

ДО ЛІТЕРАТУРНИХ ЮВІЛЕЇВ

До 400-річчя від дня смерті Вільяма Шекспіра (1564–1616)

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THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE: UNDERSTANDING *THE TEMPEST* IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTRODUCTION TO PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA'S *ORATION ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN*

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Анотація. В інтерпретаційному форматі розкривається творча лабораторія шекспірівської „Бурі”. На загальну думку критики „Буря” не має конкретних джерел. Дане дослідження, однак, припускає, що Шекспір міг посилатися на базовий концепт та, з цієї перспективи, навіть дуже докладно спиратися на його деталі. Звідси доводиться, що світоглядним імпульсом шекспірівської трагедії можна вважати інтродукцію до „Промови про гідність людини” Джованні Піко делла Мірандоли, створену до забороненої пізніше богословської дискусії відповідної тематики в Римі (1486 р.), де йшлося про можливість морального самовизначення та індивідуальну відповідальність. Накладаючи рядки з трактату Піко на образи й сюжет драми Шекспіра, одразу помічаємо переплетене тривимірне зображення, перехід від абстрактних взаємовідносин до видимих процесів існування та свідомості, фантастичних і реальних водночас. Даний аналіз базується на твердженні, що „Буря” може бути проінтерпретована як інсценування пам’ятних образів Піко. Це припущення релевантне точці зору, згідно з якою Шекспір міг би обрати ідею з *Промови* чи безпосередньо з уривка цього тексту. Шекспір свідомо йде далі ідей Піко. Якщо цитати з тексту Піко розглянути як підтекст, то відразу стає очевидним, що місце дії, персонажі й дія п’єси засновані на складній концептуальній схемі. Із підтекстом *Промови* Піко „Буря” являє собою потужний творчий експеримент, розсудливий висновок про унікальність людського життя і заклик до свободи духовного вибору людини. Таким чином, дана розвідка, не вдаючись в обговорення конкретних аспектів п’єси, спонукає до наукової дискусії про її прихований зміст.

Ключові слова: Вільям Шекспір, „Буря”, Джованні Піко делла Мірандола, „Промова про гідність людини”, інтертекст, рецепція, інтерпретація.

In his last major play *The Tempest* (1611) Shakespeare gathers together various themes into an extraordinary synthesis. They include, among others, reports of a shipwreck in Bermuda, the motif of Doctor Faustus, reflections on the conquest of the New World as for example 'Of the Caniballes' from Montaigne's *Essais* and contemporary treatises on magic. For the story of Prospero itself, however, Shakespeare does not seem to rely directly on a specific original. Therefore, literary criticism assumes that, contrary to previous plays, *The Tempest* does not seem to have a distinct source [23, p. 139].

This paper suggests, however, as one possibility amongst many others, that Shakespeare might be referring to an underlying concept after all, and from that perspective it appears that he even stages its very details. But in this case he does not seem to use a former version of a drama or an older tale or legend. Rather he could have adopted crucial ideas and figures from a philosophical treatise, namely the *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (*Oration on the Dignity of Man*), which was composed in 1486 by the Italian philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). His text was originally designed as an introduction to the disputation about Pico's theological, philosophical and scientific theses that had been due to take place in Rome [14, p. 19]. The disputation was prevented from taking place, however, and so Pico never delivered his speech. Nonetheless, the introductory text – later referred to as the *Oratio de hominis dignitate* – has gained much significance throughout later centuries. This is especially true of the general philosophical considerations presented on the opening pages, where Pico, justifying his exploration of philosophy and thereby summing up the predominant identity and credo of Renaissance man with great enthusiasm and compelling figurative speech, captures a key psychological feature of his age. Pico conjures the regained awareness of the possibility of moral self-determination as well as the implications arising from this in terms of individual responsibility and personal conduct [6, p. 45, 35] (Craven explicitly notes that Pico's words are meant as a moral and not as a metaphysical statement that would free man from the bonds of creatureliness). Although the principle idea is by no means a new one, Pico succeeds in poetically picturing its comprehensive philosophical context [10, p. 71]. His account is effectively a paean to human spiritual potential and, to this extent, a celebration of man having been made in the image of God.

While Pico refers to this subject on various occasions throughout the text, his most famous description of the wonders of human existence

in the *Oratio* is stated in two passages on the first few pages. Pico imagines God, having created Adam, celebrating the fact that He has bestowed upon human beings a unique position in creation:

I have placed thee at the centre of the world, that from there thou mayest more conveniently look around and see whatsoever is in the world. Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou, like a judge appointed for being honourable, art the moulder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are the divine.

Pico then elaborates this picture by explaining:

As soon as brutes are born, they bring with them <...> what they are going to possess. Highest spirits have been, either from the beginning or soon after, that which they are going to be throughout everlasting eternity. At man's birth the Father placed in him every sort of seed and sprouts of every kind of life. The seeds that each man cultivates will grow and bear their fruit in him [14, p. 5].

The key existential themes are discussed in one way or the other, of course, in every Shakespearian drama. His lifetime coincided with the ending of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque period, and so consequently he addresses philosophical ideas associated with the well-known Neoplatonic concept of the Great Chain of Being. In this case, however, we can see that Shakespeare, rather than having his characters engage merely in theoretical contemplation of these issues, appears to be staging the practical dilemmas of man's existence between the higher spirits and the animals and, moreover, to place Pico's key issue of human discretion and moral obligation at the very centre of his drama.

