. Perhaps, for dramatic effect, Wilkins merely augmented the episode taken from his source.

Whatever the author’s reason, it is worth remembering that lightning is rarely fatal in the Bible. Naseeb Shaheen lists several different Biblical formulations of ‘fire from heaven’,

¹⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹¹ Exodus 9:19-23.

¹² John Gower, *Op. Cit.*, line 999.

of varying interest in relation to *Pericles*.¹³ The most detailed account of a fatal lightning strike in the Bible occurs in II Kings, as the prophet Elijah turns away the followers of the king of Samaria.¹⁴ If any Biblical instance of lightning had an influence on the diction of Helicanus in *Pericles*, it is this one: 'If that I be a man of God, let fire come downe from the heauen, and deuoure thee and thy fiftie. So fire came downe from the heauen and deuoured him and his fiftie.'¹⁵ The phrase 'there came fire downe from the heauen' is repeated several times during the first chapter of II Kings, its victims described, according to various early modern translations, as devoured, 'consumed' or 'burnt vp'.¹⁶ Given that the Biblical phrase is close to *Pericles*' 'A fire from heaven came' and that each describes deadly lightning strikes, it is curious that the play's commentators have not examined the episode from II Kings, as they have that of II Maccabees. Both Wilkins and II Kings present the very kind of unequivocal relationship of lightning to judgment, wrath or indeed the supernatural that we consistently find Shakespeare endeavouring to keep ambiguous. Although it would be churlish and simplistic to argue that all storm in the Bible is a result of God's anger or demonstration of his power (especially, as we shall see, given the case of Jonah), in II Kings, the case is very much of a defined line of good and evil, or at least, the Hebrew God and 'Baal-zebub the God of Ekron'.¹⁷ It is the belief in Baal-zebub which acts to legitimise the deaths by lightning of the one hundred and two people so killed. Each death serves rapidly to convert the captain of the final fifty:

And the thirde captaine ouer fiftie went vp, and came, and fell on his knees before Eliiah, and besought him, and saide vnto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life and the life of these thy fiftie seruants be precious in thy sight. Beholde, there came fire downe from the heauen and deuoured the two former captaines ouer fiftie with their fifties: therefore let my life nowe be precious in thy sight.¹⁸

¹³ Naseeb Shaheen *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 690.

¹⁴ One of the occurrences listed by Shaheen – that at Luke 9:54 – is an allusion to this episode, and not itself an instance of lightning.

¹⁵ II Kings 1:10.

¹⁶ For 'consumed' or 'cosumed', see the Miles Coverdale 1535, Great Bible 1540, Thomas Matthew 1549 and Bishops' Bible 1568. The Thomas Matthew and Bishops' versions both also use 'burnt vp' in verse 14.

¹⁷ II Kings 1:2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:13-14.

The power of God's weather teaches various kinds of lessons through the Bible, this example being the most extreme. Only those who are willing to accede to the power of the God of Israel, then, are judged in II Kings to be safe from a lightning strike. It is the same severe line which Wilkins adopts, and the same which Shakespeare avoids.

Helicanus follows his report of the lightning with a conclusive, unapologetic statement:

yet but justice; for,
Though this king were great, his greatness was no guard
To bar heaven's shaft, but sin had his reward.
(2.4.13-15)

Helicanus' final word on the matter, as well as remembering the fatal lightning, is a continuation of the play's tendency to marginalise the daughter of Antiochus. Whenever mentioned, this character is constructed as an object. The very fact that she remains nameless is indicative of this, but she is also figured as a sexual prize by Gower: 'many princes thither frame | To seek her as a bedfellow' (1.0.32-3). As a prize, she is ideal for the romantic hero Pericles' risky adventure: he 'Think[s] death no hazard in this enterprise' and warnings of the 'danger of the task' only serve to 'embolden' him (1.1.2-5). Very quickly then, and before the daughter has entered, a vivid association between danger and sexual objectivity is clearly established. It is worth recalling, as Peter Holland does, that the hero's name 'likely is a kind of pun on the Latin word *periculum*, danger, for Pericles is recurrently in danger'.¹⁹ The association is consistently reiterated during the scene, not least in the lines before and after the daughter's only speech. 'As these before thee,' warns Antiochus, 'thou thyself shall bleed.' (59) Pericles' next lines are as much a response to Antiochus' threat as they are to his daughter's show of support:

Like a bold champion I assume the lists,
Nor ask advice of any other thought
But faithfulness and courage.²⁰ (62-4)

¹⁹ Peter Holland, 'Coasting in the Mediterranean: The Journeys of *Pericles*', Neils B. Hansen and Sos Haugaard (eds.) *Angels on the English Speaking World* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005), 11-31 (16).

²⁰ All of this may be remembered in Act 2, scene 5, when Simonides feigns anger at Pericles and Thaisa before marrying them. There the association between danger and desire is the king's practical joke, and Pericles constructs himself as an anti-hero: 'I am unworthy for her schoolmaster' (39). Simonides, in his jest, even seems to echo the incestuous violence of Antiochus: 'Yea, mistress, are you so peremptory? [...] I'll tame you, I'll bring you in subjection.' (72-4). In the previous scene involving these characters,

Of course, the danger in the scene is not restricted to Pericles; the Princess of Antioch has been subject to the proclivity of her father – the ‘evil should be done by none’, as Gower puts it (1.0.28) – and is condemned to the relationship. Sexual violation is, like the storm, a theme recurrent throughout Shakespeare’s romances: *Cymbeline* has Iachimo’s illicit undressing of Imogen and Cloten’s attempted rape of the same (2.3.37-8; 3.5.138-9); the plot of *The Winter’s Tale* depends on imagined adultery; in *The Tempest*, Caliban is imprisoned for his attempted rape of Miranda (1.2.348-52). It is in *Pericles*, however, that the idea of violation is most resonant and, indeed, most thoroughly connected with the violence of the storm. As his daughter enters, Antiochus describes her as ‘clothed like a bride | For the embracements even of Jove himself’ (1.1.8). Many commentators, remembering Jove’s affairs, have found distinct sexual overtones in Antiochus’ description of his daughter. T.G. Bishop, for example, notes a ‘coded hint of just the kind of violent and incestuous rape that has occurred’.²¹ Jove, in addition to being associated with sexual domination, is also a father figure in Roman mythology. As Gossett notes, ‘It is characteristic of Antiochus’ self-assurance that he compares himself to the king of gods.’²² Implicit in the image, also, is the idea that the minatory sexual identity of Antiochus is conflated with the god of lightning. In his Latin dictionary of 1572, Richard Huloet offers a translation of ‘Lightning’ as both ‘Fulmen’ and ‘Fulgur’, going on to note that ‘Also Fulmen is ascribed to Iupiter...’²³ Storm is a crucial danger in the play, and results in many deaths, and is inextricably linked to desire from the start. Here, the danger of Jove provides a wonderfully concise image with many resonances: in addition to the patriarchal character of the king of gods chiming with that of Antiochus, and each figure an intimidating lustful threat, the metaphor also presages the daughter’s ultimate death by thunderbolt. The connection between desire, danger and the weather is expounded upon as Pericles declines to answer the riddle:

Simonides’ order for Pericles and Thaisa to ‘Unclasp, unclasp!’ is an echo of Pericles’ account of Antiochus’ ‘untimely claspings with your child’ (2.3.103; 1.1.129).

²¹ T.G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 96.

²² Gossett, *Op. Cit.*, 177 n8.

²³ Richard Huloet, *Huloets Dictionarie newelye corrected* (London: 1572) 203^v.

For vice repeated is like the wandering wind.
 Blows dust in others' eyes, to spread itself;
 And yet the end of all is bought thus dear:
 The breath is gone, and the sore eyes see clear:
 To stop the air would hurt them...
 Kings are earth's gods; in vice their law's their will;
 And, if Jove stray, who dares say Jove doth ill?
 (97-105)²⁴

Here, we can find senses of storm, king and Jove in the response to the realisation of the violation that has taken place. The image of the wandering wind is resonant with the play's themes of travel and Fortune as well as its weather patterns; the notion that it is commensurate with vice serves to construct a meteorological aspect to the sexual violence.

Many critical responses to the play focus on its geography and its aesthetic reliance upon borders.²⁵ Here, it is vice itself, personified as Jove, which transgresses those borders, and it is subject to, or *imagined through* the very force which physically separates and divides the characters. The codes of societal and sexual conduct are thereby represented as liminal, just as the port towns in which the play is set. Only once such a conjunction is established, does Pericles mention the true 'wind' of vice, breath. The shifting between the societal, the meteorological and the bodily ends in the image of the eyes seeing clear 'to stop the air would hurt them.' Once more, the tone is meteorological – as in King Lear's curse 'Strike her young bones, | You taking airs, with lameness!' (2.2.354-6) – the air itself as well as the repetition of vice is harmful. As societal, meteorological and bodily are conflated, so, again, are Antiochus and Jove in the final couplet of the speech. Following the elaborate metaphors outlined above, the phrase 'in vice their law's their will' endows the king with a godlike power – in the reverberation of vice/storm – to match his authority. This is made concrete in the return to the specific god who embodies both storm and sexual transgression: 'if Jove stray, who dares say Jove doth ill?' In refusing to name Antiochus' act of incest, then, Pericles' speech figures him as an

²⁴ I have altered slightly Gossett's text here, removing her full-stop after 'see clear', and replacing with the Quarto's colon.

²⁵ See, for example, C. Relihan, 'Liminal Geography: *Pericles* and the Politics of Place', *Philological Quarterly*, 71:3 (1992) 281-99; Bradin Cormack, *Op. Cit.*; Peter Holland, *Op. Cit.*

irreverent thunderer who operates on a level closed to questioning.²⁶ The transparent riddle in this way may be seen as a godlike declaration of invulnerability, one which reverberates in the demise of Antiochus and his daughter quoted above. It is remarkable that, in the parts of the play which are ascribed to him, Shakespeare makes no mention of Jove. It is arguable that this fact is coincidental, but it is surely undeniable that the force and insistence with which Wilkins uses the name, and the effectiveness with which Antiochus is finished, do complete a powerful image which further repetition might dilute.

The play's first storm proper, at the start of Act 2, is often compared unfavourably to that at the beginning of Act 3 as a means of highlighting the collaborative process. Gossett notes 'the indubitably greater power of the [later] speech', whilst Raphael Lyne claims that the 'language [of the first storm] is sterile in comparison with the relentless fertility of the other.'²⁷ Roger Warren describes Wilkins' storm speech as 'functional enough, as long as there is nothing better to compare it with'.²⁸ Because commentators and editors regard the collaborative aspects of the play as one of its most intriguing features, then, analysis of how this speech fits in to the work of the storm in the play is lacking. Here is the speech in full:

Yet cease your ire, you angry stars of heaven!
 Wind, rain and thunder, remember earthly man
 Is but a substance that must yield to you,
 And I, as fits my nature, do obey you.
 Alas, the seas hath cast me on the rocks,
 Washed me from shore to shore, and left me breath
 Nothing to think on but ensuing death.

²⁶ The conflation of sexual violence and storm is by no means unique to *Pericles*. Of course, the figure of Jove, and Zeus before him, is testament itself to this. George Sandys's 1628 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* makes the link explicit:

A Virgin, for a Virgins rape, let fall
 Her Vengeance, to *Oileus* due, on all.
 Scattered on faithlesse Seas with furious stormes,
 We, wretched *Graecians*, suffer'd all the formes
 Of horror: lightning, night, showres, wrath of skies,
 Of Seas, and dire *Capharean* cruelties.
 (401)

²⁷ Gossett *Op. Cit.*, 3.1.1-14n; Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare's Late Work* (Oxford: OUP, 2007) 58.

²⁸ Warren *Op. Cit.*, 42.

Let it suffice the greatness of your powers
 To have bereft a prince of all his fortunes,
 And, having thrown him from your watery grave,
 Here to have death in peace is all he'll crave.
 (2.1.1-11)

Of the shipwreck victims in Shakespeare's previous plays, and with the ships which safely navigate the storm in *Othello*, most reach shore with companions. Pericles has in common with *Twelfth Night*'s Sebastian that he is shipwrecked alone. Whilst Viola mourns her twin brother's death to the Captain, she displays the futility of grief – 'what should I do in Illyria? | My brother he is in Elysium' (1.2.3-4) – but does not wish for death. The lonely Sebastian, conversely, does just that: 'If you will not undo what you have done, that is kill him whom you have recovered, desire it not' (2.1.35-7). As has been noted, little attention is paid by Pericles to the deaths of his fellow sailors in the first storm.²⁹ Ruth Nevo, furthermore, points out the lack of 'any reference to the trauma of the wreck itself; nor for that matter is there any rejoicing or thanksgiving ... regarding his own escape.'³⁰ His speech, rather, is clearly occupied by thoughts of his own demise: 'must yield' and 'ensuing death' being indications that 'to have death in peace is all he'll crave.' A death, that is, unlike that of his compatriots who have perished at sea.³¹ Nevo regards this as 'a total submission, a capitulation'.³² Pericles' language is that of the sole survivor, whether he mentions the crew or not. As we shall see in a later chapter, this generic language is played upon in *The Tempest*.

In terms of the play itself, rather than the canon, the crucial element of the speech is the rhyming couplet in the centre, not the end. We have already seen examples of *breath* constructed as *wind* and as *vice*; we might begin now to appreciate the way in which the word echoes across the section of the play which belongs to Wilkins. Here *breath* is apparently virtually synonymous with *life*: Pericles ruminates on the irony that he is only alive enough to contemplate death.³³ The breath which had been dangerous in its

²⁹ Gossett, however, argues that the sailors' 'disappearance' is a generic matter and to be taken as 'a given of the tale.' (2.1.9n).

³⁰ Ruth Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 45.

³¹ Similarly, in the storm in *The Tempest*, Gonzago says 'I would fain die a dry death' (1.1.67)

³² Nevo, *Op. Cit.*, 45.

³³ Gossett opts for the emendation, originally Edmond Malone's, which has Q's 'left my breath' altered to 'left me breath' and offers a sound argument (2.1.6n).

propensity to spread vice is now ostensibly at the limits of speech. Including the two examples noted, there are seven incidents of *breath* in the play, and it is invariably pertinent to the surrounding sense. Indeed, its signification has a story arc all of its own:

For death remembered should be like a mirror,
Who tells us life's but breath, to trust it error. (1.1.46-7)

The breath is gone, and the sore eyes see clear (1.1.100)

Let your breath cool yourself, telling your haste. (1.1.160)

Our woes into the air; our eyes do weep,
Till tongues fetch breath that may proclaim them louder (1.4.14-15)

I'll then discourse our woes, felt several years,
And wanting breath to speak help me with tears. (1.4.18-9)

left me breath
Nothing to think on but ensuing death. (2.1.6-7)

But if the prince do live, let us salute him,
Or know what ground's made happy by his breath. (2.4.27-8)

To begin with, then, breath is, proverbially, life.³⁴ The indistinctness of the metaphor, however, complicates the proverb somewhat. Simultaneously, 'death remembered' is a prompt to consider one's mortality; is obscuring, like breath on a mirror; and is itself a validation of life, again like breath on a mirror.³⁵ Breath is the basis of this dispersion of meaning. Next, we have the construction of breath/wind/spreader of vice as discussed above. The following instance – 'Let your breath cool yourself' – is an example of that construction made literal, as Antiochus implores the Messenger both to be refreshed by his own conversation and to ensure that Antiochus 'sees clear'. The subsequent two examples, with Cleon lamenting the demise of Tarsus, figure breath as failing – a necessary, but absent means to communicate 'woes'. Thus breath does not spread vice or danger, as before, but is tantalisingly absent at the time of need to signal emergency. Thus, by the time we reach the example in the storm, the word has assumed a panoply of

³⁴ See R. W. Dent, *Shakespeare's Practical Language: An Index* (Berkeley, 1981) B641.1.

