Whose New World? Derek Jarman's Subversive Vision of *The Tempest* (1979)

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This paper reassesses Derek Jarman's film *The Tempest* (1979) against recent developments in film adaptation theory in order to reach conclusions about its controversial handling of the Shakespearean source material. After locating the film's lack of general critical acclaim in the practice of *fidelity criticism*, an overview of film adaptation theory is given, and recent ideas are applied to the film's content and structure, placing it in the context of British counterculture in the 1970s. Jarman's *Tempest* is analysed by discussing the film's protagonists in terms of gender, considering its director's choices of characterisation and plot against the backdrop of queer politics. First Miranda's relationship with Prospero and Ferdinand is placed within a gendered context of geopolitical conflict; next, the characterisation of Caliban as non-racialised, non-threatening and essentially human is seen as the result of Jarman's queer agenda; finally, Ariel and Caliban are contrasted as conflicting sexual tendencies within Prospero, interiorising the film's action in his mind as an allegory of the release of homoerotic desire. As a result, Jarman's rewriting of the original is seen as a subversive deconstruction in service of his gay politics, to be appreciated as an independent piece of art.

Keywords: British counterculture; deconstruction; film adaptation theory; queer politics; Shakespearean romance.

Este ensayo considera la película *The Tempest* de Derek Jarman (1979) a partir de aportaciones recientes a la teoría de la adaptación cinematográfica, con el objetivo de llegar a conclusiones sobre el polémico tratamiento del material Shakespeariano. Tras recalar la falta de apoyo crítico en el momento de la producción y argumentar que esta carencia obedece a la práctica de la *crítica de fidelidad*, el artículo procede a una revisión de la teoría de la adaptación, y se aplican ideas nuevas al análisis de la película y su contenido, situándola en el contexto de la contracultura británica de los años setenta del sigo pasado. La *Tempest* Jarmaniana se analiza a través de la construcción del género de sus protagonistas, explicando las elecciones del director en cuanto a la caracterización y al argumento en clave de su activismo gay. Primero se ubica la relación entre Miranda, Próspero y Ferdinand en un contexto de conflicto geopolítico y de género. Luego, la caracterización de Calibán como ser no-racial, no-amenazante y humanizado se ve como el resultado de la política *queer* de Jarman. Finalmente, se contrastan Ariel y Calibán como tendencias sexuales en conflicto dentro de Próspero mismo, interiorizando la acción dentro de su mente como una alegoría de la liberación de su deseo homosexual. Como resultado, se puede entender esta re-escritura del original Shakespeariano como una deconstrucción subversiva al servicio del activismo gay de Jarman que debería apreciarse como una pieza de arte independiente.

Palabras clave: contracultura británica; deconstrucción; política *queer*; romance Shakespeariano; teoría de la adaptación cinematográfica.

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Derek Jarman's *The Tempest* was quite well received by local, British cinema critics for its fresh approach to well-known subject matter. Nevertheless, his 1979 interpretation of the Shakespeare play met with fierce resistance at the New York Film Festival as well as the United States at large after a devastating review in the *New York Times* by Vincent Canby (Rothwell 1999: 205). Jarman himself stated that in America "messing with Will Shakespeare is not allowed", alleging that "in such a fragmented culture … [t]he Anglo-Saxon tradition had to be defended", in an attempt to explain why his presumably irreverent interpretation of the original had not been appreciated overseas (1984: 206). That his efforts deserved a better fate may be supported by recent developments in film adaptation theory, which draw attention to the obsoleteness of the criteria employed both in newspaper reviews and academic essays when judging the adaptation from novel or play to cinema. Needless to say, at least abroad, Jarman's *Tempest* fell victim to what is called *fidelity criticism,* and therefore the aim of the present paper is to reassess his interpretation of Shakespeare's play against new notions in film adaptation theory, foregrounding its divergence from the original Shakespearean piece in more positive ways.