In other words: Here we have man in the world, placed between the higher spirits and the mere brutes, with the possibility of either being reborn into divine likeness or degenerating into the animal condition, with manifold possibilities for development and decision making – while there stands the abundantly talented Duke Prospero on an island in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by Ariel and Caliban and in the company of castaways with diverse ways of behaviour and questions of conscience; and, finally, the focus is on Prospero at the height of his powers in a situation that turns out to be crucial for him. Mentally layering the lines from Pico and the figures and plot of Shakespeare's

drama on top of one another immediately seems to produce an intertwined three-dimensional image, a transition from abstract interrelations into visible processes of existence and conscience, simultaneously fantastic and real. Viewed from this distinct perspective, the centre of the world turns into an island, Pico's Adam becomes Prospero and Pico's words are translated into the fanciful action of *The Tempest*.

Although there is no direct evidence, it can, perhaps, be assumed that such correspondence does not arise by coincidence. After his early death, Pico's writings spread from Italy to the learned circles of Europe. Modern research emphasizes that the *Oratio*, and especially the praise of man's freedom to choose his own moral nature, was only in later centuries ascribed its significance as a key text of the Renaissance and that the reflection on man's place in the universe was a principal issue in Renaissance thought [11, p. 62]. In sixteenth-century England, however, John Colet and Thomas More, among others, studied Pico's work [13, p. 28]. More translated some of his minor writings and some letters and also introduced Pico's work to Erasmus of Rotterdam [16, p. 237], who later declared Pico a leading authority among Renaissance thinkers [5, p. 261]. Considering, therefore, that Pico was held in high esteem by English humanists such as Thomas More and that Shakespeare would have been interested in motifs from all sorts of sources, it is not impossible that he should also have become acquainted with Pico's depiction.

Of course, one could argue that Shakespeare is simply drawing on common philosophical ideas and not at all necessarily on Pico. However, it is quite remarkable that Pico's emphasis on man being inevitably called to the process of moral self-creation should be so directly reflected in the final act. Gonzalo actually describes the play's conclusion as a recovery of the lost self. It can also be noted that Shakespeare grants the highest (indeed sacred) significance to these events, which extend far 'Beyond a common joy' (5.1.210) and should be 'set <...> down / With gold on lasting pillars' (5.1.210-11). That such great existential value is accorded to the overall plot, however, seems striking in a context of nothing more than general Renaissance thought. There is a final point: Could Shakespeare's creation of Miranda – still a popular girl's name – be interpreted as a reference to the author's inspiration?

Literary criticism has always acknowledged that Shakespeare might have been referring, among other sources, to the *Oratio* (The *Oratio* as a possible source is, for instance, indicated in: [18, p. 86–88]). However,

rather than merely suggesting that Pico's text is in some way related to the play, the present analysis is based on the proposition that *The Tempest* can actually be interpreted as a dramatization of Pico's memorable images. This assumption is in line with the notion that Shakespeare could have selected the idea from the *Oratio*, either from an excerpt of the text, for example, or from having been acquainted with it in some other way, which he then would have chosen to serve as his conceptual template.

Thus this article – rather than entering into discussion of specific aspects of the play – seeks to contribute to scholarly debate about its underlying meaning. In the last century in particular, a number of allegorical and philosophical analyses were put forward – and refuted. The field of discourse therefore comprises an enlightening variety of analyses. James Russell Lowell (1886), for instance, already suggests that the play evokes 'an under-meaning everywhere' [12, p. 59–60]. Lowell also detects *The Tempest's* allegoric ambiguity in that Shakespeare employs not characters but types, yet without hinting at the possible interpretation. In later allegorical readings the play is, for example, associated with the history of salvation, the various aspects of the intellectual or the psychological sphere and the levels in natural hierarchy. In opposition to such approaches, Elmer Edgar Stoll (1940), as did others before him, strongly objects to any allegory, symbolism or biography in the play, asserting that assuming meaning on unproven ground, 'actually troubles and disturbs the artistic effect' and manifests an inherent discontent with Shakespeare and his play [19, p. 281–282]. Another design is introduced by Frank Kermode (1954) who discusses Shakespeare's play against the background of the conflicting spheres of art or civility and nature [9, p. xli–xlii]. Later studies often observe the use of magic or possible allusions to Shakespeare's personal life and his retirement from the stage. In accordance with the sober view quoted above, the prevailing in-depth analysis of individual topics seems to support the assumption that, due to *The Tempest's* references to a number of complex and exotic themes, the play's richness cannot be appreciated by viewing it from a narrow and restricted perspective. Accordingly, in the revised edition of 2011, the Arden editors Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan follow the view that the play seems to reject an overall interpretation [24, p. 138]. Present research – as presented, for instance, in the Arden edition – nevertheless successfully connects *The Tempest* to the concerns of the twenty-first century. The discussion regarding references to modern topics such as its colonial implications [22, p. 145] and the resourceful adaptations of the play by modern media

effectively manifests the play's potential for transformation [7, p. xv].