³⁵ As in *King Lear*, 'Lend me a looking glass | If that her breath will mist or stain the stone, | Why then she lives.' (5.3.259-61).

meanings and associations. The final instance, spoken about Pericles, envisions breath as indicative of a semi-materialistic afterlife, as though the wandering wind which had carried the prince could be buried with him.

The commonplace of tears as rainy/tempestuous (as in *King Lear*'s 'he holp the heavens to rain' or 3 *Henry VI*'s 'And when the rage allays, the rain begins | These tears are my sweet Rutland's obsequies' (3.7.61; 1.4.146-7)) here finds its counterpart in the breath as storm. It is much more common to find such a correlation with sighing as in *Coriolanus*: 'I have been blown out of your gates with sighs' (5.2.73-4) or *Titus*: 'Then must my sea be moved with her sighs' (3.1.228) or *Antony and Cleopatra*: 'we cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report' (1.2.152-4). Wilkins' section of *Pericles*, however, is less precise in preferring *breath*, and consequently constructs a lasting parallel which finds the wind more closely connected to bodily existence – the very substantive elements of life, rather than emotional expression. When Pericles employs the word in the storm, he is entangling himself in a nuanced system of signifiers which implicates him in the cause as well as the effect of the shipwreck: his is the life of which he speaks and the wind which blows it. The editorial emendation, 'left *me* breath' – as opposed to 'left *my* breath' – has the attractive quality of briefly rendering Pericles as breath and nothing more. The Quarto phrase imagines a breath which can think – hence the emendation – and this, given the range of meanings to which the word is put, is perhaps not out of the question: either way, the point remains the same. As Gossett notes, *breath* is not used beyond the Second Act and is therefore only in the section of the play now usually ascribed to George Wilkins.³⁶ Curiously, Wilkins only uses *breath* once in *Painful Adventures*. Another play of Wilkins', though, *The Miserie of Inforst Mariage* (1607) contains a phrase which would not be out of place in *Pericles*: 'As neere to misery had bin our breath, | As where the thundring pellet strikes is death'.³⁷ For Wilkins, it seems, the cause and effect of breath is never too far from meteorological consequence. Indeed, it might be said that the

³⁶ Gossett 222n6. Gossett miscounts and writes that the word is used six times – the correct number is seven.

³⁷ Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z000129763:0> Accessed 22/04/09.

self-imposed silence which Pericles enters in the second half of the play is a direct response to each kind of breath which had hitherto been imagined: he avoids speech and is wholly committed to ‘the wandering wind’. I shall return to this idea, and its resonance in the Shakespearean section of the play, below.

The point at which Shakespeare is now usually conceded to assume the major creative role in the play is the storm of Act 3, Scene 1. It is worth remembering that the process of untangling which author wrote which sections in a collaborative effort is impossibly complex, especially with texts as old and as editorially troubled as *Pericles*. In 3.1, editors find ‘Shakespearean indicators’ in the opening speech,³⁸ and comment on the complexity of the verse. Gossett recalls the opening of *King Lear*’s Act 3, Scene 2, drawing attention to similarities and differences. Occasionally, the storm of 3.1 is taken as some sort of manifestation of authorial advent, as by Raphael Lyne:

...there may be a special moment of traumatic arrival in *Pericles* as Shakespeare takes over the play, using an excessively pivotal speech as a coded way of announcing his presence; so at least it may seem to readers and audiences of romances who know that storms come at critical junctures, as in *The Tempest* and *The Winter’s Tale*.³⁹

The readers and audiences to whom Lyne is referring are necessarily thinking retrospectively, at least with regard to the plays he mentions, which of course postdate *Pericles*. Such readers would also need conveniently to forget the earlier storm in the play. Indeed, whilst commentators may remark on the leitmotif-like nature of the storm in Shakespeare, it is seldom recalled that although this is something of a set piece, this is the first occasion on which he has directed that a sea storm is actually staged. The Senecan technique of relating various violent situations and atrocities rather than acting them is abandoned, again drawing comparisons with *King Lear*, which brings such actions on to the stage (not only in the storm scenes, of course, but in the loss of Gloucester’s eyes). Similarly, sea storms have, until now, been narrated, as in *Comedy of Errors*, illustrated through exposition, as in *Twelfth Night*, or given a simultaneous commentary, as in *Othello*. Whilst Wilkins continues the trend of making the storm as

³⁸ Gossett, *Op. Cit.*, 14 and 3.1.1-14n.

³⁹ Lyne, *Op. Cit.*, 58.

immediate as possible in Act 2, Scene 1 ('Enter Pericles, wet...') Shakespeare takes a further step and brings the ship itself into the theatre ('*Enter Pericles on shipboard*'). Lost in the search for Shakespearean indicators and similar Shakespearean scenes, then – lost, indeed, in the attempt to isolate the singular stamp of Shakespeare – is the important realisation that the storm of *Pericles* is inherently different, dramatically, from anything which the playwright has thus far attempted.

The tenor of Pericles' speech depends on the fact that, unlike those characters in, say, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar* who exhibit fear and defiance, he is in considerable danger of death. Of course, the imminent death is not his own, but Thaisa's, and the subtleties of his soliloquy make use of the juxtaposed dangers of tempest and childbirth:

The god of this great vast, rebuke these surges
Which wash both heaven and hell, and thou that hast
Upon the winds command, bind them in brass,
Having called them from the deep. O, still
Thy deafening dreadful thunders; gently quench
Thy nimble sulphurous flashes! O, how, Lychorida!
How does my queen? – Thou stormest venomously;
Wilt thou spit all thyself? The seaman's whistle
Is as a whisper in the ears of death,
Unheard. Lychorida! – Lucina, O,
Divinest patroness and midwife gentle
To those that cry by night, convey thy deity
Aboard our dancing boat; make swift the pangs
Of my queen's travails!

(3.1.1-14)

As we have seen, Wilkins managed to conflate the sexual identity of Antiochus' daughter with ideas of the threat of Jove in terms of rape and, ultimately, storm. Here, Shakespeare introduces the notion that the dangers of storm and labour are metaphorically resonant. It is this very juxtaposition which adds to the complexity of the verse, a characteristic which is important for the critical case for Shakespeare's composing hand.⁴⁰ 'How does my queen? – Thou stormest venomously' is a clear example of how the competing forces

⁴⁰ Aside from this juxtaposition, Gossett notes that the verse several 'characteristic Shakespearean indicators, absent or infrequent earlier in the play, [which] include enjambments, doubled modifiers (*deafening dreadful*, *nimble sulphurous*), a complexly directed soliloquy, invocations of the gods alternating with calls to the offstage character' (Gossett, *Op. Cit.*, 14). Clearly, the signature of Shakespeare does not inhere in simplicity.

of Pericles' fears jostle for space in the formulaic boundaries of iambic pentameter. Neither concern can develop fully because of the urgency of the other. Clearer still is the implicit connection drawn between storm and childbirth by the invocation of a deity for each. Thus 'god of this great vast' and 'thou that hast | Upon the winds command' are called upon, referring, presumably, to Neptune and to Tempestates, just as Lucina, goddess of childbirth is summoned. As Wilkins employed Jove to conflate storm and sexual violence, then, so Shakespeare alludes to pagan gods of sea, storm and childbirth. In each case the human aspect is prioritised: as Antiochus is struck with Jove's lightning bolt, Pericles' cries are representations of futility. For it is no accident here that the invocation is rendered impotent by diction such as 'deafening' and 'whisper...| Unheard'. Nor is it coincidental that the 'nimble sulphurous flashes' of lightning compare unfavourably to Thaisa's 'pangs' which Pericles wishes Lucina could 'make swift'. Each god, similarly, is constructed through 'gently' or 'gentle', as the relentless alliteration ('god/great', 'heaven/hell/hast' 'deafening dreadful' 'whistle/whisper' 'Lychorida/Lucina' 'cry convey') threads together the character's concerns and even their ineffectiveness. The initial long assonant sounds of 'vast' 'hast' and 'brass' give way to the guttural insistence of the three desperate 'O's.

Pericles himself is subjected to the elements more than most Shakespearean characters. If we are to compare Wilkins' storms in *Pericles* to those of II Maccabees and II Kings, we can continue such comparison with the storms in those scenes which belong to Shakespeare. The storm at the beginning of Act Three has been related to the account, in the book of Luke, of Jesus calming the sea at Galilee: 'And he arose, and rebuked the winde, and the waues of water: and they ceased, and it was calme.'⁴¹ Perhaps the crucial component of those New Testament verses in relation to *Pericles* is the use of the word 'rebuked', which is apparently echoed by Pericles: 'The god of this great vast, rebuke these surges' (3.1.1). Given that Jesus calms the seas and Pericles merely yells at them, such linguistic parallels are important if we are to maintain the significance of the allusion. 'Rebuke', however, is elsewhere used in the Bible in relation to controlling the elements, as Malone pointed out glossing the same line, quoting from Psalms: 'the waters

⁴¹ Luke 8.24. See Gossett *Op. Cit.*, 3.1.1n, Shaheen, *Op. Cit.*, 686.

woulde stand aboue the mountaines. *But* at thy rebuke they flee: at the voyce of thy thunder they haste away.’⁴² In the marginal note in the Geneva Bible text, reads the interpretation ‘If by thy power thou diddest not bridle the rage of the waters, it were not possible, but the whole worlde shoulde be destroyed.’ *Rebuke*, then, is readily understood in elemental terms. Even though the Psalm describes the Creation, not a storm, it does not follow that Luke’s instance of *rebuke* used in the storm should be acknowledged as an influence on *Pericles*. For, as we have seen with Wilkins’ storms, the Biblical reference should not be constructed as so direct and simple. *Pericles*’ Act 3, Scene 1, in addition to, perhaps more than the passage from Luke, bears a similarity to the book of Jonah.⁴³ This similarity is found not simply in terms of its narrative – the storm is constructed as dependent upon a passenger of a ship – but also in the way that the weather is imagined. Rather than figuring the storm as a manifestation of God’s anger or vengefulness, the passage allows for greater complexity:

Then saide they vnto him, What shall we doe vnto thee, that the sea may be calme vnto vs? (for the sea wrought and was troublous) And he said vnto them, Take me, and cast me into the sea: so shall the sea be calme vnto you: for I knowe that for my sake this great tempest *is* vpon you.⁴⁴

Pericles’ main parallel with the story of Jonah is clear enough: a passenger is thrown into the sea in order to calm it. In the play, of course, it is Thaisa, whether presumed or actually dead, who is cast into the water: ‘Sir, your queen must overboard. The sea works high, the wind is loud and will not lie till the ship be cleared of the dead’ (47-9). An important difference between the two texts is that the sailors of *Pericles* are determined to carry out the action, certain that they are correct in determining the cause of the storm, whereas in Jonah, the crew draw lots to establish why the tempest has arisen. Once Jonah has drawn the lot, the sailors are still unwilling to carry out his prophetic advice, but attempt to approach the shore: ‘Neuerthelesse, the men rowed to bring it to the lande, but they coulde not: for the sea wrought, and was troublous against them’⁴⁵ This is in contrast with *Pericles*’ meek response to the Master’s demand: ‘That’s your superstition’ (50).

⁴² Psalms 104: 6-7. See Gossett, *Op. Cit.*, 3.1.1n.

⁴³ This was first noted by Norman Nathan, in the brief text ‘*Pericles* and *Jonah*’, *Notes & Queries* (January 1956) 10-11.

⁴⁴ Jonah 11-12.

⁴⁵ Jonah 1:13.

Despite these differences, the threat to the ship in *Jonah* is great, just as in *Pericles*, and in each case the storm is attributed to supernatural causes, and subdued by the casting of a passenger overboard.

Whereas in II Kings and Exodus, the action and diction of the storms tend to emphasise God's message and power, and in Luke, Jesus' ability to calm the elements, the depiction of the sea storm in *Jonah* is weighted towards the human experience. Although the tempest is decidedly the work of God,⁴⁶ the bulk of the chapter deals with the coping strategies of the crew and Jonah. The fear of the sailors is emphasised repeatedly: 'the mariners were afraide, and cryed euey man vnto his God', 'Then were the men exceedingly afrayde', 'Then the men feared the Lorde exceedingly'.⁴⁷ Similarly, the calm resolution of Jonah is shown to contrast with that fear.⁴⁸ Gone is the narrator of II Kings and Exodus who depicted the voice and motives of God alongside the storm; instead that voice and those motives are expounded by the figures in the storm, who are necessarily emotional. Just as the strong judgemental tones of Gower and Helicanus seem to echo the Biblical accounts given, so the Shakespearean section of the text resonates with the methodology of *Jonah*. Shakespeare here, characteristically, is reluctant to attribute blame or offer judgement and instead portrays a scene which owes its nuance to the experiential dialogue of its many characters. This is evident, for example, in the language of the mariners:

MASTER: Slack the bowlines there! – Thou wilt not, wilt thou? Blow and split thyself.

SAILOR: But sea-room, an the brine and cloudy billow kiss the moon, I care not.
(43-6)

The immediacy of such lines is not apparent in the play's first sea storm; although Wilkins has *Pericles* entering 'wet', the many voices of Shakespeare's storm are reduced to that of *Pericles* and the spectating fishermen. Furthermore the imperative and present

⁴⁶ *Jonah* 1:4: 'the Lorde sent out a great winde into the sea, and there was a mightie tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.'

⁴⁷ *Jonah* 1:5; 10; 16.

⁴⁸ In the margins of *Jonah* 1:5, Jonah is described, 'As one that would haue cast off this care and sollicitude, by seeking rest and quietnes'. When his past is made clearer to the mariners, his temper apparently remains even in the face of peril: 'And he said vnto them, Take me, and cast me into the sea: so shall the sea be calme vnto you: for I knowe that for my sake this great tempest *is* vpon you.' (1:12).

tenses of Shakespeare's lines are not to be found in those of Wilkins, removing the audience from the propinquity of the storm. The frenetic activity of mariners is also found in Jonah: they 'cast the wares that were in the ship, into the sea to lighten it of them.'⁴⁹ As in the play, the emotions of the sailors in the biblical text are depicted through the structure of their speech, for example in the frustrated guise of the rhetorical question: 'the men exceedingly afrayde, and said vnto him, Why hast thou done this?'⁵⁰

There are phrases in both Shakespeare's section of the play and that of Wilkins which allude more explicitly to the book of Jonah. In Act 3, Scene 1, addressing the body of Thaisa, Pericles laments: 'the belching whale | And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse' (3.1.62-3). As Gossett has pointed out, the fact that Jonah is described as though dead, strengthens the connection between the two texts: 'For hee was in the fishes belly as in a graue or place of darkness'.⁵¹ The Biblical story had also been touched upon after the play's first shipwreck:

I can compare our rich misers to nothing so fitly as to a whale: 'a plays and tumbles, driving the poor fry before him, and at last devours them all at a mouthful..." "...he shuld have swallowed me too, and when I had been in his belly I would have kept such a jangling of the bells that he should never have left till he cast bells, steeple, church and parish up again.