Postmodern 'Fiddling with Fidelity'

In his introduction to *Novel to Film*, a study on current developments in film adaptation theory, Brian McFarlane criticises "fidelity criticism" for "adducing fidelity to the original novel as a major criterion for judging [a] film adaptation", and claims that "[n]o critical line is in greater need of re-examination—and devaluation" (1996: 8). Along poststructuralist lines, he deconstructs the hierarchical notion of the "single, correct 'meaning'" of a text the filmmaker should pay homage to, and concludes that fidelity criticism is unproductive as it only establishes to what extent one reading is different from another (1996: 8-9). Furthermore, he adds that the novel—and for the sake of our argument we shall also include the play—and the cinema are completely different media. As they use different techniques for the common denominator of story-telling and draw on very different production modes, the results of transfer are seriously conditioned from one medium to another.[1] In his view, these differences turn the search for complete fidelity into an impossible task and therefore imbue the issue with irrelevance (1996: 10). Thus, rather than being concerned with 'likeness' to the source text, film evaluation should take place bearing in mind the kind of adaptation under scrutiny and trying to locate films ideologically as they draw intertextually on texts as (re)sources. In other words, it should be established why a certain source is used and why it is approached in a certain way. McFarlane delineates more productive, less hierarchical categories to capture the filmmaker's intentions: he proposes "literal or spiritual fidelity" to the original; a "commentary" which would present some kind of "departure" from the

[1] Significantly, McFarlane reserves the term 'transfer' for the technique of transposing those elements of a novel (*and we add: play*) that can be readily displayed in film, and adaptation for those that must be translated through quite different means into film; thus, the term adaptation always draws attention to the differences in the end result of a story as displayed in writing on the one hand and in film on the other (1996: 13).

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source text; and the quite fashionable and politically charged term "deconstruction" which "bring[s] to light the internal contradictions in seemingly coherent systems of thought" in the source text (1996: 22).

McFarlane's work builds on that of predecessors who covered these latter distinctions in similar ways but without becoming explicitly political in their analyses. As early as 1975, Geoffrey Wagner defined his typology of adaptation distinguishing between "transposition", which is a screen version with "minimum interference"; "commentary", in which an original is "altered in some respect … when there has been a different intention on the part of the film-maker", and "analogy", which represents "a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art" (McFarlane 1996: 10-11). In 1981 Klein and Parker worked along similar lines and proposed that the different adaptation types could be described as, first of all, "literal translations", which stay as close to the original as possible; secondly, "re-interpretations" of the source text which retain its core, and thirdly, entirely "new works of art" which take the source text merely as a point of departure (9-10). At the beginning of the 1990s, a cross-historical study by Vaughan and Vaughan defines *The Tempest* stage and screen versions threefold: "interpretation" or "a general adherence to Shakespeare's original"; "appropriation" or the application of the play to "a present cultural dilemma", and "adaptation" or "borrowings that owe much to the spirit or characters of Shakespeare's play but very little to its text" (1993: xxi). These latter distinctions may be understood to develop along Klein's, Parker's and Wagner's lines.

Within the Shakespearean film tradition, screen versions of *The Tempest* occupy a special place and branch out twofold. In spite of the Heritage phenomenon of the last two decades, with lavish budgets for "quality costume drama" in "carefully detailed and visually splendid period constructions" (Higson 2003: 1), *Tempest* productions tend to have been less attractive low-budget television plays: relatively 'safe' and 'literal' interpretations such as the 1980 John Gorrie version for the BBC. The more expensive film adaptations, on the other hand, have usually completely diverged from the original text, such as the 1956 Hollywood science fiction classic *Forbidden Planet* by Fred McLeod Wilcox. Vaughan and Vaughan locate the latter tendency in the fact that *The Tempest* is "one of Shakespeare's most unrealistic plays", and refer to "Prospero's magic, Ariel's invisibility, the island's mystery, and the spectacles of disappearing banquet and masque" to explain why adaptation—as opposed to interpretation and appropriation—is generally the most successful solution to adapt *The Tempest* script for the screen (1993: 200). Derek Jarman's independent film version of *The Tempest* may at first seem elusive to their categories of interpretation and adaptation, as it was made on "a budget far smaller than a Hollywood fantasy" (Jackson 1994: 107), and uses both the original characters and script. Although Vaughan and Vaughan do not consider this version (what they would call) an adaptation in technical terms, they do point out that Jarman suppressed most of the original text, and drastically rearranged the remaining lines and scenes so as to "remak[e]" Shakespeare's text into "a commentary on the 1970s counterculture movement" in Britain, "intended for punk and gay audiences" (1993: 200, 209).