In summary, it can be stated that the lack of a distinct approach and the detailed exploration of the *The Tempest's* singular motives over the last decades have tended, perhaps, to supersede an interest in the play's overall meaning. From this viewpoint the question of whether or not the play was developed on the basis of a coherent conceptual scheme appears to remain unresolved. Thus *The Tempest* is still fundamentally open to interpretation, a circumstance which – tying into Lytton Strachey's comments on Shakespeare's state of mind in his final period (1906) [21, p. 52] – in 1999 prompted the following comments from Harold Bloom: 'What was Shakespeare trying to do for himself as a playwright, if not necessarily as a person, by composing *The Tempest*? <...> There is an elliptical quality to *The Tempest* that suggests a more symbolic drama than Shakespeare actually wrote' [3, p. 666]. The following account takes up this continuing possibility of a more symbolic meaning; exploring the details of Shakespeare's assumed translation of Pico for the stage may serve to uncover previously unconsidered dimensions of the play's thematic aspects. It is this restricted perspective that constitutes the basis for this article's suggestions for the interpretation of some of the play's issues.

If the quotations from Pico's text are taken as a subtext, then it immediately becomes apparent that *The Tempest's* setting, figures and action all seem to be based on a sophisticated conceptual scheme. Initially, Shakespeare employs the device of radical reduction to depict Pico's 'centre of the world' by limiting the set to a nameless and, with the exception of Prospero and Miranda, deserted island. The world is thus presented as an exact miniature model by means of which the psychological processes to be examined can be illustrated all the more starkly. In fact, Shakespeare's perspective reveals similarity to that of a scientist who closely observes the objects of his investigation through the microscope.

The conceptual framework of this dramatic universe is, according to the Neoplatonic scheme, the cosmic Chain of Being, comprising the two realms of sensible nature and higher spirits. However, without audible speech and visible appearance in a play, these realms would be no more than a silent backdrop. Following Pico's lead, however, Shakespeare's concern is to depict the development of his hero in distinction to the surrounding world. Thus in order to stage this adventure not only on a physical level but also verbally, on the level of consciousness, and to present nature as an active and acting principle,

Shakespeare draws upon the tried-and-tested dramatic device of personification. He can now do without a kingdom of elves, which he had previously employed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Instead he invents two highly original creatures: Ariel, 'an airy spirit', as he is called in the list of the 'Persons of the Play', and Caliban, 'a savage and deformed native of the island'.

To personify the realm of animated natural beings using just one figure, Shakespeare seems to create nothing less than a talking animal (The highly original figure of Caliban has, of course, inspired a vast number of interpretations. Whereas earlier critics observe the his non-human aspects, present discourse emphasizes the colonial references and in this context Caliban is considered basically human [24, p. 35]). Seen from the focused perspective of Pico's concept, Caliban is only human-like in that he has the ability to learn Prospero's and Miranda's language. His name is an anagram of the word 'cannibal'. Shakespeare was almost certainly inspired by contemporary reports of the discovery of the native inhabitants of America, who were considered savages by the Europeans. Despite being human beings, then, their nature-orientated lifestyle may have served as a model for Caliban. In order to dehumanize Caliban as much as possible from the very beginning, Shakespeare ascribes a particularly complicated origin to him – the son of a witch who possessed strong evil powers. This preceding history supplies a fairly plausible justification for Caliban's strange being and appearance. As a representative of the animal world, he is able to communicate with humans as well as provide nourishment and perform the more arduous tasks of everyday life. He is endowed with an indeterminate animal-human appearance that combines a kind of optical quintessence of various animal species with ordinary human attributes (having legs as well as fins, for example), a fact which makes him appear truly monstrous in the eyes of the castaways. Shakespeare has also based the characterization of Caliban's inner being on Pico's ideas, according to which 'As soon as brutes are born, they bring with them <...> what they are going to possess.' This emphasizes Caliban's instinctive behaviour as an animal without the possibility of development or modification. His being, as Prospero realizes with rather unjust anger, ultimately remains impenetrable to external influence.

Here, Shakespeare deliberately goes beyond Pico and illustrates the reason for Caliban's rigidity: it lies in the fact that this natural being does not truly possess the full capacity of speech. He is basically able to speak – his partial human descent means that he has the physical faculty for

verbal expression. However, his exclamation 'You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse' (1.2.365-366) makes it clear that he cannot understand its overall significance for his own faculty of consciousness. It is with such great sympathy, then, that Shakespeare alludes to the elementary fact that without language there can be no inner life in a human sense, no all-pervading comprehension of reality, no higher conscience and therefore no accompanying development of higher reason [4, p. 152, 171]. Although Miranda declares that Caliban has learned to express his intentions, it is not evident that, like human beings, he is able to perceive the explicit meaning of words beyond their mere existence and thereby to enter into a deeper relationship with himself and with the world around him. As demonstrated in his all-encompassing empathy with the isle's natural life, often considered some of the most beautiful lines in the play, Caliban's cognition is primarily bound to the sensible world. From today's perspective, his apprehension of the human sphere could, perhaps in some aspects, be compared to the understanding of an ape that has been trained to perform simple work.

By analogy with Caliban, Shakespeare personifies the whole of the immaterial and intelligible sphere on and above the island by which the elements are ruled using the figure of Ariel, a natural spirit visible only to Prospero and the audience. Compared to him, other spirits of the isle (such as elves and goblins) are only 'Weak masters' (5.1.41) and 'meaner ministers' (3.3.87), associated with specific minor natural events. In established physical terms one could say that Ariel symbolizes something like a super-force or universal formula. Whoever commands him rules with unlimited power in the cosmos of the island. The phenomena of gravity and electromagnetism had not yet been fully explored at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and thus Shakespeare did not encounter any fixed scientific dogmas when creating his poetic hierarchy of natural powers. One supreme spirit suffices to illustrate his concept of intelligible nature and in that the play keeps the aspect of the invisible sphere – which can be imparted to the audience without provoking undesired queries – in sober perspective.

