



Kazuki Sasaki\* 

## Shakespeare Engraved: Frontispiece and Bardolatry<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The term Bardolatry has been used for over a century to describe the adoration of an Elizabethan playwright, Shakespeare, but the causes of this phenomenon have not been fully elucidated. The study explores the nature of this worship produced and disseminated by various theatrical cultures during the long eighteenth century. To understand the formation of the phenomenon, this paper examines the shifts in the engraved frontispieces, taking *The Tempest* as an example.

**Keywords:** William Shakespeare, Bardolatry, frontispiece, *The Tempest*, adaptation, the long eighteenth century, theatrical culture.

### Introduction

It is not easy to imagine that there were only four complete editions of Shakespeare's works in the seventeenth century if we consider his status as a global cultural icon today. Moreover, all of them replicated the format of *The First Folio* (1623). In the eighteenth century, however, the publishing landscape changed dramatically. From Nicholas Rowe's first edition in 1709, at least "some fifty collected editions were published with London imprints" by the end of the century (Murphy, *Shakespeare in print* 131). This article examines the shift in the engraved frontispieces of *The Tempest*, one of the most popular plays throughout the long eighteenth century, to explore the growing enthusiasm for Shakespeare. It also aims to provide insight into the formation of what would later be called "Bardolatry" (Shaw xxxi), which was produced and disseminated by the various theatrical cultures during the long eighteenth century.

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\* Akita University, Akita, Japan. [zsasaki0925@gmail.com](mailto:zsasaki0925@gmail.com)

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### Nicholas Rowe's First Edition (1709)

Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition was the first of Shakespeare's complete works to be published in the eighteenth century. The leading publisher, Jacob Tonson the Elder, introduced several innovative features to attract readers. First of all, the thick and heavy single-volume folio was replaced with a six-volume octavo. As a result, it became conveniently portable in exchange for "the loss of what had been a prestige format" (Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print* 59). In addition, the name of Nicholas Rowe, a renowned playwright and poet, was listed on the title page as the editor for the first time. Tonson also altered the content. Before this edition, spectators and readers were familiar with individual works of Shakespeare but they had limited information about the author himself (Dogus 130-131). Rowe's edition cut out the complimentary poems by Ben Jonson and others in the Folio edition and replaced them with a biography, "Some Account of the Life, &c., of Mr William Shakespear" written by the editor. Above all, the most notable was the addition of visually appealing frontispieces to each play, designed by François Boitard, a French artist, and engraved by Elisha Kirkall. The most well-known is the spectacular frontispiece of *The Tempest* at the beginning of Volume I (Fig. 1). In the center of this engraving is a ship about to be wrecked by a storm and its frenzied sailors and passengers. The artist Boitard most likely aimed to accurately capture the opening scene, which includes a conversation between Shipmaster and Boatswain:

<b>Master</b>	Boatswain!
<b>Boatswain</b>	Here master. What cheer?
<b>Master</b>	Good, speak to th'mariners. Fall to't yarely or We run ourselves aground. Bestir, bestir! <i>Exit.</i> (1.1.1-4) <sup>2</sup>

But Boitard's inclusion of dragons and monsters flying through the air, which are absent from the original, may have been inspired by Thomas Shadwell's adaptation, *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (1674). As evidence to support this conjecture, the following opening directions from Shadwell's version are worth noting:

... Behind this is the Scene, which represents a thick cloudy Sky, a very Rocky Coast, and a Tempestuous Sea in perpetual Agitation. Tempest (suppos'd to be rais'd by Magick) has many dreadful Objects in it, as *several Spirits in horrid shapes flying down*. And when the Ship is sinking, the whole House is darken'd, and a shower of Fire falls upon 'em. This is accompanied with Lightning, and several Claps of Thunder, to the end of the Storm. (Shadwell II: 199) [Italics mine]

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<sup>2</sup> References to *The Tempest* are from *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works*.