Surprisingly, Vaughan and Vaughan's discussion of Jarman's film calls into being a twofold discursive tension. First of all, by using the term "commentary" they seem to evade the distinctions posited in their theoretical

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framework. Do they consider Jarman's version a mere appropriation because of its re-interpretation in terms of contemporary cultural conflict, that is, an uneasy fit of British punk and gay culture into mainstream society onto the play's plot? Or do they ultimately interpret Jarman's creation as an adaptation due to its considerable divergence from the source text and its political agenda? As it is, their analysis uncomfortably slips between these two notions. Notably, Jarman's suppressions, re-orderings, use of set, light, costume and editing created a sense of idiosyncracy that was made explicit in the film's title and advertising: "*The Tempest* … as seen through the eyes of Derek Jarman" (Crowl 1980: 1). Secondly, rather than using Wagner and McFarlane's notion of commentary on the source text, they apply it sociologically in that the film comments on British counterculture. In order to elucidate these matters further it would be useful to draw their discussion into the broader theoretical film adaptation framework outlined above, so that in the following we will use McFarlane's definitions to try and define where Jarman's film stands between commentary and deconstruction. Given Jarman's strong connection to the British counterculture of the 1970s and 80s due to his gay militancy, the question therefore is to what extent and to what ends Jarman's *Tempest* sheds the original Shakespearean core text and plot to forge a new, critical work of art. How much of the film's universe is reminiscent of Shakespeare's, and how much introduces a different and newer one: Jarman's?

O Gay New World That Has Such People in't

Ironically, in Shakespeare's original Miranda's outcry, "O brave new world that has such people in't", is not directed at Caliban, her father's native slave, but uttered on beholding a group of "beauteous and goodly creatures" in the shape of King Alonso and his courtiers. However, she is dryly put right by Prospero. The latter's reply, "Tis new to thee", points out the perspective with which the Jacobean audience would have looked on the scene (V.i.183-84). But a 21st century reading should even reveal a double irony in Miranda's observation, as many readers are familiar with the dystopian vision of total control in Western society by means of conditioning and drugs in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). Engaged by her father's magic in a love affair with political implications, the world Miranda has a first, attractive glimpse of is European, the imperial cradle of civilisation she will readily and happily embrace after her betrothal to King Alonso's son Ferdinand. The crude reality is that this geo-political union will allow her father Prospero not only to recover his Dukedom of Milan but also to extend his influence to the Kingdom of Naples. In a Machiavellian twist of the romance tradition, love becomes Prospero's means of achieving his political aims.

As behoves Shakespearean comedy, all's well that ends well so that love's cruder labour is not lost but condoned, and all characters remain happy with their lot at the conclusion of the play. Consequently, Prospero professes his abjuration of magic and the manipulation Miranda suffers deserves little other comment from her in the play than "for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle / And I would call it fair play" while she is playing chess with Ferdinand (V.i.173-74). Significantly, the latter scene, which takes place just before she discovers her 'new' world, is crucially witnessed by Alonso, who not only