Despite his unerring abilities, Ariel too, lacks the capacity for development, which Pico had claimed for the higher spirits, who 'have been, either from the beginning or soon after, that which they are going to be throughout everlasting eternity.' As a dramatic figure he displays few anthropomorphic features. Though he laments having to serve Prospero, his complaint is not clearly aggressive in character. Initially it appears as a general resentment about being forced to interact with

anyone or anything. Of himself Ariel asserts that he does not possess human characteristics or emotions and that he regards the human sphere with indifference. In contrast to the elves in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he is not a more potent human being with miraculous abilities, detached from space and time but nonetheless still subject to higher cosmic powers. No divine being presides over the natural hierarchy, just the universal power of Ariel. Like Caliban, he does not have a soul in the human sense. In his isolation from any determination or fixity, Ariel can exist only in the abstract as an impersonal, undefined principle. In modern terms he could even be described as robotic, as a prototype of certain science fiction characters (Vladimir Nabokov also suggests that *The Tempest* can be labelled as a work of the science fiction genre [15, p. 87]).

Against the physical backdrop of Ariel and Caliban, Shakespeare now relates Pico's existential task as a complex dramatic plot. For there is, after all, one essential factor that separates humans from natural beings, namely the fact stressed by Pico: 'Thou, like a judge appointed for being honourable, art the moulder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer.' As demonstrated by the disposition accorded respectively to Ariel and Caliban, the principle of freedom applies to human beings alone, who are not subject to any limitation of consciousness or will; in other words, their range of spiritual potential is indefinite. To put it in positive terms, man possesses a free will. Rather than being constrained by rigid laws or exposed to the arbitrary ways of the universe, he can make choices.

The play consequently centres around the dynamics of this freedom to choose. Looking at Shakespeare's earlier plays one might easily get the impression that the dramatic figures, presenting types rather than characters, and their stories are only very loosely connected. Nothing much really happens. But from the perspective of Pico's words, the composition of the play reveals a surprising spectrum of moral attitudes and their consequences. The characters do not actually perform deeds. On the outward level they scarcely move. Rather they adopt various conceptual positions – indeed it would be difficult to pack any more action into this highly emblematic account.

Prior to the characters taking up their positions, Shakespeare makes sure that the ultimate categories of human development become manifest for the audience in his play. This occurs in the form of Miranda, a person resembling 'the higher natures which are the divine', and Antonio, a person who has sunk below his original level. From the very beginning, both figures symbolize an optimum standard. This becomes quite

apparent through the fact that, in contrast to all the others, they do not undergo any development. Rather than representing individual characters, they personify particular programmatic purposes and their determination is fundamentally non-negotiable.

Shakespeare's Miranda symbolizes a quantum leap within human evolution. She appears neither as another Cordelia brought to perfection nor as the quintessence of former heroines; rather, Shakespeare depicts her as a simple young woman who pays no heed to matters of personal advantage, having sole regard for the welfare of everyone she encounters (Elmer Edgar Stoll even asserts: 'She exists in her relation to others, and takes her colour, positively or negatively, from her surroundings.' [20, p. 105–106]). Her natural perspective is radically altruistic so that in the world of Shakespearian plays she symbolizes an altogether different level of consciousness. But the active and unconditional support to the beneficial development of the whole community of humanity is not merely an inner attitude. It seems to bring forth the energy of life itself. In fact, the encouraging effect on others might even be seen as an expression of the ultimate creative power. When Prospero recalls the first moment of his exile: 'O, a cherubin / Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile, / Infused with a fortitude from heaven <...> which raised in me / An undergoing stomach to bear up / Against what should ensue' (1.2.152-8), and Ferdinand confirms 'The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead, / And makes my labours pleasures' (3.1.6-7), Shakespeare stresses this dynamic impact. The vital power that lies in Miranda's union with Ferdinand is consequently idealized in Prospero's masque as no less than the possibility of 'Earth's increase' (4.1.110). A civilization based on her practical values would therefore be the perfection of what is humanly possible: 'Indeed the top of admiration' (3.1.38). Thus, the play convincingly emphasizes that Miranda's outstanding position does not result from an advancement within the traditional natural hierarchy but from conscious self-transcendence on the horizontal, the human level. The sobriety of the final scene, therefore, also serves to conceal what Miranda truly symbolizes, namely, a new dimension of being, a 'brave new world' (5.1.186).