(2.1.29-42)

The story of Jonah here is explicit enough, although the Geneva Bible mentions the creature as a fish, not a whale. What makes this passage more significant is not only that it anticipates the reappearance of themes from the Book of Jonah later on, but also that it follows the Fisherman's allusion to the porpoise as a predictor of storms. The sight of dolphins or porpoises playing near land is mentioned as a precursor of tempests in several ancient meteorological texts and the phenomenon had found its way into proverbial English. However, it is surely significant that this discussion leads into one in which the world is under threat from the whale (here, simply the biggest fish) and that a Deluge-like scenario is played out in metaphor. The storm precedes the fish just as the fish foretell the storm. This, of course, is very much the case for Jonah, whose complex irony inheres in

⁴⁹ Jonah 1:5

⁵⁰ Jonah 1:10

⁵¹ Jonah 2.1.n

his situation of finding safety from the tempest inside the creature whose appearance would predict the tempest, as much as it inheres in finding a dry room in the sea. The storm precedes the fish. That the Fishermen's discussion overlays the simple structures of the Deluge and the story of Jonah with an intricate argument on the greed of humankind is illustrative of the play's insistence on appropriating Biblical text. This being Wilkins' work, it should not be surprising, even in this moment of light relief, to find a binary ethic with simplistic answers: ring the religious bell to curtail – even reverse – the greedy destruction. As Richard Halpern writes, Wilkins here 'seems to invoke this typological framework in the fishermen's image of salvation through the ringing of the church bells and through the fishermen themselves, from whose profession Jesus recruited his disciples.'⁵² What Halpern does not take into account is that, in contrast, when Shakespeare uses the story, it is to contextualise the indiscriminate death of the innocent Thaisa. The requisition of the strands of the Jonah story for highly differing ends is a neat illustration of the approach of the two playwrights.

Another factor which may be pointed to in suggesting Jonah as an influence in Act 3, Scene 1 is the direction in which the Biblical ship is sailing at the time of the storm: 'he founde a ship going to Tarshish: so he payed the fare thereof, and went downe into it, that he might go with them vnto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord.'⁵³ Although the location of Tarshish is not known, one candidate for its site is Tarsus. Regardless, it cannot be denied that the similarity of the words is striking and that Shakespeare, hardly being precise with his cartography⁵⁴, prioritises the poetic over the geographical. It might even be suggested that in altering the ship's course for Tarsus, Pericles flees, just as Jonah does by travelling to Tarshish. 'Ships of Tarshish' is also an expression denoting a ship of no particular place, as found in several instances throughout the Bible, especially poignantly in the current context in Isiah: 'The burden of Tyrus. Howle, yee shippes of Tarshish: for it is destroyed'.⁵⁵ The trouble of Tyre and the ships of Tarsus are a small linguistic step from that powerful image. The hazily located, or even implicitly *dislocated*, ships in Jonah find their poetic and dramatic counterpart in the storm of

⁵² Richard Halpern *Shakespeare Among the Moderns* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 144-5.

⁵³ Jonah 1:3. Norman Nathan also made this connection.

⁵⁴ See Holland *Op. Cit.*, *passim*.

⁵⁵ Isiah 23:1.

Pericles. Just as in *Jonah*, Shakespeare emphasises the human experience of storm, the strategies of bargaining and the development of fear, acceptance and resolution, rather than the indelicate message from the heavens found elsewhere in the Bible, and elsewhere in *Pericles*.

To relate, as I have tried to do, *Pericles* and in particular the play's violent episodes to passages from the Bible is seemingly to disagree with the conclusions of R.A. Foakes:

The gods may *seem* to preserve virtue, and to punish wickedness in the case of Antiochus and his daughter, struck by lightning, and Cleon and his wife, burned in their palace by the citizens of Tarsus, but do they exist? It appears rather that fortune, the violent impulses of humans, and the violent forces of nature shape the destinies of the characters, and there is no reason why *Pericles* should have been singled out for the suffering he endures. Only in retrospect do arbitrary events that occur by fortune or accident and natural disasters become assimilated into the idea of a divine dispensation.⁵⁶

Rather than the retrospective assimilation of ideas of divinity expounded by Foakes, surely more germane is the notion that the manifestations of fortune and accident emerge from a solid structure of Biblical allusion? In the case of each of its writers, there are recognisable Biblical echoes and similarities in *Pericles* which are apt to be forgotten if we are to follow a reading such as the one proposed by Foakes. Is it not more pertinent that an apparently random and indiscriminate series of events occurs at a tangent to the ordained pattern which, given the Biblical influence, they ought rather to parallel? Is it not the case that this departure itself is every bit as symbolically powerful in signifying the futility of prayer, the arbitrariness of plot and the preference of humanity that the Pagan setting is intended to portray? Could this have been achieved without the centrality of storm?

We have seen how Wilkins repeatedly uses *breath* and builds a stormy atmosphere into the word. In the opposite direction, Shakespeare builds human connotation into the idea of the storm and, in particular, the wind. In the face of adversity, Antiochus' daughter's silence finds its counterpart in Marina's verbosity. Her seemingly absent-minded conversation with Leonine draws on the story of her birth:

⁵⁶ R. A. Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) 186.

MARINA Is this wind westerly that blows?

LEONINE South-west.

MARINA When I was born the wind was in the north.

(4.1.49-50).

The direction of the wind and its significance has resulted in confusion amongst commentators. In an attempt to unravel the play's geography, Peter Holland, not unreasonably, writes: 'a north wind cannot blow a ship travelling from North Africa to somewhere close to Tarsus... It is a navigational impossibility.'⁵⁷ Cartographical concerns aside, the wind is seen to have other connotations. Warren glosses the first citing of the direction as 'north wind (bringer of storms)'. Moreover, DelVecchio and Hammond's assertion that the south and south-west winds had negative associations for Shakespeare is supported by lines in *2 Henry IV* ('the south | Borne with black vapour' 2.4.363-4) and *The Tempest* ('A southwest blow on ye | And blister you all o'er' 1.2.324-5). However, such associations are mitigated somewhat by Florizel's 'a prosperous south-wind friendly' (5.1.160). As I have attempted to show in my introduction, the meteorological understanding of tempests in early modern England was detailed and complex.⁵⁸ In this regard, Warren's assertion that a north wind is the 'bringer of storms' is worth exploring. It is certainly true that many such examples, from both poetic and factual sources roughly contemporaneous with *Pericles*, exist. Barnabe Barnes, in a sonnet of 1593, writes: 'The North whence stormes, with mistes and frostes proceede'⁵⁹. In Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, a voyage to Tripolis is described as troubled by tempest, as 'presently there arose a mighty storme, with thunder and raine, and the wind at North.'⁶⁰ Biblically, we find 'The sound of his thunder beateth the earth: so doeth the storme of the North'.⁶¹ However, the notion that the north wind is solely a 'bringer of storms' is undermined by at least as many incidents as support it. Taking the opposite

⁵⁷ Peter Holland *Op. Cit.*, 15. Holland understandably wishes to ignore the possibility that Marina is mistaken in her assertion (see 28 n9). Happily, Marina is not the only character to note the direction of the wind, as Gower prefaces the scene of Marina's birth with 'the grizzled north | Disgorges such a tempest forth'.

⁵⁸ See above 1-13.

⁵⁹ Barnabe Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (London, 1593), Sonnet LXXXV.

⁶⁰ Richard Hakluyt ed. *Principal Navigations* (London, 1599-1600) 189.

⁶¹ Ecclesiasticus, 43.17.

direction as an example, Nicolas de Niolay, recounting explorations of Turkey, recalls Plutarch's conviction that the desert was formed by 'sand being moued with a storme which blew out of the south.'⁶² In a 1586 work of criticism, William Webbe cites Virgil: 'Looke how the tempest storme when wind out wrastling blowes at south'.⁶³ Nor is the idea that the north wind is particularly tempestuous a Biblical one, for the south is just as dangerous: 'And the Lord shalbe seene ouer them, and his arrowe shal go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shal blowe the trumpet, and shal come forth with the whirlewindes of the South.'⁶⁴ The characterisation of winds, then, is obviously not as simple a process as we might have thought, and is further complicated by several other possibilities. The direction of the wind might be seen to have medical significance, as in the following example of Simon Harward: '*Fernelius sayth, The north wind vtterly forbiddeth letting blood, only the south wind doth best admit it in the cold time of winter.*' Clearly, although this quotation is from a medical text, the letting of blood in Act 4, Scene 1 has other connotations: Leonine has agreed to stab Marina.

Another way in which the north wind might be understood is shown by John Deacon, in his 1601 work, *Dialogicall Discourses*. Deacon described the way in which the weather affects those suffering from melancholy madness, which 'eftsoones is encreased in the *spring*, & in *summer*: yea, & it is then the extreamest of all when the *north-winde* blowes, by reason of the *drines* thereof.'⁶⁵ The dryness of the north wind is part of the association of characteristics attributed to each wind by contemporary meteorology.⁶⁶ Linked to the element of earth, the north wind was seen to be cold and dry as it 'riseth out of watrie places, that bee froze and bounde, because they bee so farre from the circle of the Sunne.'⁶⁷ Most clearly, the Proverb 'The North wind driveth away rain' was quoted by

⁶² Nicholas de Nicolay, *The nauigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie* (London: 1585) 123.

⁶³ William Webbe, *A discourse of English poetrie* (London: 1585) E3^v.

⁶⁴ Zechariah 9:14. Other such examples are available in the Bible, such as: 'Terrorours shal take him as waters, & a tempest shall cary him away by night. The East winde shall take him away, & he shal depart: & it shal hurle him out of his place.' Job, 27:20-1.

⁶⁵ John Deacon, *Dialogicall Discourses* (London: 1601) 160.

⁶⁶ For an overview, see S.K. Heninger, *A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968) 107-128.

⁶⁷ Bartholomeaeus, quoted by Heninger, *Op. Cit.*, 114.

clergymen in sermons and repeated in ecumenical commentaries.⁶⁸ Hence, it seems manifestly curious that a tempest should arise from a northerly wind. The equation, however, is not so simple. The north wind, although dry, carries poetic associations of violence, as in the sonnet of Barnabe Barnes:

That boystrous turbulence of North winds might
Which swels and ruffles in outrageous sort:
Those chearefull Southerne showers whose fruitedew
Brings forth all sustenance for mans comfort⁶⁹

Here, the rain is not oragious, but refreshing – it is the south wind’s revitalizing answer to the chaotic influence of the north’s. The ‘boystrous turbulence’ of the wind in *Pericles* is clear enough: Pericles prays to the ‘god of this great vast...|... that hast| Upon the winds command, bind them in brass.’ (3.1.1-3). Indeed, it is the reason which Pericles’ crew demand Thaisa be abandoned: ‘the wind is loud and will not lie, till the ship be cleared of the dead’ (3.1.48-9). The important characteristic of the north wind, then, both in the storm scene itself, and in Marina’s recounting of it, is not dryness, but chaos. Just as in the Barnes quotation, the quality of the north wind is understood partly through its opposite, so in *Pericles*, the text creates its own weather dynamic. Far more important than the many cultural undertones of the particular wind is the construction established in the conversation. Marina associates the north wind with birth, whilst Leonine emphasises *south*, thereby implicating that wind in the scene with connotations of Marina’s death: thus, a reliance upon opposites is used for symbolic effect north/south:birth/death.⁷⁰ Furthermore, just as Marina connects the north wind with danger and futility, so the other winds seem to maintain her sense of security, thus elevating the dramatic tensions of the passage. As elsewhere, the playwright is less interested in the learnt associations of weather and portent, and more in the speed and certainty with which his characters tend towards symbolising it.⁷¹

⁶⁸ See, for example, William Burton’s eighth sermon in *Ten Sermons* (London: 1602), 216; Robert Bolton *Some Generall Directions* (London: 1626); John Robinson, *Oberuations Diuine and Morall* (London: 1625); Thomas Taylor, *Christs Combate* (Cambridge: 1618).

⁶⁹ Barnabe Barnes, *A diuine centurie of spirituall sonnets* (London, 1595) Sonnet LXXXXV.

⁷⁰ Although the wind is ‘south west’, the emphasis is clearly on *south*, to qualify Marina’s suggestion that the wind is solely from the west.

⁷¹ *Julius Caesar* (1.3 1-84 & 2.2-1-38) is a clear example of the same focus.

Marina's evoking of the direction of the wind at the time of her birth accords with the shift of tense as she moves from soliloquy to conversation and into narration. 'When I was born the wind was in the north', establishes a sense of impossible recollection and a testament to the power of the story: the curious minutiae of the scene bears the characteristic of received understanding, as there is no possibility of Marina remembering the night, let alone the detail. As the supplier of this knowledge, Marina's nurse Lychorida, is invoked, the tense alters: 'My father, as nurse says, did never fear' (51). Again, this bears the touch both of the impossible and its relation to storytelling – Lychorida is recently deceased, but her story is still current, still voiced. Indeed, it is a story which Marina immediately begins to retell, or more accurately, since it is still *being* told, to maintain. Although the story itself is clearly understood as present, the events are still told in the past tense – 'did never fear' – and this is continued for several lines, until Marina moves from conversation into fully developed narration. 'When I was born. | Never was waves nor wind more violent' (57-8) is her response to Leonine's question, but as her story becomes more detailed, she returns to the present tense:

And from the ladder tackle washes off
A canvas climber. 'Ha' says one, 'wolt out?'
And with a dropping industry they skip
From stem to stern. The boatswain whistles, and
The master calls and trebles their confusion.
(60-3)

The shift into the present tense again ensures that minute details of the scene are again made vivid, again experienced. The reported dialogue of the seamen, their frantic activity and the disorder of the storm are all conveyed. Furthermore, Marina has knowledge of mariners' terms and nautical colloquialisms. Partly, this may be attributed to the feeling, formulated by many, that *Pericles* is 'a play controlled by the sustained awareness of the sea', or that the sea 'has the part of a principal character'.⁷² The proximity of the scene to the sea is also relevant, and is emphasised by Dionyza (25). More significant than these factors, however, is the way in which Marina seems to inhabit her story: it is clear from a comparison of this speech and the scene it recollects that

⁷² Holland, *Op. Cit.*, 12.

Marina's details have not appeared onstage earlier.⁷³ Apparently having learned the story from Lychorida, Marina is supplementing the staged version of the storm as though it were *still* onstage. The tense and the detail are both complicit in reifying Marina's earlier pronouncement, 'This world to me is as a lasting storm' (18). If the sea is a principal character of the play, the storm is that character's personality: just as the characters persist to use the diction of the sea, so they consistently identify with its oragious character and ensure that the waves are never still.

Although there is a clear authorial divide in the text of *Pericles*, the narrations of Gower are less definitely attributed to either playwright. If either author is to be given credit for all of Gower's speeches, it is Wilkins,⁷⁴ but in one of the later chorus speeches we find an image which seems characteristically Shakespearean. As Pericles leaves Tarsus, under the impression that Marina is dead, 'He puts on sackcloth and to sea he bears | A tempest which his mortal vessel tears, | And yet he rides it out.' (4.4.29-31) The figure of the body as ship is, perhaps, an obvious one, given the predominance of the sea in the play, but the image is effective nonetheless. The power of the phrase is in the use of the storm: the ship of the body is not simply a vessel for the soul of Pericles, but for the tempest of his emotions. The irony of bringing the storm to the sea reaches the painful conclusion of all but destroying the 'vessel' which carries it – clearly a notion resonant with the literal shipwrecks of the play. The phrase, in its essence, is comparable to Lear's 'This tempest in my mind | Doth take from my senses all feeling else' (3.4.12-13). In the face of bodily peril, that is, the greater threat is from the workings of the mind: in *Pericles*, this threat is couched not in the immediacy of shipwreck, but in the seeming inevitability of it, in Pericles' propensity to reify the very danger which encapsulates his journey. The carrying of the tempest is, ultimately, the indication that Pericles is finally ready to succumb to the cruel logic of the drama, assuming as he does the identity of the play's chief divisive force. Only once he has embodied the tempest, then, does Pericles abandon domain over his destiny; only having taken the tempest to the sea can he 'bear his courses to be ordered | By Lady Fortune' (46-7). Much of the character of Gower depends on his

⁷³ There is no occurrence of 'wolt out' in 3.1, for example, nor a whistle.