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discovers the son he believed dead but also the girl who is to be the latter's wife. This arranged marriage is the price Alonso must pay for recovering his heir to the throne of Naples because Prospero, a skilled player, has left no loose ends here. In these crucial scenes for the denouement of the play, compressed in a mere 30 lines, Miranda willingly offers herself up for use in her father's plot against the Italian nobility, in whose political chess game she is used as the white queen to subdue Prospero's foes and to exchange New for Old World rule. Miranda's connivance is no doubt caused by her knowledge of the story of her exile but also by her reward, a beautiful, young and well-connected European of noble stock, and this throws a different light on her presumed gullibility and feelings of love: they might be read as a case of reversed colonialism. In these few lines, the text introduces all sorts of ambiguities: the New World against the Old World (but casting doubt on which is/controls which); the beautiful (would-be) native female (Miranda is Latin for 'to be admired') against the ugly, rebellious native Caliban (who will disrupt the wedding ceremony only moments later); the notion of marriage out of love against political convenience, and implicitly, the juxtaposition of Prospero's palace revolt and Caliban's rebellion. Shakespeare's comedy, however, through its focus on the happy occasion of wedlock and concomitant celebration on all sides, immediately occludes the presence of these baser and dystopian issues of class, colonialism, racism and gender that many recent commentators, such as Paul Brown (1992) and Ann Thompson (1995), have picked up on, especially where Miranda, Caliban and Prospero are concerned.

Jarman's film, however, is more explicit on these matters. Kenneth Rothwell calls his *Tempest* "a post-modernist version" of the play as it engages in a deconstruction of Shakespearean subject matter along the lines of gender "by imposing a gay/camp vision" (1999: 205-207). The chess scene and Miranda's introduction to the Italian nobles may serve as an example. The quotes mentioned above are maintained in the film but embedded in a very different context: they serve to empower a woman and a gay-friendly universe. First of all, we see Miranda, in a subversive twist performed by Punk-star Toyah Wilcox, playing chess. She takes one of Ferdinand's pieces, presumably beats him at the game and corrects him verbally for his bad play after a servant has placed a perfectly-fitting, beautiful shoe on her foot, which pertains to her wedding dress. The whole vision is meant to be empowering and does away with the innocent play at tennis and hide-and-seek of Ferdinand and Miranda in previous scenes. She sheds her childlike mask, clarifies that the time for play is over, exhorts him to take serious action and actively participates in the political business of usurpation under way (min.75).

The wedding is clearly the next move in Prospero's scheme and therefore the film withholds Alonso's presence until the very last. In fact, the Italian courtiers are all asleep in the ballroom, lavishly decorated for the wedding ceremony and bathed in light, until Prospero breaks their spell and causes Ferdinand's marriage with Miranda to come as a fait accompli. However, Jarman takes the sting out of this plot of personal and political revenge by turning the finale into a surprising and invigorating comedy. He plunges the audience into a distinctly queer world of colours, music, dance and happiness that questions the heterosexual pairing underway by staging a merry and gay "spoof of a Busby Berkeley production number" (Rothwell 1999: 207). With barely suppressed sexual innuendo, young sailors pair up and dance in

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circles to a cheerful, up-tempo hornpipe, while the Italian courtiers are sleeping in the uniforms of their respective offices, a Renaissance collection of potential *Village People*.[2] Jarman rounds it off with the blues song "Stormy Weather", performed by the black soul singer Elisabeth Welch, who aptly complains that "my man and I ain't together". She dons "the sophisticated garb of a twenties' chanteuse" (Harris and Jackson 1997: 96) and "[s]ingle-handed ... replace[s] Iris, Ceres and Juno" (Jarman 1984: 191), and as triple goddess she outweighs the perversities of racism and heterosexual prejudice. It is at the start of this camp ritual, with the inclusion of Trinculo as a drag queen, that Miranda utters the prophetical "Oh How beauteous mankind is / Oh brave new world that has such people in it!" (min.76). Significantly, Prospero's critical correction has been cut, which leaves Miranda's and our full appreciation of the scene intact and paves the way for Jarman's utopia: a gay new world of male bonding to be admired and relished. Many a commentator has highlighted the originality of these scenes and pinpointed this "*pièce de résistance"* and "stunning wedding-masque finale" (Harris and Jackson 1997: 95) as the epitome of the camp Jarmanian universe in the film.