The principle of caring for the well-being of others conforms to the central values of Christian ethics, which provide the basis of Renaissance thought. Miranda's view could therefore be described as an attitude of the heart, akin to love of one's neighbour and charitable deeds as well as to the virtue of mercy and the ability to express sympathy toward others. This 'virtue of compassion' (1.2.27) is indeed reflected in almost all her

statements. Therefore, by analogy to Portia's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, all that Miranda symbolizes rules superior to any other of the 'several virtues' (3.1.42) depicted in *The Tempest* (Although Miranda's function as daughter and future wife is often considered as subordinate to Prospero's, other critics suggest that Miranda – the virtue of *caritas* being essentially represented by her – is in fact the 'unifying principle' in the play [8, p. 14]). In sum, it can be stated that, with regard to Miranda, Shakespeare avoids theological interpretations and remains in the human sphere. The fact that she bears a resemblance to divinity is revealed just slightly when during the final act of reconciliation the recovering King Alonso wonders whether Miranda is 'the goddess that hath served us / And brought us thus together' (5.1.190-1). According to Renaissance Platonism which is, of course, also imparted in Pico's *Oratio* rebirth to divine likeness is generally understood to be a process of spiritual perfection and insight which ultimately leads to mystical approximation to God [14, p. 6; 11, p. 94]. In contrast to this, Shakespeare remains less theoretical but his scheme is much more philosophical in its thrust. The fact that 400 years after the first staging of *The Tempest* the all-encompassing attitude symbolized by Miranda is accorded ever greater acceptance in contemporary philosophy and science proves the unaltered relevance of this Shakespearian theme.

Antonio, whose very name contains the prefix 'anti-', is diametrically opposed to Miranda, being depicted as a symbol of deliberately negative human evolution. The destructive, risky dimension of human existence inevitably also lies on the scale of freedom. It becomes manifest in the fact that human beings have the capacity to act in a ruthlessly egoistic way and to wilfully harm others [17, p. 13–14]. Consequently, Antonio, being almost simplistically hostile, concentrates only on his own personal advantage. He deliberately acts against the shared rules which make up the very foundations of human co-existence and of any benevolent political system. To illustrate such an attitude in a credible way, Shakespeare never provides a psychological explanation for Antonio's wickedness (just as he provides no interpretation of Miranda's position). The moment Prospero transfers his political duties onto his brother, 'an evil nature' (1.2.93) arises within Antonio which remains unmodified throughout the play. Antonio has no guilty conscience about his deeds; in fact, he ignores the very existence of his conscience. At this stage it becomes clear that Antonio does not bear any demonic or sinister attributes that could point beyond himself. The lack of political necessity and of any other explanation for Antonio's plans

confirms that his actions should not be misinterpreted as unfettered Machiavellianism.

With regard to Antonio, Shakespeare refrains from using well-known comparisons with a predator animal. Instead Antonio is implicitly contrasted with the instinctive behaviour of Caliban whose plot against Prospero consequently appears as almost human. His actions do not therefore result in Antonio's degradation to an animal or even to the lower level of plants or stones. Rather they place him as 'Unnatural' (5.1.79) in a dimension of evil beyond the cosmic hierarchy. His sacrilege becomes manifest in his willingness to regress to the state of Cain at the beginning of human history. With this attitude he negates all development towards a higher level. He consciously abuses the gift of freedom, thereby placing himself, from the perspective of Pico's account, in direct opposition to the positive potential of the Creator's intention. Thus the figure of Antonio embodies the most destructive design ever: 'worse than devils' (3.3.36).

The foregoing analysis suggests the following approach to the play: Ariel, the higher spirit, and Caliban, the animal, constitute the physical scenery against which human actions take place. However, neither of them supplies any categories by which human rebirth to divine likeness or descent to unnaturalness can be defined. The ways of nature cannot be applied to human beings because nature itself is not endowed with advanced moral criteria. The principal point of correlation that thus emerges between *The Tempest* and Pico's *Oratio* is that man is not an animal-turned-human or incarnate spirit. He is neither the highest of animals nor the lowest embodiment of a spiritual being [14, p. 3]. Prospero, Miranda and the castaways are not a mixture of Caliban and Ariel, they are not a combination of animal being and *ratio*. Rather, they exist in a specific human reality insofar as they transcend all external nature. As a part of creation they are an absolute paradox or, in Pico's and Miranda's words, 'a wonder' (5.1.184) [14, p. 3].

The play's actual plot can now be seen to be arranged, like the composition of a picture, around the momentary realization of spiritual development, as postulated in the *Oratio*. Before the inner eye of the audience, almost measurable on an invisible scale, the other characters take up their positions within the three-dimensional space of possibilities that exists between the framework of nature set by Ariel and Caliban in the background and the opposing poles of Miranda and Antonio in the foreground. The contradiction between these two schemes also establishes an imaginary horizontal dividing line: a choice in favour of devotion to others or of personal advantage. Ultimately, of course, the

plot centres around Prospero. His decision is described in detail and results in the understated climax of the play. Yet before Prospero is able to change his mind, Shakespeare presents a spectrum of typical options for human action in the context of charity and selfishness and thus accurately illustrates Pico's statement: 'The seeds that each man cultivates will grow and bear their fruit in him.' In that sense the entire society of Italian noblemen is put to the test in terms of moral decision making – including the self-proclaimed 'King Stephano' (4.1.221).