⁷⁴ See Warren, ed. *Op. Cit.*, 69.

propensity towards offering judgement. In his role as Chorus, he has the opportunity to compartmentalise the characters he describes every time he speaks, and it is not an opportunity which is passed: 'Bad child, worse father, to entice his own | To evil should be done by none.' (1.0.27-8); 'good Marina' (4.0.39); 'wicked Dionyza' (4.4.33). That there are very few characters in Shakespeare's plays who offer such unambiguous judgments who are not wholly comic, is commensurate with the idea that the majority of Gower's lines were written by Wilkins. The conflation of storm and vengeance, whilst direct and defined in Wilkins, is necessarily problematic in Shakespeare. This is formulated in *Antony and Cleopatra*: 'Some innocents 'scape not the thunderbolt' (2.5.77). Whichever author is responsible for Gower's speeches then, they reflect the position of Wilkins as demonstrated in the first section of the play.

In *Pericles*, therefore, we may see Shakespeare's storms in a direct comparison with those of his collaborator. We have seen the ways in which the same source is used differently by each writer, with regard to the Bible. Bardolatry and canonicism may prescribe to the modern reader the idea of which of the play's sections is more valuable, but in *Pericles*' storms the separate approaches allow each example to function differently without becoming repetitive. For just as it is no coincidence that we find two distinct voices in the play, it is no surprise that they seem to evince two discrete world views: the judgemental diction and absolutes of Gower, Helicanus and the Pericles of the first two acts is juxtaposed with the moral exoneration of Lysimachus and Bolt; Wilkins' providential lightning is replaced by the ethical intricacy of Shakespeare's storm; the omniscient narration of Gower and Helicanus gives way to a generically sustained narrative ignorance and silence. Rather than form a hierarchy with regard to the two sections of the play, we might, more helpfully, conclude that the continual use of the storm enables *Pericles* to represent these shifting perspectives at once delicately and forcefully.

The phrase of my chapter title, 'The powers above us', then, can be read in its context, the recognition of a defeated, tempest-tossed man. However, beyond its immediate context, it might serve as a reminder of the many debts which *Pericles* owes to the Bible,

the powers above represented as either severe or forgiving, judgemental or lenient. Alternatively, 'The powers above us' are simply natural forces – the storm, the winds, the sea – which, whatever human interpretation they invite, 'Must be as 'tis'. For ultimately, *Pericles* is concerned with the myriad ways in which humanity apprehends the natural world, as well as the insistence that despite that apprehension, these are powers which 'We cannot but obey.'

5.

The Tempest: Storm and Theatrical Reality.

As the Boatswain in the opening of *The Tempest* argues with the courtiers, who are ‘louder than the weather’, his exasperation is articulated in the phrase ‘if you can command these elements’.¹ An innocuous expression, perhaps, lost as it may be in the tumult and commotion of the scene, and yet, on reflection, it is a line which echoes throughout the play. As the meticulous presentation of the storm gives way to more and more obvious magic, the Boatswain’s phrase, the desperate futility of the desire to control the weather, becomes less and less unreasonable. In this chapter, I will attempt to explore the ways in which the play’s opening storm allows for a reading of the rest of the weather in the text. I will give particular attention in the first part of my argument to the staging of the storm, in an effort to expose the implications of its realism. It is my contention, furthermore, that the first scene of *The Tempest* must be read in conjunction with Shakespeare’s previous directions for *thunder and lightning*, if we are to attempt to come to terms with the process of meaning in which the storm is engaged.

In *Back To Nature* (2006), Robert N. Watson, exploring *As You Like It*, ‘interprets the longing for reunion with the world of nature as a sentimental manifestation of a philosophical problem: the suspicion that our cognitive mechanisms allow us to know things only as we liken them.’² Watson finds in the imagery of the play ‘the impulse of the human family to impose its familiarities.’³ Because Watson’s study is broadly concerned with the pastoral, it does not examine *The Tempest* in depth. However, an approach comparable to that which Watson takes with *As You Like It* is rewarding in reading *The Tempest*. *As You Like It* is involved in, and examines, pastoral fantasy and the human will both to succumb to nature and to re-appropriate it through language.

¹ 1.1.35-6; 21. All quotations from *The Tempest* unless otherwise noted are taken from the Arden 3rd series edition, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughn and Alden T. Vaughn (London: Cengage Learning, 1999). I have also made use of the Oxford edition, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: OUP, 1998) and the New Cambridge text, ed. David Lindley (Cambridge: CUP, 2002). Line references are included in the text.

² Robert N. Watson, *Back To Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2006) 33.

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

Similarly, *The Tempest* is concerned with, and implicated in, strategies of representation of the natural world and the human will to power over it. In the second half of this chapter, I will move towards what might be termed ecocriticism, as I argue that the possibilities and the connotations of the theatrical storm are repeatedly investigated during the play and that this process is part of *The Tempest*'s wider concern with the dramatic representation of nature. Although the ecocritical will become more explicit in the latter part of this chapter, however, it is always at stake in this reading, not least in the following paragraphs, which examine the play's first scene.

*A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard;
enter a Shipmaster and a Boatswain.*

MASTER	Boatswain!
BOATSWAIN	Here master. What cheer?
MASTER	Good, speak to th' mariners. Fall to it yarely or we run ourselves aground.
	<i>Exit.</i>
BOATSWAIN	Heigh, my hearts; cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! Yare! Yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the master's whistle! Blow till thou burst thy wind, if room enough.

(1.1.0-8)

The opening storm of *The Tempest* can be read as an example of what Timothy Morton has termed 'rendering'.⁴ For Morton, rendering is a 'main element', and indeed a 'result' of 'ambient poetics' or 'ecomimesis', that is, the critical language developed in *Ecology Without Nature* which ostensibly deals with the environmental form of art.⁵ This vocabulary of ambient poetics, for Morton, is necessary if we are to discuss the environmental form of literature without falling prey to its ostensible ecological content. Hence rendering, along with other elements of ecomimesis, is one way of critically evaluating works of art from an ecocritical direction, and this will become clearer below.

⁴ Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 35.

⁵ Ibid. 31-34. Morton writes, 'There are six main elements: *rendering*, the *medial*, the *timbral*, the *Aeolian*, *tone*, and, most fundamentally, the *re-mark*. These terms overlap, and are somewhat arbitrary and vague.' (ibid., 34).

Cinematic theory is the source for the concept of rendering, which is expanded by Michel Chion.⁶ Chion stresses the need to ‘distinguish between the notions of *rendering* and *reproduction*’, arguing that for cinematic ‘sounds to be truthful, effective and fitting’, film should less ‘reproduce what would be heard in the same situation in reality’ and more ‘render (convey, express) the feelings associated with the situation.’⁷ Whereas Chion’s definition is restricted to ‘use of sounds’, Morton’s use of the term is extrapolated to all texts and media.⁸ Morton, then, asserts that rendering ‘attempts to simulate reality itself: to tear to pieces the aesthetic screen that separates the perceiving subject from the object.’⁹ Although Morton’s work mainly concentrates on Romantic poetry for its literary examples, this concept of rendering may apply to any medium and, as Morton elaborates on the idea, its pertinence to theatre becomes clearer:

When ecomimesis renders an environment, it is implicitly saying: “This environment is real; do not think that there is an aesthetic framework here.” All signals that we are in a constructed realm have been minimized. Alternatively, even when the perceiver proceeds by “cynical reason,” we know very well that we are being deceived, but our disbelief is willingly suspended. Or we choose to enjoy the rendering as if it were not artificial. Rendering encourages us to switch off our aesthetic vigilance. But even if we know very well that it is a special effect, we enjoy the deception.¹⁰

This is how I wish to use the term *rendering* in my argument, that is, the process by which a text presents itself as reality and encourages the reader or audience to accept it as such. This is a helpful way to think about *The Tempest*’s first scene for two main reasons, each of which is important in an ecocritical approach to the play. Firstly, however the King’s Men staged the storm, everything in the text points towards an attempt to present a theatrical tempest which is as close to a real one as possible. In so doing, the scene works to diminish the obviousness of its own ‘aesthetic framework’; that is the mechanics of representation which draw attention to the drama’s artificiality. Secondly, the ‘aesthetic vigilance’ which Morton describes is distracted – or ‘switched off’ as

⁶ See Michel Chion, *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 109-112.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁹ Morton *Op. Cit.*, 35

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Morton puts it – not only by the scene itself, but by the history of Shakespeare's storms and their relationship with the supernatural. Thus, it is more likely that an audience will accept the scene as a 'natural' and therefore non-theatrical, perfectly rendered storm, if they are familiar with Shakespeare's tendency to stage storms without theophanies. Doubtless this appears to be too sophisticated an audience for some. In response, I suggest that the regular Jacobean theatregoer, having seen popular plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Pericles*, and possibly *King Lear*, may justifiably accept *The Tempest*'s storm as 'natural' thanks to the 'natural' storms which recur in the earlier work of the playwright.¹¹ These reasons outline the ways in which Act 1, Scene 1 of *The Tempest* can be seen as inviting a reading informed by Morton's concept of rendering. In order to develop such a reading, I will deal with each of these points in detail.

In his essay '*The Tempest*'s Tempest at Blackfriars' (1989), Andrew Gurr discusses the various possibilities of staging the play's first scene.¹² Although, as with any attempted explication of early modern staging, Gurr is necessarily involved in an amount of speculation, his closing remarks are persuasive: 'If *The Tempest* truly was the first play Shakespeare planned for the Blackfriars, his opening scene was a model of how to *épater les gallants*. The shock of the opening's realism is transformed into magic the moment Miranda enters.'¹³ As I have shown already in Chapter 1, with regards to *Julius Caesar*, the notion that the spectacular showcase of the storm could define the character of the playhouse is an attractive one. Although Gurr's approach to *The Tempest* may appear similar, a crucial difference is that his argument, to a certain extent, must contend with the fact that the Blackfriars theatre had an established mode of practice when Shakespeare's play was staged there. Hence, the impact of the storm is as much to do with surprise as with impressive spectacle. As Gurr makes clear, the Blackfriars audience would have been accustomed to musicians playing both introductory pieces and *entre-act* music, and consequently the difference in approach is extreme:

¹¹ Perhaps this leaves room for an acknowledgment of the irony of the Boatswain's phrase for an audience member who sees the play twice: 'if you can command these elements' has very different meanings depending on audience expectations.

¹² Andrew Gurr, '*The Tempest*'s Tempest at Blackfriars', *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1989) 91-102. All Gurr quotations in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are taken from this essay.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 102.

At the Blackfriars a wild and stormy scene like the middle act in *King Lear*, with drums rumbling and bullets crackling to make thunder offstage, might deliver an initial shock to the routine musical expectations of the Blackfriars audience, expectations which would only be slowly eased by the announcement of Prospero's magical control of the storm and the music which follows.¹⁴

As with the now familiar conflation of storm and the supernatural, then, this approach to the staging of thunder and lightning is based on audience expectations. When it is considered that the musicians at Blackfriars were grouped as a broken consort, that is, without drums, the play's opening of '*tempestuous noise*' indeed appears determined in its unconventionality. If, like Gurr, we are convinced of the novelty of the special effects used, then the scene seems utterly renegade in character: 'There are no real precedents anywhere in earlier plays for mounting a storm complete with a shipwreck on stage. Indeed the musical effects, which do not appear until the second scene, might be considered the second and reassuring movement in a deliberate challenge to audience expectations.'¹⁵

The direction of the '*tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard*' is probably the phrasing of the scrivener Ralph Crane, who seems to have prepared the script for publication of the 1623 Folio.¹⁶ If we are to take the direction literally, as 'the earliest evidence we have of how the play was staged by the King's Company', then it is unusual in specifying lightning as an auditory effect.¹⁷ John Jowett has proposed that 'this is a possible indication of an original direction having been reworded' and appears to imply that a visual lightning effect was likely.¹⁸ It seems to me that if the phrase is Crane's, and thus is not the prescriptive direction one might expect in a prompt book but rather a descriptive account of a performance, then there can have been no sight of lightning. 'Thunder and lightning' is a phrase which may be used to depict the noise of a storm, but 'thunder' and 'lightning' are different theatrical effects. The '*tempestuous noise*',

¹⁴ Ibid., 95.

¹⁵ Ibid., 95.

¹⁶ See Vaughn and Vaughn, *Op. Cit.*, 126-30.

¹⁷ Ibid., 130.

¹⁸ John Jowett, 'New Created Creatures: Ralph Crane and the Stage Directions in *The Tempest*', *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983): 107-20.

therefore, is likely to have been *only* a noise. This conclusion supports my reading of the scene as invested in rendering the storm: the noise of a thunder-run is convincing and accurate, whilst lightning effects are much more palpably an aesthetic extravagance.¹⁹

Although the storm is an illusion, and the stage effects which conjure that illusion may have been impressive, the actions and diction of the crew are firmly grounded in Jacobean reality. Shakespeare seems to have paid great attention to portraying accurately contemporary nautical procedures in his writing of the scene. The Boatswain's instructions to the crew reveal a factual determination on the part of the playwright: 'Take in the topsail', 'Down with the topmast', 'Bring her to try with the main course' and 'Set her two courses off to sea again! Lay her off!' are, as we shall see, all valid instructions (1.1.6, 33, 34, 48). Figurative language is not the emphasis in the bulk of the Boatswain's speech. Thus the imagery he uses when speaking to the nobles, or to the Mariners when his orders have failed, is pointed in its contrast: 'What cares these roarers for the name of king?' and 'What, must our mouths be cold?' (16-17, 51). Crucially, these examples of figurative language are both in the form of a rhetorical question; the nautical imperatives have no answer but action, the imagery no answer at all. In the Boatswain's speech, survival is dependent on the absence of metaphor. Figurative language, therefore, is portrayed in the scene as an extravagance, and that portrayal is part of the process of rendering the storm: by prioritising the technical terms and by isolating the imagery, the Boatswain's language conceals the aesthetic framework.

In order to illustrate this further, it is helpful to compare the scene with its counterpart in John Fletcher's play, *The Sea Voyage* (1622). Although the later work alludes repeatedly to *The Tempest*, the difference in terms of the figurative language is clear in the first speech. As in Shakespeare's play, special effects for a storm are directed, and the Master speaks first:

*A Tempest, Thunder and Lightning.
Enter Master and two Saylor.*

¹⁹ Thunder-runs are simple to reconstruct, and so their effect is easily evaluated. There is one, for example, in the permanent theatre exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Master.