This Thing of Darkness

Vaughan and Vaughan's study of Caliban representations points out that he "is the most enigmatic and the most susceptible to drastic fluctuations in interpretation" and call him "Shakespeare's changeling" (1993: 7), and perhaps the authors' pun on Caliban's changeability as well. While primarily described as a "savage and deformed slave" in Shakespeare's stage directions (1996: 59) and often called a monster in the play, his image has always been the object of speculation: his apparent link with the Amerindian, suggested by his name's similarity to the terms cannibal and Caribbean, has never been conclusively proven. Deborah Cartmell sees Caliban invested with the "stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy" although "not explicitly black", and draws attention to what she calls his "surprisingly unproblematic" representation "in the latter half of [the last] century", using Jarman's *Tempest* as an example (2000: 78). Due to the character's elusiveness, Caliban is easily transformed into an exponent of Jarman's gay universe, while avoiding the racial element by casting a white actor for the part. The underplaying of race is enforced by a highly subversive nude scene in which Caliban is sucking his mother Sycorax's breast (min.56), the role being performed by the imposingly voluptuous white actress Claire Davenport. Nevertheless, Caliban's whiteness does not turn him into an attractive New Worlder, and Deborah Cartmell describes him as a "non-threatening, old, decrepit, stupid and gay" outsider, whose humanity, however pathetic, can not be denied (2000: 80). Interestingly, Jarman cast the mime actor and harlequin Jack Birkett, "the perennial favourite of the Lindsay Kemp clique" (Rothwell 1999: 206), for the part, whose blindness, although perfectly

[2] The *Village People* were a popular late-70s and early-80s group of gay singers, whose stage dress and upbeat disco music boosted homosexual innuendo. Still popular are their songs "In the Navy", "Macho Man", "Go West" and "Y.M.C.A.".

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unnoticed in the film, could be interpreted to symbolise the vulnerability and lack of threat this mellow version of "this thing of darkness" (V.i.275-76) represents.[3]

In the play, Caliban is contrasted to Ferdinand, who Miranda immediately admires as "a thing divine, for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble" (I.ii.418), whereas she rejects Caliban as "a villain … I do not love to look on" (I.ii.308-309). However, in Jarman's film less contrasting relationships are found. While Ferdinand and Miranda appear to be on more equal footing, both partaking in play and politics, Caliban's sexual interest in her may provoke different responses. When he devours a raw egg and opens his fly, she is scared of the sexual allusion (min.7). The comment on his 'villainous' personality follows right upon the latter scene, but has more of the frightened child's perception than actual truth. Yet again, Caliban's occasional flirts may also turn into games of playful laughter for both, as when he intrudes on her while she is washing herself and lets off a fart upon her throwing him out (min.18). It foreshadows, from a baser point of view, the games Miranda and Ferdinand will play later on, removes the differential treatment that the text propounds for both men, and humanizes the 'monster'.

Jarman's Caliban remains, nevertheless, the slave upon whose work Prospero and Miranda's welfare depends, which leads to his alliance with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano to defeat their master. The text underlines the working-class connotations of their revolt: the three rebels hold menial jobs—slave, jester and butler respectively—and Caliban shows disapproval of his work when he sings to his fellow conspirators, "No more dams I'll make for fish / Nor fetch in firing / At requiring, / Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish" (II.ii.176-79). In Shakespeare's original, Caliban's revolt interrupts the wedding proceedings in disturbing ways: Prospero's outrage, "I had forgot that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates / Against my life. The minute of their plot / is almost come. –Well done! Avoid! No more!" (IV.i.139-42), demonstrates that Caliban poses a threat that he is willing to take seriously (cf. Barker and Hulme 1985: 202-203). Thus, Ferdinand remarks that "[t]his is strange. Your father's in some passion / That works him strongly", upon which Miranda agrees that "[n]ever till this day / Saw I him touched with anger so distempered" (IV.i.143-45). However, Jarman's film sees the rabble chased through the mansion by Ariel and Prospero in a carnivalesque masquerade that precedes and paves the way for the wedding ceremony, thus completely doing away with the sensation of danger (min.59). Later, in an innocent exercise of male bonding, Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo stumble in upon the wedding ceremony while hanging on to each other in drunken stupor, merely provoking great bouts of laughter and cheers at their gay parade; 'king' Stephano and '(drag) queen' Trinculo drag Caliban along as their helpless, inebriated prince. Caliban confesses his error of confiding in the two drunks and, merely having added to the general amusement and festive gay mood, he is simply sent off by Prospero (min.80).