If the audience of *The Tempest* were to set up a hierarchical order among the castaways, Ferdinand would probably occupy the highest position as the personification of an ideal sovereign. (It is possible that his name is intended as a homage to Ferdinando Stanley (1559–1594), a patron of playing companies and at one time considered as a possible successor to the English throne). Ferdinand immediately recognizes that Miranda's concern for the well-being of others and therefore of the commonwealth, is of ultimate value to him, 'worth / What's dearest to the world!' (3.1.38-9). He pledges himself wholeheartedly and without hesitation to her, asserting: 'I, / Beyond all limit of what else i'th' world, / Do love, prize, honour you' (3.1.71-3). Their engagement is celebrated as a 'contract of true love' (4.1.84) in Prospero's mythically transfigured vision of eternal bliss. Although having been able to prove his constancy, Ferdinand is by no means over-idealized, for at the next convenient opportunity he ignores his ideals, as when he tries to cheat when playing chess with Miranda. In this context chess is, of course, a symbol for political power-play which in threatening circumstances requires the use of morally questionable means. And it is for just this purpose that Miranda grants Ferdinand prior absolution by declaring: 'Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play' (5.1.177-8). Here, far from demonstrating a naïve understanding of politics, Ferdinand and Miranda reveal that theirs is a highly pragmatic view.

Gonzalo throughout the play symbolizes the loyal subject who naturally corresponds to the ideal sovereign. He works for the common good and the welfare of others on a practical human level with his unconditional willingness to engage in 'charity' (1.2.163). This includes his previous help for Prospero as well as his enduring attempt to maintain hope that the adventure may take a favourable course. Again, Shakespeare refers directly to everyday life when illustrating the development of human nature toward divine nature. Accordingly, Prospero reveres the old counsellor as 'Holy Gonzalo, honourable man' (5.1.62). In the figurative sense of *The Tempest* Gonzalo could well be located toward the upper

end of *The Tempest's* underlying scale.

In contrast to Ferdinand and Gonzalo, Stephano and Trinculo are depicted as examples of, in the case of the former, a despotic ruler who exclusively pursues his own personal aims and, in reaction to this, a reluctant subject. To enable this analogy to work as a credible simulation, Shakespeare applies the device of portraying the two servants as utterly drunk. Self-proclaimed 'King Stephano' (4.1.221), actually a butler of the King, reveals his natural inclination to violence and thus adopts elements of Antonio's position by warning Trinculo, whom he must suspect of interrupting his conversation: 'by this hand I'll turn my mercy out o'doors and make a / stockfish of thee' (3.2.71-2) and, a short time later, hitting him. Moreover, Stephano appears to be prepared, at least according to his words, to commit the murder of Prospero with the intention of securing his rule over the island. In contrast to Trinculo, he fails to recognize that his helper Caliban is in fact an animal and not a human. But by acknowledging Caliban as a subject, Stephano unconsciously places himself on the same level as the animal. This equation inevitably implies the voluntary abandonment of human distinctiveness and, paralleling Antonio's and Sebastian's interpretation of Gonzalo's vision of a simple life on the island, the abandonment of human civilization. Although not the utterance of a sound mind, Stephano's disposition is finally judged, even by Caliban, as outlandishly foolish and by the play as downright detestable. Stephano thus places himself within the negative domain beyond human or animal intelligence.

Stephano proves to be an aggressive tyrant who claims his position only by virtue of possessing a cask of wine, while Trinculo, the King of Naples' jester and likewise drunk, functions as the corresponding subject. As probably physically inferior and less obtrusive than Stephano, Trinculo submits to the latter, adopting an ironic attitude as he does so. Although not openly contradicting the plot against Prospero, he does not actively support it. And by drawing attention to Prospero's garments he delays the deed. In an invisible hierarchy Trinculo could, therefore, probably be placed above Stephano. However, his drunkenness still confines him to the lower or rather the sensuous realm.

Whereas the mental attitudes portrayed above are rather straightforward and influenced more by intuition and spontaneity than by anything else, the situation is much more complicated for the other noblemen. Sebastian, Alonso and Prospero seem to be in a precarious position near the dividing line between the realms of Miranda and Antonio. At this point Shakespeare refocuses his dramatic microscope by

one degree: he now dramatizes individual, personal attitudes. The individual level, though, proves likewise problematic because humans are generally not aware of being bound by the demands of an existential task and are therefore liable to fail.

In this perspective, Sebastian may serve as an example of a person who, without having destructive ideas himself, is persuaded to act by others, under the pretext of alleged advantages and in a similar manner, perhaps, to his brother twelve years before. Sebastian does not have a lodestar like Miranda. The speed with which Antonio is able to coerce him into committing a murder demonstrates his frail mindset. After being exposed to Antonio's sophisticated phrases he drops his objection that the murder violates human conscience without much resistance. Here, Shakespeare expounds the problem of a decision which, although originally unintended, is nonetheless executed to the disadvantage of others and the permanent destabilisation of personal positions. Sebastian's attitude is constantly susceptible to outside influences.

In the course of depicting the various stages of Prospero's inner development, the play's close focus on Sebastian explicitly highlights the fact that significant decisions are not made unconsciously after all. Sebastian's guilty conscience, symbolized by his 'inward pinches' (5.1.77), clearly reminds him that his intention runs contrary to his inner disposition. In taking up this well-known aspect of common psychology, Shakespeare stresses the existence of danger along the invisible horizontal line dividing one moral sphere from the other. As often as possible he uses concepts associated with moral awareness as a leitmotif in key passages of the text, most of all the moral authorities of conscience, heart and mind. They jointly point towards the conviction that general principles for appropriate action are inherent within every human being. According to Scholastic philosophy, these inner moral guidelines emerge from intuition and insights obtained by reason and experience, and they broadly function as an inner support for self-control and personal decision making [2]. Naturally, beings confined to the sensuous level, who in the play are Caliban and the two drunkards, must lack such inner authority. In their case, Shakespeare re-translates the proverbial pricks of consciousness as actual physical pains such as 'pinches' (4.1.232) or 'cramps' (1.2.327) which are commanded by Prospero and executed by Ariel and other spirits. Using these witty devices, Shakespeare manages to convey the compass-like function of inner impulses on the psychological as well as the sensuous level.