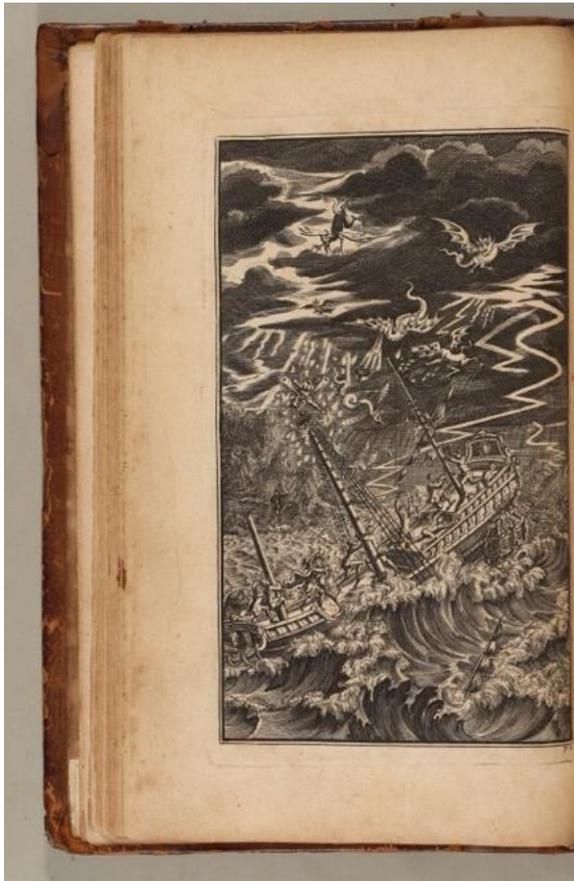


Fig. 1. Frontispiece to Nicholas Rowe's edition of *The Tempest* (1709) by François Boitard. 27 December 2023. <https://archive.keiyou.jp/akitaunivrare/contents/index/2001?volumeid=129505088>. By permission of Akita University Library

As these stage directions specify “several spirits in horrible shapes flying down,” some scholar had already speculated that this was likely the source for Boitard (Merchant 49). However, it is unclear what prompted him to incorporate Shadwell's monsters into the frontispiece of Shakespeare's original.

To unravel this mystery, it is crucial to examine the performance history of *The Tempest*. In 1667, John Dryden and William Davenant presented their adaptation, *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*, which newly included Dorinda, Miranda's sister, and her lover Hippolito, and transformed the play into a lively Restoration-style comedy. Seven years later, Shadwell added even more elaborate stage effects and music to this comedy, contributing to its great success. According to *The London Stage: 1660-1800*, it is evident that Shakespeare's original version of *The Tempest* was not performed from the

Restoration up until the mid-eighteenth century. In contrast, Shadwell's operatic version had been on the board at least 31 times before Rowe's first edition in 1709. In other words, it is probable that for Boitard, *The Tempest* most likely referred to Shadwell's adaptation. It can be, therefore, assumed that he chose for the frontispiece the most impressive scene from this operatic version that he had watched recently. The publisher Tonson may have been uncertain about the popularity of both Shakespeare, whose biographical information was newly presented in this edition, and *The Tempest*, which had not been performed in its original form at the time. This would explain why Boitard's confusing design was adopted. Tonson probably wanted to attract customers familiar with Shadwell's adaptation with flying monsters to increase sales of this new edition. In any case, this engraving suggests that the reputation of Shakespeare was not yet fully established at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

### Nicholas Rowe's Second Edition (1714)

In Rowe's second edition, most of the frontispieces were replaced. According to theater historians, this was likely due to the change in page size from octavo to duodecimo, in order to reduce paper costs (Milhous and Hume 237-238). This alteration required the frontispieces to be re-carved, but most of them "reveal Tonson's economy with time and costs by simply reproducing Boitard's designs of 1709" (Sillars 64). However, in the case of *The Tempest*, it was replaced by Louis Du Guernier's serene frontispiece (Fig. 2). Judging from the wand he is holding, the old man on the left is probably Prospero. Another old man on the right with whom he is conversing, is presumably King Alonzo of Naples, while their companion, the older bearded man, is identified as Gonzalo, the adviser. The other men standing behind Alonzo are likely Antonio and Sebastian. The couple in the background are undoubtedly Miranda and Ferdinand, who could be identified by the tiny chessboard they are holding. Therefore, this engraving correctly depicts the famous reconciliation scene at the end of the play. Below are the lines spoken by Prospero to Alonzo at that moment:

My dukedom since you have given me again,  
I will requite you with as good a thing;  
At least bring forth a wonder, to content ye  
As much as me my dukedom.

*Here Prospero discovers FERDINAND and MIRANDA, playing at chess.*

(5.1.168-171)