Lay her aloofe, the Sea grows dangerous,
 How it spits against the clouds, how it capers,
 And how the fiery Element frights it back!
 There be devils dancing in the aire, I think
 I saw a *Dolphin* hang ith hornes of the moone
 Shot from a wave: hey day, hey day,
 How she kicks and yerks?
 Down with'e main Mast, lay her at hull,
 Farle up all her Linnens, and let her ride it out.²⁰

Despite the concern, expressed by Gurr, that 'Fletcher's scene is designed to be an immediately recognisable echo and development of Shakespeare's and therefore cannot be compared too closely with it'²¹, this speech exemplifies my point, by developing its predecessor in ways more complex than a simple echo. As in *The Tempest*, the commands are evident, but here they merely bookend the speech rather than dominate it. In their place, the imagery of the sea, the clouds and the fiery element give the lines an entirely alternative focus. As Christopher Cobb has remarked of *The Tempest*, 'The play withholds poetic descriptions of both the storm and the suffering of those caught in it.'²² This is not to dismiss Fletcher's scene, merely to point out that it is inherently different from the play on which it is based. That the Master's lines from *The Sea Voyage* would not be out of place in *Pericles* or *The Winter's Tale*, for example, shows the extent to which Shakespeare has modified his language for *The Tempest*.

In fact, the extent to which Shakespeare deals in nautical technicalities is remarkable, as A.F. Falconer, in *Shakespeare and the Sea* has explained. In response to the commands of the Boatswain, which I have already quoted ('Take in the topsail', 'Down with the topmast', 'Bring her to try with the main course' and 'Set her two courses off to sea again! Lay her off!') (1.1.6, 33, 34, 48), Falconer writes

The ship is sound, the seamen are disciplined, the right orders are given. Some of the newer manoeuvres of the day, even one that was debateable, have been

²⁰ 1.1.1-9. Quoted from the Lion database, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqi:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft.dr:Z000079617:0> Accessed 22/04/09.

²¹ Gurr, *Op. Cit.*, 100.

²² Christopher Cobb, 'Storm versus Story: Form and Affective Power in Shakespeare's Romances', in Stephen Cohen (ed.), *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism* (Aldershot: Ashgrave, 2007), 95-124 (103).

tried, but all without success. [...] Shakespeare could not have written a scene of this kind without taking great pains to grasp completely how a ship beset with these difficulties would have to be handled.²³

This detail of the scene is indicative of the authenticity at which Shakespeare is apparently aiming. Why the playwright would adhere to such specifications is puzzling: it is certainly at least highly unusual in Jacobean drama.²⁴ Perhaps there is a concern – more appropriate for the Globe performances rather than those at the Blackfriars – that any mariners in the audience would need to be as convinced by the scene as the rest of the crowd. Perhaps the possibility of theatregoing gentlemen who had also been at sea, and thereby absorbed some knowledge of the procedures, was of greater bearing. Whatever the reason, it is apparent that the scene draws attention away from its aesthetic framework by including valid commands in a correct and justifiable order. We might fruitfully contrast this with Shakespeare's anachronisms elsewhere, not least his notorious propensity to insert coastlines and seaports onto landlocked countries and inland towns.²⁵ The consideration with which the ship in the storm is rendered is made even clearer as Falconer goes on:

[Shakespeare] has not only worked out a series of manoeuvres, but has made exact use of the professional language of seamanship, knowing that if this were not strictly used aboard ship, the seamen would not know what they were required to do; and that, without it, the scene would not be realistic and lifelike. He could not have come by this knowledge from books, for there were no works on seamanship in his day, nor were there any nautical word lists.²⁶

²³ A. Falconer, *Shakespeare and the Sea* (London: Constable, 1964) 39. Falconer, himself a naval officer, also provides a detailed appraisal of the validity of the emergency procedures which the play's crew attempt.

²⁴ I have not been able to find any similar examples in extant plays of the period. It remains, of course, possible that texts which have not survived the centuries have the same level of authentic nautical detail.

²⁵ The most famous example of this is of course in *The Winter's Tale* ('our ship hath touched upon the deserts of Bohemia', 3.3.1-2) although *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* seems fancifully to suggest a naval route between Verona and Milan (1.1.71). In *The Tempest* itself, we might charitably suggest that Prospero's account of the Milanese bark which 'Bore us some leagues to the sea' (1.2.145), is feasible, but it would be a stretch to conclude that Shakespeare is as accurate with his geography as with his naval manoeuvres.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39. There has been no discovery of the types of texts Falconer mentions since *Shakespeare and the Sea* was published.

The scene, then, represents a ship in a storm by going through the motions of nautical manoeuvres, but crucially, in so doing, draws those manoeuvres not from stage practice, and not even from public literature. Falconer makes it clear that the manoeuvres can only be recognised and confirmed as correct and accurate by reading nautical texts which postdate the play.²⁷ The first of these such texts, Henry Mainwairing's *Seaman's Dictionary* (1623) advertises its premier position: 'To understand the art of navigation is far easier learned than to know the practice and mechanical working of ships, with the proper terms belonging to them, in respect that there are helps for the first by many books ... but for the other, till this, there was not so much as a means thought of, to inform any one in it.'²⁸ The framework of the scene is hidden by the fact that it is not a recognisable, book-based framework. By employing language which is not associated with theatre or with the written word, Shakespeare here relies on the fact that associations with artistic forms and with factual literature are concealed. Whether the manoeuvres are taken from a private manuscript, or whether the playwright gained this knowledge from investigative conversations, the point is the same: the scene is rendered by effectively saying 'this is not taken from drama, this is not taken from books, this is not taken from anything: what you are watching is real.' To borrow from Morton's definition of rendering, 'All signals that we are in a constructed realm have been minimized', and whether or not this is recognised by the audience, this is the way in which the scene operates.²⁹ The success of rendering depends not on the exactitude of the illusion but on the ease with which the audience is enabled to accept it as reality.

An alternative to this conclusion has been proposed by Christopher Cobb:

The presentation of the characters, without either particularising details or any sign of humane behaviour, does not seem calculated to create sympathy for them. Rather, the scene seems to solicit interest in the capacity of the theatre for vivid special effects, to encourage the spectators to revel in the impact of its sights and sounds without much regard for the fate of the characters on shipboard. Thus, it encourages the spectators to be aware of the scene's theatricality even while it claims that the storm is real for the characters.³⁰

²⁷ See Falconer, 36-40.

²⁸ Quoted by Falconer, *ibid.*, xii.

²⁹ Morton, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

³⁰ Cobb, *Op. Cit.*, 103.

Cobb's main point here is concerned with characterisation, and in particular a characterisation of the playhouse as much as of the characters onstage. For Cobb, then, the use of special effects draws attention to the aesthetic framework, rather than contributing to its concealment. In reading Gurr's essay on the staging, it is, admittedly, possible to see the scene in both ways: the effects could, in the context of previous Blackfriars productions, be so shocking as to demand attention for its theatricality. However, that same shocking approach could be understood as a rejection of the established practice of, for example, introducing a play with music, or even with descriptive poetry, as in *The Sea Voyage*.³¹ In this way, the opening of *The Tempest* bypasses the formulaic elements which signal the beginning of a play and which therefore serve to enclose the illusion. Thus, the play starts by drawing audience attention, but not by drawing attention to the fact that it is a play.³² Indeed, were the scene to follow the pattern, and the storm to be staged after the familiar strains of music, the whole scene would be altered. In this way the storm would be a representation of reality, rather than an illusion of reality itself, and the qualities of rendering written into the lines would be diminished. For Morton rendering is, '[rather] than a weak representation, or imitation, [...] a strong, magical form, a compelling illusion rather than a simple copy.'³³

Implicit in all of the above arguments is the recognition that the rendering which I have described is dependent upon the language of the scene. Reliant upon the language, that is, more than the stage effects of thunder and lightning. Indeed, the title of the play is of importance here, also. However realistic the drums, thunder runs and fireworks are, their contribution to the overall effect of the scene is necessarily limited. The reason for this is that Shakespeare's storms are never simply storms. By this I mean that the representation of the weather is never the only priority of the storm scenes: if that were the case, the

³¹ Blackfriars performances were preceded by a musical concert, but that music was, in each play performed there, distinct from the play itself. By 'introducing a play with music', here, I mean the music which signalled the start of the play, not the performance which preceded it.

³² We can think of this in several analogous ways: it is a similar idea, for example, to the work of 20th century artists, whose canvases are hung without frames – Yves Klein, for example – or whose work incorporates and plays upon the idea of a liminal space between the edge of the painting and the edge of the canvas, as in Mark Rothko's mural pieces. In modern, proscenium arch theatre, the effect is equivalent to the play starting before the house lights are dimmed.

³³ Morton, *Op. Cit.*, 54.

scenes would be inherently undramatic. Rather the scenes are concerned with the human apprehension of storms. In the case of *The Tempest*, this concern is played out by staging characters in mortal danger, whose mode of apprehending the storm is necessarily practical. That the Boatswain's language reflects that necessity (and that the language of the nobles flaunts it) is as crucial for the rendering of the ship in the storm as the thunder and lightning effects which begin the play.

Having explored the ways in which the scene in question relies on a faithful depiction of nautical procedures, I will now turn to the importance of Shakespeare's earlier storms for the reading of this one. I have already noted that the sea storms in Shakespeare's plays, when considered in chronological order, become increasingly involved in spectatorship. It is also apparent that, when the storms which occur onstage are considered, the simplistic conclusion that thunder and lightning indicates supernatural activity is troubled. I propose that *The Tempest's* engagement with storm relies on a career of complex approaches to that theatrical commonplace. Moreover, the ways in which the opening scene of the play builds on earlier storms once more point to what, following Morton, I want to call rendering. In order to show this, it is necessary to recall briefly each occurrence of thunder and lightning in Shakespeare's plays and how each one engages with the supernatural.

In the *Henry VI* plays, as we have seen, staged thunder and lightning is dealt with in two different ways. In *Henry VI Part 2*, the effects are a straightforward accompaniment to the rise of Asnath, and therefore follow the formula proposed by Leslie Thomson in 'The Meaning of Thunder and Lightning'.³⁴ In *Part 1*, however, the effects follow Talbot's oath and, whilst the possibility of divine intervention is thereby alluded to, it is not realised onstage (1.4.97). From the very start of his playwriting career, then, Shakespeare demonstrates a propensity to destabilise the expected association of storm and the supernatural.

³⁴ See above, Introduction, 13-25.

In *Julius Caesar*, the next play in which directions for thunder and lightning are found, no supernatural element is forthcoming (at least until the ghost of Caesar appears, long after the storm). Whilst the possibility of portent and ‘unnatural...things’ is raised during the storm, such lines are balanced within the characters’ dialogue, with Cicero as sceptical of the idea of the supernatural as Casca is credulous. The storm in *Julius Caesar* shows an awareness of its theatrical context in its allusion to the supernatural, but is at odds with that context in that it does not stage a supernatural figure.

If the sound of thunder was a part of the original performance of *Othello*, then subsequent editors, from the First Quarto of 1622 onwards, have not recognised it in stage directions. However, the beginning of Act 2, Scene 1 takes place during a storm, and the characters in it comment on the weather: ‘Methinks the wind hath spoke about at land. | A fuller blast ne’er shook our battlements’ (2.1.5-6). Perhaps because there are no storm effects, or perhaps in spite of them, there is scarcely any allusion to the work of the supernatural during the tempest. Cassio’s hopeful lines come closest: ‘Great Jove, Othello guard, | And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath’ (78-9). Once again then, if the audience have expectations of the meaning of a storm on stage, Shakespeare has refused to meet them.

The same applies to the next staged storm in Shakespeare’s plays, that in *King Lear*. As I sought to demonstrate in chapter 2, Act 3 of the play seems to engage with the audience expectations outlined by Thomson and indeed develops the character of Lear with them. At no point is there a supernatural figure or apparition onstage during the storm, but, as in *Julius Caesar*, the scenes nonetheless can be helpfully read as alluding to a wider supernatural theatrical context.

In *Macbeth*, of course, the effects of thunder and lightning are unambiguously charged with the supernatural, occurring as they do at each appearance of the Witches. Rather than consolidate Thomson’s argument, however, the storms in *Macbeth* (especially in light of the play’s composition and first performance being so close to those of *Lear*) illustrate the extent to which Shakespeare is able to manipulate and utilise expectations.

For the original Shakespearean audiences, the playwright's storms had meaning specific to each play. In the wider context of other plays, this meaning was inevitably complicated and not readily transferable.

With Shakespeare's romances, the relationship of storm and the supernatural is perhaps even more complex than in the tragedies. As with *Othello*, the storms of *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles* are not introduced with stage directions for thunder and lightning in their respective editions. However, there is a persuasive case for concluding that those effects would have been used, particularly in the case of *Pericles*, the text of which ultimately derives only from a problematic quarto edition and which, in Act 3, Scene 1, stages a shipboard scene which seems to cry out for storm effects. In terms of the present question viz. the supernatural, *Pericles* is persuaded to throw the body of Thaisa overboard in order to calm the elements, but there is no apparition of the supernatural in the scene. In the following scene, however, Thaisa is revived by Cerimon, who claims knowledge of 'an Egyptian | That had nine hours lien dead, | Who was by good appliance recovered' (3.2.86-7). Storm and magic are thus delineated in the two scenes. Only when the noise of thunder and lightning has faded can the work of the supernatural commence. *Cymbeline*, however, sees the return of the familiar descent of the heavenly figure: 'Jupiter descends in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle. He throws a thunderbolt' (5.4.93). Although, as we have seen, directions such as these are not unusual in early modern theatre, this is the first time in Shakespeare's works in which thunder and lightning accompanies a descent.³⁵ Storm and the supernatural, then, are once more conflated and simultaneous. As ever, this is not a position on which Shakespeare rests, for in *The Winter's Tale*, another storm occurs, as earthly as *Cymbeline*'s is heavenly. Moreover, this is a play in which the withholding of 'magic' is essential for the dénouement: the reappearance of Hermione. As in *Pericles*, the (unusually deadly) storm and the supernatural are delineated, but here are they also separated by several scenes. The immediate appearance of the supernatural following the storm in *Pericles* is an explicit separation: each is informed by the absence of the other, and the harm done

³⁵ See above, 13-25. Thunder and lightning do, of course, provide a backdrop for the ascent of Asnath in 2 *Henry VI*, and it is possible that the Witches in *Macbeth* entered from beneath the stage, thus perhaps providing a neat contrast to Edgar as Poor Tom in *Lear*.

during the storm is rectified by the magic which follows it. In *The Winter's Tale*, the effect is completely different. The deaths caused by the storm are not revisited, and the intimations of the supernatural are not related to the shipwreck. Any expectations of a theophany during the storm would introduce the idea of a *deus ex machina* too early, and so suggestions of it are avoided.

It is possible of course that the chronology of Shakespeare's plays differs slightly from the order above. Perhaps *The Tempest* was written before, for example, *The Winter's Tale*, or both of those plays appeared before *Cymbeline*. I have listed the various approaches of the plays, however, in order to make apparent the extent to which any implicit notion of the supernatural in staged storms is destabilised by Shakespeare. This is an important realisation in reading the storm *qua* supernatural in *The Tempest* and, whether the play was Shakespeare's last of sole authorship or whether others appeared afterwards, the playwright's earlier storms have already established the pattern.