All in all, in Jarman's vision Caliban's role incorporates more of the innocent and harmless court jester than the dangerous "thing of darkness" (V.i.275-76) should be controlled by Prospero at all costs. As Rothwell has it, Jarman "did not seem to have much interest in the plight of exploited workers

[3] Lindsay Kemp is a British dancer, (mime) actor, choreographer and director who reached fame in alternative circles in the 1960s and 70s, and is notorious for his camp productions.

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under capitalism" but he did put all his efforts in "defang[ing] 'heterosoc' [sic] prejudice against 'queers' that he saw as the lynchpin for ideological, racist and gender policing" (1999: 204). That Jarman chose to underplay the racial element in Caliban is most probably the result of his wish to make a general statement on homophobia rather than a desire to obscure racial oppression (cf. Cartmell 2000: 80-81). That he managed to do so at a time when racism had become an issue of serious political debate in the United Kingdom is both a measure of his queer commitment and made possible by the lack of definition the character of Caliban suffers from in the play. Moreover, one should note that Jarman gave the disturbing racial issue embedded within the play a more positive twist in the shape of Elisabeth Welch, the black soul singer who embodies the film's glorious apotheosis. Nevertheless, this is not to say that Jarman's gay universe empties Caliban of depth; rather, Prospero's "thing of darkness" has an important part to play in the field of gender that Jarman wishes to address.

My Tricksy Spirit, Our Revels Have not Ended yet

One of the intriguing changes that Jarman incorporated into his *Tempest* script was to foreground the intimate, homoerotic relationship between Prospero and Ariel. Harris and Jackson claim that there is "an element of psychodrama involving the central trinity of Prospero, Ariel and Caliban" (1997: 97), so that Caliban and Ariel could be seen as extensions of Prospero's psyche, representing antagonising notions of restraint and freedom, and hetero- and homosexuality. Such a psychological reading would tie in with Jarman's representation of events as a nightmarish dream, "plac[ing] the action entirely within the mind of Prospero" (Collick 1989: 99). The initial film sequence is eloquent in this sense: Prospero's restless tossing on a bed in a Gothic mansion intermingles with the sounds of breathing, eerie images of the stranding and shipwreck in blue, and cries such as an allegorical "[w]e split" (min.3). Moreover, the beginning comes full circle in the finale, with Prospero heavily and peacefully asleep in the dark ballroom, his 'mind-voice' echoing the play's lines "[o]ur revels now are ended … We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep" (IV.i.148-58/min.127). The overall dark, gloomy yet timeless atmosphere of the film and Heathcote Williams's characterisation as a young, vigorous, dark, Byronic Prospero vaunting a "Beethoven"-like hairdo (Harris and Jackson 1997: 91) are other indicators that Jarman intended the film to represent "an island of the mind" and an "abstract landscape" (Jarman 1984: 186). Most of the action is shot in the barely lit chambers and labyrinthine stairs and corridors of the Tudor-style Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire and the scarce exteriors in an indistinct and illusory, blue-filtered dunescape of the Northumberland coastline, which adds to the sensation of the film being a projection of Prospero's stormy subconscious mental processes, reminiscent of Gothic tales such as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), and already explored in Fred McLeod Wilcox's *Tempest* adaptation *Forbidden Planet*.