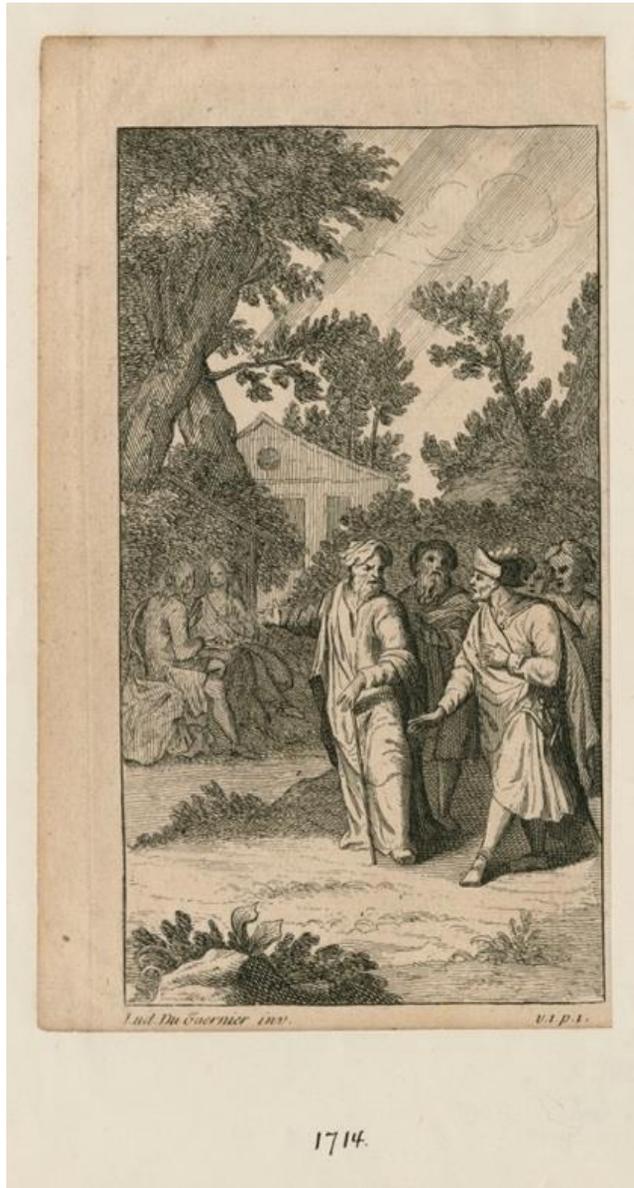


Fig. 2. Frontispiece to Nicholas Rowe's edition of *The Tempest* (1714) by Louis Du Guernier. 28 December 2023. <https://digitalcollections.folger.edu/img27043>.  
By courtesy of The Folger Shakespeare Library

Interestingly, Shadwell's version omits this crucial speech of Prospero and the chess game between Miranda and Ferdinand. Instead, Prospero suddenly comforts grieving Alonzo by saying, "Sir, I am glad kind Heaven decreed it

otherwise” (Shadwell II: 262), after which Alonzo finds Ferdinand alive. Most customers who were familiar with only Shadwell’s version could not have recognized the scene depicted in the new frontispiece as that from *The Tempest*. Therefore, Tonson must have been aware that this replacement would entail considerable sales risk. It is possible that he was encouraged by the success of the first edition and decided that capitalizing on Shadwell’s opening scene was not essential to the marketing of the second edition. Alternatively, he may have deemed Du Guernier’s rococo engraving more attractive than Boitard’s baroque one to new and sophisticated customers, for whom the second edition was reprinted in 2,500 copies (St. Clair 701).

The emergence of publishers like Tonson, who treated Shakespeare’s works as commodities and deliberately replaced their frontispieces to meet and create new demands, undoubtedly contributed greatly to the establishment of Shakespeare’s popularity and the rapid rise of his fame in the early eighteenth century.

### **Thomas Hanmer’s Edition (1743-1744)**

In the mid-eighteenth century, Shakespeare’s reputation underwent a significant transformation. After the Tonson family’s copyrights to Shakespeare’s plays expired in 1731, fierce competition arose between Robert Walker and Jacob Tonson the Younger in 1733-1734. Walker attempted to break the monopoly by publishing individual works at a lower price, while Tonson offered greater discounts to protect his sales. As a result, inexpensive individual works of Shakespeare flooded the market (Milhous and Hume 239-240). The renewed interest in Shakespeare’s romantic comedies may have been a by-product of this price war. Two of his famous comedies, *As You Like It* and *The Twelfth Night*, were revived in their original forms at Drury Lane in December 1740 and January 1741, respectively (Hogan 91 & 455). On October 19, 1741, David Garrick made his debut as Richard III at Goodman’s Fields Theatre in London, immediately captivating the audience with his innovative performance. These coincidences made Shakespeare the most popular writer in print and on stage at the time.

The publication of Thomas Hanmer’s luxurious edition may be considered as a response to Shakespeare’s growing reputation. The beautiful engravings by the famous painter Francis Hayman were well suited to Hanmer’s folio edition. It consisted of six volumes, and Hanmer covered the cost of the frontispieces. However, at 210 shillings, this edition was affordable only to the wealthy (St. Clair 702-703). Unfortunately, due to the inaccuracy and arbitrariness of the textual emendation, this edition is now rarely referenced in connection with textual studies and is considered to be “one of the worst in the

eighteenth century” (Wells & Taylor 54). The thirty-one frontispieces are, however, often mentioned partly because of their high quality and partly because of the letters from Hanmer to Hayman that were discovered in the 1970s.