With this in mind, let us examine the part of Leslie Thomson's essay which deals with *The Tempest*. Until her reading of *The Tempest*, Thomson's argument has been fairly unequivocal, asserting that, '[in] the case of *thunder and lightning*, the audience was almost invariably prompted to expect the supernatural – and got what it expected.'³⁶ When examining *The Tempest*, however, it becomes clear that the play already presents for Thomson a departure from the established theatrical practice which is the subject of her essay:

until Miranda begins the second scene by saying to Prospero, 'If by your art, my dearest father, you have | Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them', it is likely that the audience would not have questioned the tragic event, given the effects they heard and saw while listening to the desperate sailors.³⁷

This statement points to a complexity of audience response which is not in keeping with the 'invariable prompting' of the former quotation. Effectively, Thomson concludes that with an appropriate degree of realism in effects, dialogue and acting, the '*tempestuous*

³⁶ Thomson, *Op. Cit.*, 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-1.

noise of thunder and lightning heard need not suggest the supernatural. Moreover that same realism is enough to convince the audience that the storm is a portrayal of a natural phenomenon. It is my contention that an audience familiar with Shakespeare's plays would be prepared for a storm which withholds its character according to a binary supernatural/natural assignation. Again, this is not simply a case of how effectively the storm effects are staged, but relies on a career's worth of the meaning of *thunder and lightning* being destabilised. Whilst Thomson's point about the supernatural quality of the storm being realised only through the speech of Miranda is true, then, it complicates her earlier claims over what an audience would expect as the special effects begin the play. The storm is more readily rendered because Shakespeare has, in earlier plays, already troubled the aesthetic framework which rendering seeks to conceal.

So far, I have attempted to show how the opening scene of *The Tempest* is replete with strategies of rendering, and how these strategies work in the scene itself and in relation to earlier plays of Shakespeare's. I will now examine the ways in which the rendering of the first storm functions in the rest of the play, beginning with Act 1, Scene 2. That Miranda's lines which begin the scene immediately raise the possibility that the storm was an illusion has already been observed. It is seldom acknowledged, however, that the lines suggest that the storm is still taking place:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch
But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out.

(1.2.1-6)

In particular, the second line of the speech with both the deictic 'this roar' and the imperative 'allay them' gives the impression that the storm has not finished, and that impression is maintained throughout the passage. The effects of this are several and subtle. Firstly, rather than simply intimating that the storm might be supernatural the lines allow the audience to experience the storm in this light, instead of simply reimagining it retrospectively. Secondly, and more importantly, the present tense relates the speech to accounts of storms from earlier plays. In this regard, the description becomes consciously

theatrical in the very way which, as we have seen, the opening scene avoids. Thus, Miranda's speech is reminiscent of, for example, the Mariner's in *The Winter's Tale*, 'The heavens that we have in hand are angry, | An frown upon's' (3.3.5-6) and Pericles' lines 'O, still | Thy deaf'ning, dreadful thunders; gently quench | Thy nimble sulphurous fashes!' (3.1.4-6). Moreover the literary conceit of the sea touching the sky is employed. A similar idea is used by William Strachey, whose *True Repertory* is a probable source text for *The Tempest*: 'the Sea swelled above the Clouds, and gave battell unto Heaven. It could not be said to raine, the waters like whole Rivers did flood in the ayre.'³⁸ The image, however, is widespread and taking Ovid as an example, we may see some variations on the theme in the following extracts:

The surges mounting vp aloft did séeme too mate the skye,
And with theyr sprinckling for too wet the clowdes that hang on hye.³⁹

What boysterous billowes now (O wretch) amids the waues we spye,
As I forthwith should haue bene heu'de to touch the Azure skye.⁴⁰

Ioues indignation and his wrath began to grow so hot.
That for to quench the rage thereof, his Heauen suffisde not.
His brother *Neptune* with his waues was faine to doe him ease⁴¹

In including imagery in this vein, then, Miranda's speech is identifiably engaging in a tradition. This is exactly the type of allusion which the first scene of the play sought to avoid.

³⁸ The relevant sections of Strachey's work are reprinted in the Arden edition (ed. Vaughn and Vaughn), *Op. Cit.*, 287-302. I quote here from page 290. For the most recent account of the evidence for Shakespeare's reading of Strachey, see Alden T. Vaughn, 'William Strachey's "True Repertory" and Shakespeare: A Closer Look at the Evidence' in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.3 (Fall 2008): 245-73. As well as presenting a clear challenge to doubts over Shakespeare's use of Strachey, Vaughn provides a thorough history of the debate.

³⁹ Arthur Golding, *The. xv. bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman, a worke very pleasaunt and delectable* (London: 1567) 143^r

⁴⁰ Thomas Churchyard *The three first bookes of Ouid de Tristibus translated into English* (London: 1580) 3^v.

⁴¹ *Metamorphosis*, Golding trans., *Op. Cit.*, 5^r. It is possible that Shakespeare had this passage in mind when writing this scene as, in the build up to the lines in Golding's translation, the South wind is described as having a 'dreadfull face as blacke as pitch'. Along with the juxtaposition of sea and sky – and with their characterisation as Jove and Neptune in Ariel's speech – this may seem only to be a coincidence of clichés. However, nowhere else does Shakespeare use 'pitch' in the description of a storm.

After the detailed and careful rendering of the storm in the play's opening, then, why have a speech which, in its diction, imagery and allusiveness, undoes the entire process? Surely, the fact that Miranda's lines intimate that the storm is not real, whilst simultaneously employing language suggestive of a *theatrical* storm, is not a coincidence. In the speech, form is reflective of content, and vice versa. Miranda's lines belong to the aesthetic framework which the first scene has been shown to hide.

If Miranda's speech does this fleetingly, then Ariel's description of the storm consolidates the shift:

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 lightning, the precursors
O'th' dreadful thunderclaps, 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.

(1.2.196-206)

As in Act 1, Scene 1, there is a certain amount of nautical knowledge on display here, which, though less obscure than that in the first scene, is nonetheless exact. Falconer comments that Ariel 'makes his report, naming the different parts of a tall ship correctly' and, moreover, 'in order' and, as with the manoeuvres in the storm, this is apparently a knowledge gained through experience or conversation rather than books.⁴² This, however, is where the similarity with the earlier scene ends, for, like Miranda's, Ariel's speech is thick with figurative language and allusion. Gabriel Egan has pointed out the similarities between these lines and Lear's in the storm:

The compound adjectives 'thought-executing' and 'sight-outrunning' are not just grammatically alike [...] but also convey in different ways the sense of a human faculty (thinking, seeing) surpassed by the instantaneous brightness of

⁴² Falconer, *Op. Cit.*, 39; 105.

lightning flashes that are advance warnings ('vaunt-couriers', 'precursors') of the boom of thunder that will follow.⁴³

Again, then, the second scene of *The Tempest* is allusive in ways which the first scene circumvents. One word in particular which Egan notes is shared by Lear and Ariel is 'sulphurous'. In fact, it is a relatively frequent word used by Shakespeare in describing storms, and in particular, Jove. As well as Pericles' 'nimble sulphurous flashes' (3.1.6), we have Isabella's comparison of Angelo and Jove: 'Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt | Splits the unwedgeable and gnarled oak' (*Measure* 2.2.116-7). In *Cymbeline*, Jupiter 'came in thunder; his celestial breath | Was sulphurous to smell' (5.4.114-5). In choosing this word, however, Shakespeare is not simply imbuing Ariel's lines with a favourite description, but referring to the practical elements of staging lightning. Gurr contends that 'Fireworks or rosin for lightning flashes were available at the amphitheatres but unpopular at the halls because of the stink.'⁴⁴ That stink was, very often at least, attributable to the ingredients of the fireworks being based around sulphur, which is both a constituent of gunpowder and able to burn independently.⁴⁵ Ariel's lines, then, can be read as referring to an effect that was used in the first scene, or, alternatively, hinting at the absence of such an effect. If fireworks were used, 'sulphurous' is a reminder of their smell, which has probably only recently faded when Ariel is speaking. It points towards the artificiality of the lightning which the fireworks were intended to mimic. If the storm was staged through noise effects alone, then 'sulphurous' functions as a reminder of the inadequacy of such a form in rendering the visual phenomenon of lightning. In either case, the word may be understood as being informed by the practicalities of staging, and thus, in Ariel's speech, is engaged in the process of highlighting the storm's theatricality. The same can be said for the examples from *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, of course, but in *The Tempest*, there is a further suggestion that the second scene underscores what the first scene secretes.

⁴³ Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 151. *King Lear* quotations are from 3.2.4-5.

⁴⁴ Gurr, *Op. Cit.*, 95.

⁴⁵ Both gunpowder and sulphur alone were used on the stage, depending on the effect required. See Butterworth, *Op. Cit.*, 230-1.

Whatever the various permutations of 'sulphurous' in the speech may be, it seems extremely unlikely that the staging of the storm extended to the spectacular displays of flame which Ariel describes.⁴⁶ Unlikely, that is, partly because an effect as distinctive as this would surely be mentioned in a detailed stage direction and partly because no flames are mentioned in the first scene. Perhaps the most pertinent point here, however relates to the rendering of Act 1, Scene 1 being achieved, as we have seen, with carefully practical language. Ariel's speech is not simply figurative for the sake of fulfilling an opportunity for heightened language, but to contrast with the earlier storm. In this way, in its hyperbolic style, it points to a system of theatrical representation which is spectacular, that is, one which draws attention to itself and to its aesthetic form. By reshaping the content of the storm, the form of the storm is brought to light: 'As if we would stage something like that', the speech seems to say, 'when the whole point was to make you think the storm was real.' This reaches a climax in Ariel's next speech, in which, in addition to even more elaborate effects, there is reported speech which is not in the first scene:

All but mariners
Plunged into the foaming brine and quit the vessel;
Then all afire with me, the King's son Ferdinand,
[...]
Was the first man that leapt, cried 'Hell is empty,
And all the devils are here'.
(210-4)

Ariel's speeches here, moreover, are significant for another, rather different reason. Having been engaged in tempestuous imagery and staging throughout his writing, Shakespeare here indulges in the ultimate pathetic fallacy by giving the storm a voice. Ariel's speech is a detailed, first person narration, that approaches the representation of weather by focussing on, as it were, the I of the storm. The closest I have found to an appraisal of this is concerned with the masque and not the storm, in an essay by Robert Egan: 'the goddesses are being played by spirits who are, in fact, elemental creatures of nature – the real nature surrounding Prospero – and are compelled, possibly against their

⁴⁶ Of the other connotations of 'sulphurous', of course, most prominent is the suggestion of Hell.

wills, to enact a natural order which is not their own, but Prospero's "pathetic fallacy".⁴⁷ This remark indicates the ways in which notions of pathetic fallacy may be helpful in explicating the play's approach to the representation of nature, and this applies equally to Ariel as to the spirits of the masque. I will return to this in the final section of the chapter, as it has important connotations for an ecocritical appraisal of the play and is best examined in that light.

Following the introductory storm, with its subsequent re-imagining by Miranda and Ariel, the sound of thunder is questionable both in its origin and in its context with regards to the supernatural.⁴⁸ Having witnessed a natural storm, which immediately becomes a supernatural storm, the audience is not in a position decisively to judge the next incidence of thunder:

*Enter Caliban, with a burden of wood;
a noise of thunder heard.*

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him
By inchmeal a disease! His spirits hear me,
And yet I needs must curse.

(2.2.1-4)

Commenting on these lines, Gabriel Egan writes: 'Caliban has developed the recognisable symptom of the mentally traumatised [...] This is why he responds to perfectly ordinary thunder as though it were the reaction of Prospero's agents to his cursing'.⁴⁹ As in Thomson's argument above, Egan's notion of 'perfectly ordinary

⁴⁷ Robert Egan, 'This Rough Magic: Perspectives of Art and Morality in *The Tempest*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 23:2 (Spring, 1972): 171-182 (178).

⁴⁸ I have opted to use 're-imagining' here, as I think it suggests (more than, for example, 're-description') the process through which the audience is compelled to consider differently that which has already been seen.

⁴⁹ Gabriel Egan, *Op. Cit.*, 160. It helps Egan's argument here that he quotes the lines from Stephen Orgel's Oxford edition of the play, which moves the direction for thunder to the middle of the third line. In Orgel's words, the Folio text 'has this in parentheses as part of the opening stage direction, but it seems more likely to belong here: Caliban takes the thunder as a threatening response to his curse.' See Orgel, ed. 2.1.3n. My argument follows the Folio text for two reasons. Firstly, I hope to show that, whilst Orgel's point is intriguing, the alteration of the Folio text is unnecessary, and it is equally illuminating to read Caliban's curses as a response to the sound of thunder, rather than a prelude. Secondly, one of the singular characteristics of *The Tempest* is the detail adhered to in the stage directions: there is no direction in the play which could be moved without impinging on the subtleties of meaning in the lines.

thunder' is undermined by his earlier assumptions of the simplistic relationship of storm and the supernatural. Moreover, the impetus of Caliban's lines relies on the fact that neither the natural nor supernatural assignation of the sound of thunder here is possible. Caliban's curses, like Lear's before him, are formed from early modern meteorology. Indeed, the curses of Caliban and Lear are very similar, a point often overlooked in current editions of *The Tempest*. See especially, *Lear* 2.2.358-60: 'Infect her beauty, | You fen-sucked fogs, drawn by the powerful sun | To fall and blister!' Nor are the above lines of Caliban's the play's first such case of a meteorological curse. At his first appearance, we have: 'As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed | With raven's feather from unwholesome fen | Drop on you both. A southwest blow on ye | And blister you all o'er' (1.2.322). The significance of the meteorological source of the later curse is that it occurs following the sound of thunder. The weather in the play having been exposed as magically derived rather than natural, Caliban's curses, relying as they do on authentic natural processes, evoke the futility of his position regarding authority. Nature, then, is represented by the play not only as subject to human control but as providing the language through which to express its own enslavement. Even though they may still make sense without the concept of supernatural thunder, Caliban's curses would thereby lose a wide nexus of allusive connotations. Having established the possibility of supernatural thunder, then, the play consolidates the idea by directing the sound effects to be produced again. Thus the tug between natural and supernatural is created, and even formed into a hierarchical relationship: natural is subsumed by, and subject to the work of, supernatural. Note that it is not necessary for a theophany to confirm the sounds of thunder at the start of Act 2, Scene 2 as supernatural: all that is required is that the prospect of supernatural thunder has already been shown. The work of the supernatural does not require that a supernatural act be witnessed, only that there is the possibility of such an occurrence. In this way, the source of the thunder in the scene is not important. Rather, the effect relies on Caliban's readiness to accept the sound as supernatural, and for the audience to be convinced by that acceptance. If this is the case, then Caliban's invoking of meteorological processes points at its own ineffectiveness in comparison to the domination Prospero exercises over nature.

Continuing his argument on Caliban's traumatic state, Gabriel Egan makes the following proposition:

It is in this light that we should consider the transformatory power of Prospero's terrifying theatrical illusions. The first illusion is the tempest itself that made the "bold waves tremble" [...] and was intended to "infect [the] reason" to cause "a fever of the mad" in Prospero's enemies. The reactions of the low characters who experienced this terror are no different to the reactions of the high characters: they thereafter take the natural for the supernatural.⁵⁰

If we follow the hypothesis that the thunder in Act 2, Scene 2 is 'natural', then this is persuasive. However, I have tried to show that there is something more fundamental happening here in the play's representation of representation. The opening scene's determined rendering has given way to a clearly acknowledged aesthetic framework, one which makes it impossible to categorise the thunder in this scene as an 'illusion of an illusion' or as an 'illusion of the real'. The way in which Caliban's speech approaches the sound of thunder is indicative of the two separate strands of understanding. He recognises the possibility that the thunder is an indication that Prospero's spirits are listening, but meets that supernatural apprehension of the storm with diction grounded in a natural understanding of the weather. In this way, the sound of thunder questions the representation of the natural in a dramatic context: it is not simply Caliban's curses which are impotent, but the possibility of rendering a natural environment in the supernatural aesthetic which the play has established. This is, moreover, a metadramatic quality: that supernatural aesthetic is the framework within which the play operates, and by highlighting it, the text necessarily foregrounds its theatricality. Much has already been written on the metadramatic in *The Tempest*, but in this way, as we shall see, such self-reflexivity has implications for an ecocritical reading of the play.