Consequently, the director imbued Ariel's 'airy', spiritual character with an erotically charged physicality which served his overall reading of *The Tempest* as a gay pamphlet. Tellingly, Harris and Jackson place "the relationship

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between Prospero and Ariel … at the emotional centre" of the film (1997: 97), and indeed, key scenes in the film underline the homoerotic tension present in their relationship. When Prospero first calls him, the impression conveyed is more of an impatient partner than master, and Ariel has Prospero wait as if it were a game of hide-and-seek between lovers (min.4). Prospero repeatedly promises freedom to Ariel in return for his loyal service, but the softness and relish with which his words are uttered acquire a sexual undertone, thus hinting at freedom as the imminent consummation of homosexual desire. This notion comes even more strongly to the fore immediately after Ariel has chased Caliban and his fellow revolutionaries around the mansion (min.59). Once again the promise of freedom is repeated, Ariel turns his face, all satisfaction, in close-up to the camera, sticks his tongue out of his mouth, and starts panting heavily as if in "postcoital lassitude" (Harris and Jackson 1997: 95).

Moreover, another elucidating scene takes place just before (min.57), when Ariel confronts Prospero with his demand for freedom. Prospero is not willing to release him and recalls how he freed him from the witch Sycorax's spell. Interestingly, this scene is infused with revulsion against heterosexual relationships: an immense, white, flabby and naked Sycorax has an equally nude Caliban suckle on her breasts and wants Ariel to do the same. Consequently she pulls on the chain around Ariel's neck to move his naked body closer, offers her breast up to the struggling man, but much to her despair he manages to escape. Ariel is evidently frightened of physical contact with the woman, and the unnaturalness of a full-grown Caliban breastfeeding only enhances this feeling. Thus, Prospero's demand for loyalty may be interpreted as the imposition of homosexual over heterosexual desire, and also explain his rejection of this 'monstrous' Caliban, as the latter can be taken to represent his heterosexual side. Equally, Caliban's reincorporation into Prospero's world after his rebellion could be read as the triumph of homosexual desire over the heterosexual norm.

Nevertheless, Prospero's general attitude towards Ariel is one of extreme satisfaction: whereas he cruelly steps on Caliban's fingers to punish him for his heterosexual advances on Miranda, he praises Ariel with an admiring "[t]hy tricksy spirit" (min.116) for organising the glamorous wedding ceremony that in reality is staged as a celebration of male bonding. Here, homoeroticism is vaunted in bright colours, music, drag and physicality and, not surprisingly, represents one of the few moments when the film abandons its dark, gloomy air. If Ariel denotes Prospero's homosexual side, a 'tricky', difficult-to-handle part of his own spirit, Jarman's film can be read as an allegory of its necessary and healthy release; this would explain the wedding as the cathartic celebration of Prospero's homosexuality, a queer merger of the male and female principle into a completely new and liberating sexuality. After Ariel as Homoerotic Desire has finally been released, visualised by briefly enthroning himself before Prospero's sleeping figure, he literally and metaphorically comes out of the closet by exchanging the mansion for the wide world. In the film's silence after the storm, Prospero is peacefully asleep and his voice-over proclaims that his "revels" are over, here not only taken to mean the celebration, but also the sexual pleasure experienced. This also offers another tack on the choice of the blues song that rounds off the festivities, as its lines could be interpreted to denote the inner torment Prospero has had to undergo. Thus, it summarizes the

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film's plot as Prospero's painful yet liberating encounter with his own hidden homosexuality:

> Don't know why, there's no sun up in the sky
> Stormy weather, since my man and I ain't together
> Keeps raining all the time
>
> Life is bare, gloom and misery everywhere
> Stormy weather, just can't get my poor old self together
> I'm weary all the time, the time, so weary all the time
>
> When he went away, the blues walked in and met me
> If he stays away that old rocking chair will get me
> All I do is pray the lord above will let me
> Walk in the sun once more
>
> I can't go on, everything I had is gone
> Stormy weather since my man and I ain't together
> Keeps raining all the time, keeps raining all the time
> (Ted Koehler and Harold Arlen, 1933)