Human conscience, whose natural authority as a 'deity' (2.1.283) is

only apparent to Antonio's heightened awareness, also extends to the domain below the play's division between good and evil. Its main function here lies in the call for reversion. This feature is demonstrated by the development of the figure of Alonso, the highest ranking character of the play. His actions illustrate the act of revoking a prior wrong decision. Although not the instigator, Alonso has nevertheless tolerated Antonio's plot and benefited from Prospero's exile. After being reminded of this failing by Ariel's performance as a harpy, he suffers intensely from his guilty conscience. Consequently, he perceives the loss of his son as rightful vengeance. Of the 'three men of sin' (3.3.53), then, only Alonso repents of his deed and subsequently asks for forgiveness. This act of recovery enables his restoration, which is celebrated in the last act of the play. At this point Shakespeare avoids too many obvious words and gestures. The line between possible realms of existence is thin. In the end, wrongdoing cannot be avoided but only forgiven.

Prospero has also been manoeuvring himself into a dangerous position. As stated above, Shakespeare has placed him exactly 'in the centre of the world'. Highly intelligent and well educated in the liberal arts, he is given the possibility of exploring everything that exists and, more than this, of commanding the natural world in godlike manner. At the same time he is bound to the requirements of moral self-realization, as described by Pico. Prospero's previous history is marked by his failure as the Duke of Milan. In this act of negligence that directly contradicts what he later intends, Prospero has broken Ferdinand's 'contract of true love' (4.1.84) and deliberately disregarded the welfare of his subjects. The consequence is his physical exile from the human community. For twelve years Prospero is then exposed to nature, the realm of Caliban and Ariel, and is thereby forced to recognize the basic principles of his actions and to change his previous self-centred approach to life.

With the character of Prospero, Shakespeare focuses on a highly prominent topic whose modernity for the beginning of the seventeenth century can hardly be overemphasized. Natural scientists such as Giordano Bruno, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, William Gilbert, Francis Bacon, as well as the mathematician and magician John Dee, are Shakespeare's contemporaries (Frances A. Yates suggests that John Dee (1527–1608/9), the former advisor of Queen Elizabeth, might have been a model for Prospero [25, p. 95–96]). Their empirical studies together with the findings of their predecessors ultimately start the comprehensive scientific analysis of the natural world. Prospero, too, is an enthusiast of the wonders of the world around him and in this sense is fundamentally a

positive figure. Only by reflecting on the play against the background of Pico's lines can we arrive at a true explanation of why he finally turns away from nature in the most radical way, a step which – looking only cursorily at the plot – does not seem necessary in its utter finality. With regard to the challenge of moral self-realization and the two principles symbolized by Miranda and Antonio, it is inevitable that the nature and purpose of Prospero's scientific interests and methods will be subject to the highest moral requirements. Not only are the deeds of the castaways scrutinized in direct reference to fundamental existential questions, but also Prospero's magic 'art' (1.2.292) (and in a move of deliberate symmetry, Shakespeare hints here at his own creative work). In this sense, Prospero is constantly operating at the critical margins.

The reasons are obvious. Not only does Prospero neglect his political task; on the psychological level too he devotes himself exclusively to nature, thereby overestimating its importance in relation to the play's categories in every respect. One glance at Caliban's and Ariel's fixation and indifference reveals that the natural system itself cannot constitute a meaningful dimension for Prospero. His intellectual endeavours cannot lie within this arena but only in the imperfect, ever changing but nevertheless unbound human sphere. In accordance with such a fundamental misjudgement, the practice of Prospero's art on the castaways turns out to be a shift towards the negative. The crucial point here is not that magic should be judged as a reprehensible means of commanding nature (Pico as representative of Renaissance Platonism, for instance, considers natural magic to serve as an important element in perfecting the philosophical study of the wonders of creation [14, p. 29]). Rather, Prospero's flaw lies in the fact that he practices unrefined magic – originally intended for non-human nature alone – on the castaways. On the emotional level his inner dissociation from other humans and his pretension to treat them as mere mindless objects become manifest as relentlessness. But if the grace of charity is the ultimate objective – after all, Prospero has been educating Miranda precisely in that way – he will fail to fulfil *The Tempest's* inherent task in a twofold respect.

His conversion happens at the height of the dramatic action. At first he is unexpectedly confronted with his own ruthlessness by an external impulse conveyed through the words of Ariel. Ariel speaks with the voice of the principle of basic reason, which is, according to Scholastic doctrine, inherent in creation itself [1]. Immediately Prospero realizes that his inhumane attitude even surpasses nature, which is notably indifferent to questions of morality. Then comes the moment when

Prospero consciously, deliberately pauses – followed by his spontaneous and thoroughly unforeseen decision to renounce all magic and his immediate implementation of its consequences. Up to this moment Prospero has remained in an insecure position, namely, at the point of transition between human kindness and inhumanity (or even below that point). With his choice in favour of pity and forgiveness and, resulting from this, his almost ceremonial abdication of his magic powers, he finally leaves the negative realm. In Pico's sense this is a step forward to Prospero's rebirth into divine likeness, while on the level of the play it means the recovery of his dukedom. However, as highlighted once again by the epilogue, he has also gained a heightened awareness of the nature of his existence as a human being.