There is one more scene in *The Tempest* in which thunder is staged, and, unlike the first two scenes, there are two such directions:

Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariel, like a harpy, claps his wings upon the table, and with a quaint device the banquet vanishes. (3.3.52)

⁵⁰ Gabriel Egan, *Op. Cit.*, 160-1.

...

He vanishes in thunder. Then, to soft music, enter the shapes again and dance with mocks and mows, and carry out the table. (3.3.82)

It seems clear enough from these directions and from the above discussion that, in the course of the play, the sound of thunder has shifted in meaning from one extreme to another: firstly a meticulously rendered natural storm, here a commonplace theophany, in between, a direction which does not signal either way, nor needs to. Addressing the staged thunder in *The Tempest*, Leslie Thomson writes that, following the first scene, ‘occurrences of the effects in the play, although in the context of Prospero’s white magic, are nonetheless potent reminders of its darker uses, which would probably have helped to convey – more clearly to the original playgoers than to us – that Prospero is on the edge between one force and another.’⁵¹ ‘On the edge’, however, is the way in which *The Tempest* represents nature throughout. At its core, the play may be understood as an investigation of the drive to dominate nature, and the fantasies in which that desire is expressed. For the remainder of this chapter, I hope to show that *The Tempest*’s approach to theatre is fruitfully read not simply as metadramatic, but as what has come to be termed ecocritical.

Approaches to the play’s concern with metatheatre have largely been centred on Prospero’s character as a dramatist, and in particular on the masque of Act 4, Scene 1. Kiernan Ryan, for example, contends that ‘[t]he play’s ideals are expansively celebrated in the masque’ by representing empathy and concession.⁵² As Stephen Orgel points out, the masque ‘is re-enacting central concerns of the play as a whole.’⁵³ With these qualities in mind, the appropriateness of the masque for the focus of metatheatrical readings is evident, although the approaches are still open to various conclusions.⁵⁴ However, I

⁵¹ Thomson, *Op. Cit.*, 21.

⁵² Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002) 149.

⁵³ Orgel, ed. *Op. Cit.*, 49.

⁵⁴ Ryan, for example, argues for a utopian stance on the play, positing that the repeated insistence on the aforementioned ‘empathy and concession’ toward the end, along with Prospero’s abjuration, determine the ‘fulfilment of its aims as a dramatic fable’ (*Op. Cit.*, 149). For Orgel, however, the masque ‘invokes a myth in which the crucial act of destruction is the rape of a daughter ; it finds in the preservation of virginity the promise of civilization and fecundity... This is Prospero’s vision’ (*Op. Cit.*, 49). Metadramatic readings may share a common point of reference in the self-reflexivity of the text, but if the perceived concerns of

would argue that if the metadramatic is to be properly addressed, then we must take account not only of the masque, but of the storm of the opening scene.

Like the masque, the storm of the first scene can be thought of as reflecting *The Tempest*'s concerns. As well as identifying immediately with the title of the play, the storm portrays social upheaval and confusion. As a work of magic, it establishes the idea – which the masque, of course, makes explicit – of Prospero as dramatist, simultaneously controlling the events of the play and given to comment on their illusory nature.⁵⁵ Although it is arguable that the storm in the first scene makes the metadramatic at once explicit and unstable from the start, such an argument would not fully take account of the detail with which that scene is rendered. It is possible for the scene to operate on both levels of meaning, that is, concerned both with naturalistic theatre and with metatheatre. Whilst the opening storm is retrospectively metatheatrical, we must also acknowledge that – at least in the initial reading or viewing – the concealment of the storm as a work of illusion serves to camouflage the metadramatic aspects. The rendering of storm, then, involves a representation of nature as wild and free, only subsequently to be claimed as under the domain of a supernaturally endowed human, or indeed under the domain of theatre. Part of the play's concern with its own process of producing meaning inheres in its concealing that process for the time it takes for viable alternative processes to be consolidated. By rendering the storm as thoroughly as possible, the foundations are in place for the play to carry out a formal investigation of the meaning of thunder and lightning on the Jacobean stage. This investigation can only take place if the opening storm insists on its non-theatricality. In this way, the implications of the storm – both in terms of what it means and how it means – can be extended, as we have seen, through the speech of Miranda and culminate in the language of Ariel.

the play divert from this point, then the examination of those concerns in light of the metatheatrical will vary widely. A metadramatic reading might presuppose an ideological stance in the play, but does not presuppose what that stance may be.

⁵⁵ There is, of course, a long history of critical approaches which relate the figure of Prospero and his magic to the art of the dramatist. For overviews, see Vaughn and Vaughn, *Op. Cit.*, 62-73 and Lindley, *Op. Cit.*, 45-53.

As I have already noted, the fact that Ariel provides a voice for the storm is of great significance to an ecocritical approach to the text. Central to such an approach are similar interests as those which ground postcolonial readings. In the readings of the play which formed the bulk of late twentieth-century responses, postcolonial studies tended to focus on Caliban, as a native of the island ruled by the invading Prospero.⁵⁶ The postcolonial and the ecocritical have already been shown to share concerns by Gabriel Egan. In his *Green Shakespeare*, Egan's chapter on *The Tempest* explores Prospero's apparent deforestation of the island, carried out through the enslaved Caliban who is constantly made to deliver wood, and relates this environmental question to the similar policies of Jacobean English forces in Ireland.⁵⁷ Although Egan's argument is persuasive (and can also be applied to Ferdinand – an imperial, rather than a native, challenge to Prospero's domination in a postcolonial reading), its scope is limited by the focus on Caliban. Clearly an ecocritical approach finds more of interest in Ariel, a recognisable non-human, who is nonetheless enslaved and made supernaturally to carry out the work of nature.

Ariel's domination by Prospero is encapsulated both before and after his descriptions of the storm. His first lines display a willing subservience: 'All hail, great master; grave sir, hail! I come | To answer thy best pleasure' (1.2.189-90). The simplicity of this is troubled by the later exchange with Prospero, whose question 'What is't thou canst demand?' is met with a forthright 'My liberty' (1.2.245). The extent to which Prospero has control over Ariel is evident in the language of intimidation. The threat with which he forces the slave to work is based on Ariel's once being trapped in a pine tree by Sycorax: 'If thou more murmer'st, I will rend an oak | And peg thee in his knotty entrails' (1.2.294-5). The punishment which Prospero threatens is couched in both natural and mythological terms, the oak tree being suggestive both of the strength of nature and its associations with Jove.⁵⁸ Ariel's involvement in the natural world is simultaneously one of control and

⁵⁶ See Vaughn and Vaughn, *Op. Cit.*, 98-108 and Lindley, *Op. Cit.*, 33-45. Both editions also explicate the varying trends of theatrical productions to bring out colonial elements in the text, via the portrayal of Caliban.

⁵⁷ See Gabriel Egan, *Op. Cit.*, 148-171. For a lengthier exploration of the relationship between empire and deforestation, see Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁵⁸ See also Prospero's later speech: 'to the dread-rattling thunder | Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak | With his own bolt' (5.1.44-46).

subservience. Moreover, the strength of Ariel's lightning is apparently not the most powerful on the island, if Prospero's later claims are to be taken at face value.⁵⁹

As with the threat of the oak, Prospero's encouragement to Ariel is figured in terms of the natural: 'Thou shalt be as free | As mountain winds' (499-500). Indeed, the same can be seen in much of the language used to describe Ariel and his actions. Prospero also speaks of the tasks 'to tread the ooze | Of the salt deep, | To run upon the sharp wind of the north, | To do me business in the veins o'th' earth | When it is baked with frost' (1.2.252-6). Significantly, after Ariel's speech in which he claims to have 'flamed amazement', Prospero here associates the spirit with the three remaining elements – the water of the sea, the air of the wind and the earth of the ground – in quick succession. In isolating one of Prospero's phrases – 'To do me business in the veins o'th' earth' – we can see that if the veins of the earth refer to metallic ore, as is clearly one possible meaning, then the phrase figures capitalism as ravaging nature - 'To do me *business* in the veins o'th' earth'. Simultaneously, *veins* is a word which figures the earth as mammalian, even human – there is a symbolic bridge between the earth and the human here: making the ravaging of nature more explicit, more cruel. Prospero's lines are surely related to Ariel's first phrases: 'I come | to answer thy best pleasure, be't to fly, | To swim, to dive into the fire, | To ride | On the curled clouds.' (1.2.189-192). Indeed, as Prospero defines Ariel, so Ariel often speaks of himself in imagery drawn from the natural world: 'Where the bee sucks, there suck I | In a cowslip's bell I lie; | There I couch when owls do cry. | On the bat's back I do fly' (5.1.88-91). The imprisoning methods of Sycorax ensured that Ariel's 'groans | Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts of ever angry bears' (1.2.287-9).⁶⁰ Ariel's entry in thunder is not simply the zenith of the play's gradual conflation of storm and the supernatural, then, but of Ariel's identification with natural forces which become subject to the supernatural in theatrical representation.

⁵⁹ Concerning the 'catalogue of tricks' in Act 5, Scene 1, Gabriel Egan contends that 'there seems little possibility that an audience will take it seriously' (Egan, 167). However, in figuring Ariel both as lightning and as imprisonable by oak, the play establishes a range of lightning power.

⁶⁰ The power of Prospero is apparently reflected by animals in his similar lines to Caliban: 'I'll rack thee with old cramps, | Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar, | That beasts tremble at thy din.' (1.2.370-2). The natural, it seems, is subject to the supernatural at every level.

In depicting Ariel both as a slave and as a personification of weather, *The Tempest* demands to be read in ecocritical terms: the fantasy of new-world domination is necessarily also a fantasy of domination over nature. Moreover, the way in which the ostensibly ‘real’ storm is thoroughly shown to be an illusion within the world of the play as well as the within the world of the theatre, provokes the thought that all theatrical representations of nature share this same fantasy. In his chapter on *As You Like It*, Robert N. Watson remarks that the ‘difficulty of knowing nature objectively becomes part of the entire subject-object problem, as well as the problem of other minds’.⁶¹ Watson argues that *As You Like It* addresses such problems through a strategy of relentless simile, which foreground, rather than conceal the difficulty:

The irreducible distances between likeness and identity, and between the human and the natural, are (though the term has become anathema to Shakespeare scholars) themes of the play, recurring – often in parallel – with a remarkable frequency and intricacy quite apart from any necessities of plot or realistic characterisation.⁶²

If we are to accept Watson’s argument as far as *As You Like It* is concerned, then we might be intrigued by the ways in which it may be applied to *The Tempest*. *As You Like It* supports such a reading largely because of its form: the ‘difficulty of knowing nature’ is a condition of the early modern human experience, and is a challenge which is, according to Watson, ironically reducible to a pastoral fantasy of a prelapsarian existence. In *The Tempest*, however, nature is not represented in the same nostalgic way: the environment is presented either as destructive or as supernatural. It is furthermore, as we have seen, figured as theatrical, neatly encapsulated in Prospero’s question to Ariel: ‘Hast thou, spirit, | Performed to point the tempest that I bade thee?’ (1.2.193-4). Whereas *As You Like It* draws attention to the difference between the human and the natural through its imagery, then, *The Tempest* does so through its metatheatricity. The only form of nature which *The Tempest* is capable of representing is that which is controlled by the human. Paradoxically, it is the first scene – the most carefully ‘natural’ nature – which is the most rigorously exposed as an illusion: humankind can only represent nature *as* theatre, for to represent it *through* theatre is to mistakenly conclude that it is possible to know nature

⁶¹ Watson, *Op. Cit.*, 90.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 104.

objectively. According to Watson, then, in *As You Like It*, 'Shakespeare begins to explore some modern anxieties about our ability to know the world itself, to move beyond comparison into truth, to see the absolute face to face, as we feel we should and once did.' In *The Tempest*, however, such an approach is problematic not because language is a barrier, but because the play is ultimately concerned with approaching theatrical representation and not nature. Rather than 'see the absolute' of nature 'face to face', *The Tempest* seeks to expose the structures of illusion on which theatre depends as the only absolute available to us.

For this reason, the personification of the storm as Ariel is the summit of the play's approach to the problem of representing nature on the stage. In the speeches in which Ariel describes the storm, nature has a voice, a language, a narrative, the very qualities through which anthropocentric thought is expressed, and therefore through which the irreducible barrier between nature and the human is maintained. The fantasy of the supernatural agent, then, is one in which a dialogue with nature is possible. Crucially, such a dialogue is presented as hierarchical: the voice of nature in Ariel is subject to the voice of the human in Prospero. This hierarchy is maintained throughout the play after the first scene. Indeed, it may even be argued that the ferocity of the storm in the first scene is a way of retrospectively establishing the notion that even at its most extreme, *The Tempest's* weather is the subject of human control. It is in the conversation between Ariel and Prospero that the relationship of human and nature is most explicitly played out, but there are incidents elsewhere which support the points I have made. The notable irony, for example, of Prospero's characterisation of Antonio as 'unnatural' rests on Prospero's entire character being founded on the subjugation of nature, or indeed the 'unnaturalisation' of nature (5.1.79).⁶³ Watson's account of the Renaissance maintains that 'the elite intellectual culture appeared obsessed with getting back to nature, hoping there and thereby to regain unmediated contact with simple reality – which that culture could no longer comfortably identify'.⁶⁴ In *The Tempest*, however, the obsession is not

⁶³ It is remarkable that, despite all of *The Tempest's* magic, and the characterisation of Caliban as a 'thing' or a 'monster', this is the play's only instance of 'unnatural', possibly suggesting that the word has been saved for the very irony I have pointed out.

⁶⁴ Watson, *Op. Cit.*, 324.

with getting back to nature, but with controlling it.⁶⁵ Moreover, the notion of a ‘simple reality’ with which culture might gain ‘unmediated contact’ is made to seem ridiculous: in its place is a complex theatricality, which addresses the attempts to identify with anything simpler – more ‘natural’ – as futile. This complexity inheres in the drama’s capacity to recognise its own dramatic qualities after, of course, it has hidden them during the storm.

The last speech of the play has been read as superfluous. The recent Arden editors assert: ‘The Epilogue is not required for a coherent reading or production because the play’s action is complete. Shakespeare may have added it for special performances, perhaps at court.’⁶⁶ By way of coming to a conclusion, I would like to turn to the Epilogue with these remarks in mind, and to argue that the speech is indeed vital for a coherent reading of the play and can be shown as completing the action rather than commenting upon it.

Now my charms are all o’erthrown,
 And what strength I have’s mine own,
 Which is most faint. Now, ‘tis true
 I must be here confined by you,
 Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
 Since I have my dukedom got
 And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
 In this bare island by your spell;
 But release me from my bands
 With the help of your good hands.
 Gentle breath of yours my sails
 Must fill, or else my project fails,
 Which was to please. Now I want
 Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
 And my ending is despair,
 Unless I be relieved by prayer,
 Which pierces so that it assaults
 Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
 As you from crimes would pardoned be,

⁶⁵ Gabriel Egan addresses this issue from a different angle, pointing to the archaeological discovery of a thermoscope in Jacobean Jamestown, remarking that ‘somebody there was experimenting with devices that were used to measure and predict the weather, and which certain showmen claimed could be used to control the weather.’ Egan, *Op. Cit.*, 153. See also B. J. Sokol, *A Brave New World of Knowledge: Shakespeare’s The Tempest and Early Modern Epistemology* (Madison NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 97-124.