In such a psychological reading, Jarman's *Tempest* becomes a pamphlet against the repression of homoerotic desire, visually describing the act of coming out of the closet as Ariel's leaving the mansion. Thus, Jarman invites the viewer to 'revel' in the homosexual universe at a time when gay liberation was still a relatively recent phenomenon and the strictures on a queer lifestyle ubiquitous.

Let Your Indulgence Set Me Free

In the light of the previous discussion, Jarman's adaptation of the Shakespearean script obeyed a clear objective. From his commitment to gay activism, he sought to deconstruct the text in order to imbue it with those elements that would pay homage to homoerotic desire, a subversive move which would provide him with scant critical and box-office success worldwide. In an elucidating comment on the deconstruction process applied to appropriate the play, Jarman writes:

> Having decided on the format of the film, one which enabled me to take the greatest possible freedom with the text, I cut away the dead wood (particularly the obsolete comedy) so that the great speeches were concertinaed. Then the play was rearranged and opened up: the theatrical magic had to be replaced. (1984: 188)

His intervention consisted of the suppression of much of the dialogue, the rearrangement of the remaining lines with resultant twists in the plot, the dress code shuttling between different historical periods with obvious references to gay and punk counterculture, the timeless dream-like structure, the setting in a Gothic mansion rather than on an island, and the introduction of a shockingly

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camp universe as both point of departure and arrival in the film. This evidently reconstructs the Shakespearean script into a film that is substantially different from the original, yet leaving an odd sensation of similarity due to the consistent use of Shakespearean language and characters. In spite of the latter, Jarman's *Tempest* may certainly be called a deconstruction in McFarlane's terms, as it discovers the faultlines in the discourse on the presumed prevalence and desirability of heterosexual love in the source text. What is more, one could even claim that Jarman's adherence to lines and characters of the Shakespearean original allowed him to work more effectively on the politics of the subject matter, a reading which would understand his version of *The Tempest* as an utterly subversive one. If labelling Jarman's version as a commentary would automatically divest it of radical political content, this step would clearly be a mistake. Interestingly, Geoffrey Wagner points out that a commentary "seems to represent more of an infringement on the work of another than analogy" (Giddings, Selby and Wensley 1990: 11), so the subversive quality of a deconstruction could be enhanced by presenting itself as a 'harmless' commentary. Indeed, by calling his film *The Tempest* in close reference to the original, Jarman insists on both a proposal for a radical revision of the play's content and a claim to prestige similar to the Bard's original. It is his wish to make the play distinctively his own in combination with his love for the original—Jarman speaks of "the delicate description in the poetry, full of sound and sweet airs" (1984: 186)—that turns what some critics have typified as a poorly-achieved act of irreverence into a new, vibrant and highly politicised work of art for the screen.

In the aftermath of Jarman's untimely death from AIDS, Diana Harris and MacDonald Jackson paid homage to *The Tempest*'s director by re-assessing the film in an in-depth study. They chose to read the film as his cinematic testament, projecting onto Jarman a traditional understanding of Prospero as the impersonation of Shakespeare bidding his farewell to the stage (1997: 97). *The Tempest* was the playwright's last, single-authored play, written in 1611, only three years before his death. Evidently, the lines on man's mortality which Jarman placed in Prospero's mouth, conveniently moved to the film's epilogue, together with the notion of the film's universe as the product of Prospero's mind, could be understood to point in this testamentary direction. But perhaps it is more appropriate to reserve this qualification for Jarman's self-intended goodbye to the screen, *Blue,* filmed fourteen years after *The Tempest*, and to recover the very last line of Shakespeare's original in order to capture the message of Jarman's subversive film: "Let your indulgence set me free" (Epilogue, 20).

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