In conclusion, the interpretation has revealed that *The Tempest* may be considered as a dramatization of a classical humanistic concept. From this perspective Shakespeare seems to have composed the elements of his play in correspondence with the imagery and philosophical account in the introductory passages of Pico's *Oratio*. It is suggested that in order to reach the full complexity of this reflection on man's freedom to choose his own moral nature, Shakespeare designs his Adam using the model of a contemporary naturalist, with his encounters on the various levels of existence – the natural, the political, the social, the family and the spiritual – arranged concentrically around him.

Instead of adopting the hubristic motif of the classic figure of Doctor Faustus, Shakespeare's last play is centred on the problem of inner self-creation and the possibilities of the misjudgement of an essential human moral purpose. The play's multidimensional set-up, its nuanced reflections on conscience, but also the sophisticated figures of Caliban and Ariel as well as the incarnate ideas of Miranda and Antonio have proven to be artistic milestones in the history of playwriting. Furthermore, with the template from Pico's *Oratio* as a subtext, *The Tempest* constitutes a powerful imaginative experiment and a sober plea for the uniqueness of human life and the freedom of man's spiritual decisions. It is perhaps for this reason that *The Tempest* was given its prominent position in the First Folio.

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ЧЕРЕЗ МИКРОСКОП: ПРОЧТЕНИЕ „БУРИ” В КОНТЕКСТЕ ИНТРОДУКЦИИ К „РЕЧИ О ДОСТОИНСТВЕ ЧЕЛОВЕКА” ПИКО ДЕЛЛА МИРАНДОЛЫ

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Аннотация. В интерпретационном формате раскрывается творческая лаборатория шекспировской „Бури”. По общему мнению критики, „Буря” не имеет конкретных источников. Данное исследование, однако, предполагает, что Шекспир мог сослаться на базовый концепт и, с этой перспективы, даже очень подробно опираться на его детали. Отсюда доказывается, что мировоззренческим импульсом шекспировской трагедии можно считать интродукцию к „Речи о достоинстве человека” Пико делла Мирандолы, созданную к запрещенной позже богословской дискуссии соответствующей

тематики в Риме (1486), где речь шла о возможности нравственного самоопределения и индивидуальную ответственность. Накладывая строки из трактата Пико на образы и сюжет драмы Шекспира, сразу замечаем переплетенное трехмерное изображение, переход от абстрактных взаимоотношений к видимым процессам существования и сознания, одновременно фантастическим и реальным. Данный анализ базируется на утверждении, что „Буря” может быть проинтерпретирована как инсценировка памятных образов Пико. Это предположение релевантно точке зрения, согласно которой Шекспир мог бы взять идею с *Речи* или непосредственно с отрывка этого текста. Шекспир сознательно идет дальше идей Пико. Если цитаты из текста Пико рассмотреть как подтекст, становится очевидным, что место действия, персонажи и действие пьесы основаны определенным образом на сложной концептуальной схеме. С подтекстом *Речи* Пико „Буря” представляет собой мощный творческий эксперимент и рассудительный вывод об уникальности человеческой жизни, призыв к свободе духовного выбора человека. Таким образом, данное исследование, не прибегая к обсуждению конкретных аспектов пьесы, побуждает к научной дискуссии о ее скрытом смысле.

Ключевые слова: Уильям Шекспир, „Буря”, Пико делла Мирандола, „Речь о достоинстве человека”, интертекст, рецепция, интерпретация.

THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE: UNDERSTANDING *THE TEMPEST* IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTRODUCTION TO PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA’S *ORATION ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN*

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Abstract. In the format of interpretation the creative laboratory of Shakespeare’s “The Tempest” is being revealed. By all accounts “The Tempest” has no specific sources. This study, however, supposes, that Shakespeare could refer to the basic concept and, from this perspective, even very closely rely on the details. Hence, it is proved, that the philosophical impulse of Shakespeare’s tragedy can be considered the introduction to the “Oration on the Dignity of Man” by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, created for the forbidden later theological discussions on relevant topics in Rome (1486), which dealt with the possibility of moral self-determination and individual responsibility. Imposing the lines of the treatise by Pico on the images and plot of the drama by Shakespeare, we immediately notice a twisted three-dimensional image, the transition from abstract relationship to the visible processes of existence and consciousness, at the same time fantastic and real. This analysis is based on the statement, that “The Tempest” can be interpreted as the staging of memorable images of Pico. This statement is relevant to point of view, according to which Shakespeare could choose the idea of the *Oration*, or directly from the passage of the text. Shakespeare consciously goes beyond the

ideas of Pico. If the quotations from the text of Pico are considered as a subtext, it immediately becomes evident that scene, characters and action of the play are based in some way on a complex conceptual scheme. With the underlying meaning of the *Oration* by Pico, “The Tempest” is a powerful creative experiment and a reasonable appeal to the uniqueness of human life and spiritual freedom of a man. Thus, this study, without resorting to discuss specific aspects of the play, aspires to promote scientific debate about its hidden meaning.

Key words: William Shakespeare, “The Tempest”, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, “Oration on the Dignity of Man”, intertext, reception, interpretation.

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