⁶⁶ Vaughan and Vaughan, eds. *Op. Cit.*, 285n.

Let your indulgence set me free.

Despite the content of the speech, its form betrays magic overtones: rhyming couplets in trochaic tetrameter is the structure used for *Macbeth*'s Witches and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'s fairies. As an epilogue, Puck's is similarly arranged and is, like Prospero's, concerned with the liminal boundary of theatre and audience imagination. *The Tempest*'s Epilogue, however, is unusual for maintaining the character of Prospero: as Stephen Orgel remarks, it 'is unique in the Shakespeare canon in that its speaker declares himself not an actor in a play but a character in a fiction.'⁶⁷ How does this idiosyncrasy reflect on the play as a whole? I have tried to argue that the storm in the first scene is deliberately written to draw attention away from the aesthetic framework of the play. Surely, something similar is happening in the Epilogue if Prospero remains in character? Remarking on this quality, Robert Egan asserts that 'The Epilogue of *The Tempest*, [...] specifically does away with this perspective, purposefully eliminating any barrier between the play-world and the real.'⁶⁸ The 'charms' and the 'strength' in the speech ostensibly refer to the supernatural powers which Prospero has surrendered, and yet are also evidently applicable to the power of the theatre and the play. By remaining in character, this anthropomorphic Epilogue readdresses the play's concern that our contact with reality cannot be unmediated. This is made clearer as the speech continues, as further aspects which I have attempted to highlight re-emerge. In the phrase 'I must be here confined by you', for example, the language of slavery is revisited. Orgel notes that here: 'Prospero puts himself in the position of Ariel, Caliban, Ferdinand and the other shipwreck victims throughout the play, threatened with confinement, pleading for release from bondage.'⁶⁹ This much is clear. However, in addition to imagining Prospero as slave, what this phrase also does is figure the audience as enslaver. Audience become both master and dramatist: they are implicated in the same strategies of control which Prospero has espoused throughout the play.⁷⁰ Moreover, this is not simply an

⁶⁷ Orgel, *Op. Cit.*, 204n.

⁶⁸ Robert Egan, *Op. Cit.*, 172.

⁶⁹ Orgel, *Op. Cit.*, 204n.

⁷⁰ A parallel may be found in *The Taming of the Shrew*, as Petruchio, detailing to the audience his extreme plans for Katherina, demands: 'He that knows better how to tame a shrew, | Now let him speak: 'tis charity to show.' (4.1.198-9). These lines, the closing ones of the soliloquy, are often said with an inviting or soliciting tone by actors in modern productions, who then linger in the inevitable silence. The 2006-7

identification of the audience applies only in the Epilogue, but that implication is of a hierarchy which has persisted for the length of the drama. In the final speech, then, the fantasy of theatrical control over nature is made explicit again, and the audience's part in it is formalised: 'Gentle breath of yours my sails | Must fill' follows the importuning of 'the help of your good hands.' The extent to which these phrases figure the audience not simply as controlling of nature but as complicit in the play's magic – and therefore in the storm – is made clearer when they are compared to Prospero's last lines before the Epilogue:

I'll deliver all,
And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales
And sail so expeditious that shall catch
Your royal fleet far off. My Ariel, chick,
That is thy charge. Then to the elements
Be free, and fare thou well!
(5.1.314-9)

What the Epilogue offers, then, is a formal alignment of the audience's magical powers with those of Ariel: just as Ariel is charged with creating the 'auspicious gales', so the audience 'must fill' the sails with their 'Gentle breath' and applause. Just as Ariel is to return 'to the elements', so the audience is ultimately responsible for the means through which he is imprisoned: 'this bare island by *your* spell', a phrase which neatly implicates the audience as well as drawing attention to the bareness of the stage itself. I have tried to argue that the play presents nature as only accessible through a distorted theatrical lens, one which reflects both subject and object through its self-awareness. The final component of that fantastical representation is the acknowledgement that any such lens necessarily requires the audience's guilty subjugation of the elements, its wilful abandonment of the natural. If the longing to get 'back to nature' is fuelled by the characterisation of nature as 'real', *The Tempest* subverts the desire by highlighting the dramatic quality of its presentation of nature. In order to achieve this, the storm in the first scene must be as 'real' as possible, for only then is the theatricality of the human apprehension of nature exposed.

Conclusion.

It is not an exaggeration to say that storms have influenced the course of history, both in the period in which Shakespeare lived and today, in the ongoing storms associated with climate change. Without one notable thunderstorm in 1505, for example, it is conceivable that the entire modern era of the West would have been radically different. It was in the summer of that year that a young Martin Luther was caught in a violent storm and, fearing for his life, exclaimed the oath, ‘Help me, Saint Anna, and I shall become a monk.’¹ A fortnight later, Luther entered the Augustinian Monastery at Erfurt, thus beginning in earnest the theological life which would shape so much of the Reformation. If it is too much to say that the storm engendered religious upheaval, it must surely be acknowledged as a catalyst.

Unsurprisingly, just as the characters in Shakespeare’s plays offer different accounts of storms, descriptions of Luther’s experience vary. In 1581, the English theologian Robert Parsons wrote that ‘*MARTIN LVTHER* vvalking in his youth in a certain medovve, vvas stroken vvith a thunder boolt, & therupon sodaynlie for verie feare made hym selfe an Austen fryer’.² The notion that Luther was actually struck by lightning lends an element of hyperbolic dynamism to a story which is hardly deficient in symbol. Thunder and lightning, since antiquity figured as the instruments of divinity, are in Parsons’ description constructed as capable of conferring divinity on their target. The speed, both literal and figurative, of lightning lends itself neatly to the apparent rapidity of Luther’s epiphany.

The storm of 1505 was not the only important storm of Luther’s life. It seems that he had a susceptibility to the weather and that it substantially affected his temperament. Whilst still a novice, in the chapel at Erfurt, during a service and whilst a storm raged outside,

¹ See, for example, Thomas M. Lindsay, *Luther and the German Reformation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 30.

² Robert Parsons, *A Defence of the Censure...* (London: 1582), 45. Parsons goes on to question the validity of this version of events, citing the writers Charke, who disagrees with it, and Lyndan and Prateolus, who do not. Prateolus, it seems, included in his account the death, by lighting, of Luther’s companion: see Parsons, 49.

Luther fell to the floor in a fit, shouting ‘It is not I’ or, according to Parsons, ‘*I am not, I am not dume, I wil speake yet vnto the world.*’³ The episode marked the end of Luther’s novitiate, and, at the invitation of Erfurt’s seniors, the beginning of his career in the priesthood. As the first storm had ushered his career towards religion, so the second refined that career and imbued it, crucially, with a public voice. As Nathaniel Pallone and James Hennessy remark, explanations of Luther’s experience vary according to ‘the theological vs. the psychopathological’.⁴ Pallone and Hennessy add to such variations with ‘neurochemical interpretation’: ‘Severe thunderstorms release vast quantities of nitrogen... among susceptible persons, such rapid infusion may trigger episodes of “nitrogen narcosis,” a short-lived condition resembling acute alcoholic intoxication’.⁵

I begin this conclusion with an account of Luther because the events of his life are a helpful way to think about what this thesis has shown. If one were imagining lost elements of Shakespeare’s life in order to read his works, then it would be tempting to speculate that he had experience, either direct or anecdotal, of some episode of nitrogen narcosis whilst working on *King Lear*. In reading the plays, however, such a conjecture would be less apposite for its explanation of Lear’s raging and hallucinations than for its implicit acknowledgement of the relationship between environment and identity. It is this relationship that Shakespeare’s storms highlight and elucidate. I began my thesis by detailing the most thorough accounts of storm meteorology in early modern science, and by juxtaposing this with what storms represented in terms of the supernatural on the early modern stage. The differences between the scientific understanding and the dramatic understanding of storms were shown to be stark. One of the achievements of this thesis is to show Shakespeare probing the minutiae of the relationship between those two modes of understanding: the capacity for a character, or an audience member, simultaneously to represent or experience storms on several levels is part of the detailed complexity of Shakespeare’s dramatic meteorology. Whether in the extreme manifestations of weather in *Lear* which are matched with extremes of expression by the king, or whether, as in *The*

³ Ibid. ‘It is not I’ is the more common account of Luther’s exclamation. See, for example, E. H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A study in psychoanalysis and history* (Norton: New York, 1958), 23.

⁴ Nathaniel Pallone and James Hennessy, ‘Luther’s Call and Nitrogen Narcosis’, *Current Psychology* 13.4 (Winter, 1994-5): 371-4 (372).

⁵ Ibid.

Tempest, thunder and lightning act as a looking glass through which representations of the weather are examined, Shakespeare remains alive to the environmental conditions of human experience.

Crucially, as with Luther and nitrogen narcosis, those conditions accrue layers of interpretation. As Cicero remarks in *Julius Caesar*, in what amounts to a précis of much of the dialogue around storms in Shakespeare, ‘men may construe things after their fashion | Clean from the purpose of the things themselves’ (1.3.34-5). During the early modern period, Luther was described approvingly as ‘that sonne of thunder’, and condemned as one who ‘hath stered a mighty storme and tempest in the chirche’.⁶ As we have seen, Shakespeare’s attention to the contradictions and mutability of weather interpretation is evident in all of his storm plays, and particularly in *Julius Caesar*. The relationship between human and environment, then, is understood not only as integral to expression, as in *Lear*, but subject to manipulation through that expression. Thus, the storm is a conduit for symbol, as when, for Cassius, Caesar is figured as ‘a man | Most like this dreadful night | That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars’ (1.3.72-4) or for *Pericles*’ Marina, ‘born in a tempest’ and for whom ‘This world... is as a lasting storm’ (4.1.18-9). It is the very protean nature of the Shakespearean storm that eludes critics who seek to integrate it into a comprehensive equation or code.⁷

Storms are an important figure throughout Shakespeare’s plays, and especially for those characters who, like Cassius and Marina, are subjected to them. However, the poetic implications of storms are not the only reason for their recurrence. The impact of the special effects of thunder and lightning was, as I have shown, one which Shakespeare seriously considered when writing staged storms. In the case of *Julius Caesar*, this can be seen most obviously in the attempt to create the sense of the new Globe as an exciting venue, where poetic eloquence is matched with spectacular display. In Chapter One, then, I argued that the storm in the play would have been a major spectacle, designed to

⁶ John Boys, *An exposition of the festiuall epistles* (London, 1615), 1328; John Fisher, *The sermon of Ioh[a]n the bysshop of Rochester made agayn the p[er]nicious doctryn of Martin luther* (London, 1521), 3.

⁷For example, G Wilson Knight in *The Shakespearian Tempest* (New York: MacMillan, 1937) passim, and Ted Hughes in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 382-417.

generate an instant reputation for the playhouse. The chapter explored the Globe's capacity for special effects and mapped that capacity onto the text of the play. What the storm in *Julius Caesar* also shows is that Shakespeare is aware of the expectation of the supernatural. As we have seen, in the early modern playhouses the association of storm and the supernatural was regularly actualised onstage, as the appearances of heavenly and hellish characters were accompanied by the sight and sound of thunder and lightning effects. I have shown throughout this thesis many examples of Shakespeare toying with this association, and *Julius Caesar*, featuring the playwright's first prolonged storm, also sees the first incidences of this playfulness in practice.

In Chapter Two, I built on work in which the traditional location of the heath in *King Lear* had been shown to be anomalous to Shakespeare's text. This chapter explored the implications of this anomaly, showing its roots, effects and current manifestations, before suggesting the ways in which the play should be read not in terms of location, but event. Thus, the argument moved through the play, revealing the determined absence of locality and developing the repercussions of this for an ecocritical reading. This allowed for a return to the relationship between storm and the supernatural, when, having concluded that *King Lear* should be read in terms of event, I focussed on Lear's question, 'What is the cause of thunder?' (3.4.151). I argued that the question can be read in two ways: either as providing the naturalistic sign around which an understanding of the play can be formed with no room for the supernatural, or as an indication that the storm yet has the potential, for Lear, to take sides. This second reading relies on the alternative meaning of *cause*. Thus, I concluded that 'What is the cause of thunder?' is a question which opens the possibility of the supernatural, by penetrating the phonic system of signification in early modern theatre. It does so, moreover, by demanding that the audience react to, understand through, the event of the storm.

If the scholarly consensus on the chronology of the plays is correct, then *King Lear* was immediately followed by *Macbeth*. Shakespeare, then, having written a storm which skirts around the supernatural, and uses the suggestion to refine his characters, writes another storm which embraces the supernatural entirely. Chapter Three explored

Macbeth's engagement with the supernatural storm, drawing on early modern accounts of witches and weather manipulation. It also showed the way in which Elizabethan and Jacobean meteorology accounts for earthquakes as a type of storm in the ground. The implications of this were considered with regard to incidents in the play of the earth both shaking and staying still. Thus the relationship between storm and the supernatural in *Macbeth* was shown to be fundamental to the play's equivocation. The chapter showed that, even whilst the thunder and lightning is clearly supernaturally charged, the weather is still open to the play of dramatic irony.

Pericles contains storms by both Shakespeare and George Wilkins. In Chapter Four, I explored the approach of both writers to the storm and their common source text, the Bible. I demonstrated that Wilkins takes an approach which allies the storm to heavenly judgment. In so doing, I showed that the deaths of Antiochus and his daughter are allusive not only to the passages in II Maccabees, as had previously been thought, but also to passages such as that in II Kings, in which fire from heaven kills non-believers. In contrast, Shakespeare's approach to the storm is weighted towards human experience, evident especially when juxtaposing Shakespeare's storm with the Book of Jonah. Much of the previous work on *Pericles* has been influenced by Bardolatry and canonicism and prescribes to the modern reader which of the play's sections are most valuable. To counter this, I concluded that the separate approach of *Pericles*' storms allow each example to function differently without becoming repetitive, and indeed, to move the play towards the characteristic redemptive aesthetic of the genre of romance.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I argued that Shakespeare's manipulation of audience expectation through the storm demands a reading of *The Tempest* which combines the metatheatrical and the ecocritical. Using the term 'rendering', I outlined the ways in which the storm at the start of the play is designed to be as 'real' as possible. Part of this process involved the tendency of Shakespeare, demonstrated throughout the thesis, to ensure that the audience does not necessarily expect the supernatural in his storms. Additionally, as with *Julius Caesar*, the playhouse itself, this time the Blackfriars, is crucial for an understanding of the storm on stage. Only after the opening scene of the

play is the storm 'exposed' as supernatural. The implications of this were shown to be both metadramatic and concerned with the relationship of human and environment. I argued that the figure of Ariel is the ultimate pathetic fallacy, the personification of the storm as a character. Ultimately, *The Tempest* highlights the dramatic quality of its presentation of nature. In order to achieve this, the storm in the first scene must be rendered convincingly, for only then is the theatricality of the human apprehension of nature exposed.

Whilst theatre as a form is developing rapidly, then, Shakespeare is aware of the codes of practice being established and able to use them aesthetically and ironically. The recognition of audience expectation in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre is, I believe, an area which merits a great deal of further work, and it is in such cases that Shakespeare's storms are at their most intriguing. It is through the manipulation of the expected that Shakespeare achieves the unexpected. In the storms, we have inevitably found violence, beauty and loss. What this thesis has demonstrated, however, is that the storms also show Shakespeare testing the limits of theatre and audience before those limits are established.

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