Here is a part of the editor’s instruction to the artist regarding the frontispiece of *The Tempest* (Fig. 3):



Fig. 3. Frontispiece to Thomas Hanmer’s edition of *The Tempest* (1743-44) by Francis Hayman. 29 December 2023. <https://archive.keiyou.jp/akitaunivrare/contents/index/2002?volumeid=129505094>. By permission of Akita University Library

... Prospero and Miranda are to stand as in conference together: He is an elderly man but not decrepid of broken with Age, clothed in a long garment and his head cover’d with a cap lined with Ermyne, holding a wand in his right hand. The daughter in the bloom of youth and beauty, and habited after the Italian or Spanish manner. At some distance from them, Ferdinand must appear... His Air and Mien to be that of a fine graceful youthful Prince and his dress after the

Italian manner with a sword by his side and his hat button'd up with a diamond. ...The spirit Ariel to be sitting in the clouds with a pipe or flute in his hand. The Grotesque figure of Caliban to be coming from behind the Cave towards the mouth of it with a burden of wood on his Shoulders. (Allentuck 294-295)

Hanmer emphasizes the physical appearance of the three primary characters: Prospero, Miranda, and Ferdinand. By defining each character through details of costume, he aims to make it clear to the reader which social class they belong to and to contextualize the play within the eighteenth-century society, and Hayman is faithful to the instruction.

In the case of Caliban and Ariel, it is noteworthy that the painter complements the editor's description. Let us begin with a closer examination of Caliban. While Hanmer refers to him only as "the grotesque figure," Hayman's portrayal of Caliban is a darker-skinned and more shabbily dressed character who appears to be performing manual labor under the control of Caucasians. Hayman may intend to place Caliban within the historical context. Since the play is set on an island, readers would draw a comparison between Caliban and the black slaves who worked on the West Indies' plantations, which brought great wealth to Britain at the time. In addition, Hayman may also intend to make Caliban a major character in the play. Although critics suggest on this frontispiece that "Caliban lurks dimly... in the background" (Vaughn & Vaughn, *Shakespeare's Caliban* 218), he seems to be purposely placed in the center to attract the reader's attention as well as Prospero and Miranda.

As for Ariel, Hanmer refers to the character as "the spirit," but the shape of the wings and chubby infant appearance suggest that Hayman portrays Ariel as Cupid. This may explain why Hayman's Ariel looks down at Miranda, who appears captivated by Ferdinand, while he looks up at Ariel, creating a love triangle in the composition. In the 1740s, Hayman contributed to the decoration of the supper box at Vauxhall Gardens on the Thames (*DNB* 26: 53). His depiction of Ariel may reflect the atmosphere of this elegant and amorous pleasure garden.

Finally, the frontispiece of this edition is remarkable for its depiction of all the main characters in a single plane. This is a departure from Rowe's editions, where artists would cut out the most impressive scenes from the play. For the wealthy, this magnificent frontispiece would serve as a guide to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, providing clues as to how to read the play when Shadwell's opera version was still popular and the original was not yet revived (Hogan 432-437).

The availability of affordable single copies of Shakespeare's works in the 1730s made reading Shakespeare a popular form of entertainment for the public. However, the publication of this lavish and informative edition suggests that having Shakespeare's edition also became a status symbol for the wealthy in the 1740s.

### John Bell's Acting Edition (1774)

John Bell's acting edition provides a unique perspective on the reception of Shakespeare in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Commonly known as *Bell's Shakespeare* after its publisher, John Bell, this edition differs from scholarly editions in that it collects prompter's books used for performances at Drury Lane, where David Garrick was the manager at the time. The text of Bell's acting edition has received little attention in the field of textual studies because it was edited for the convenience of the production or at the discretion of the actors. However, its smaller size (duodecimo) and lower price (15 shillings) would have made it widely available at the time. According to records, "no fewer than 8,000 were sold in one week" (St. Clair 705). This success indicates the broad appeal of this edition to the public in contrast to, for example, Samuel Johnson's first edition in 1765, which was published in only 1,000 copies (St. Clair 703).

Bell's acting edition, which was so popular at the time, suggests that two modes of Shakespeare reception coexisted. One of these modes is indicated in the advertisement that the editor Francis Gentleman placed at the beginning of the first volume:

...why then should not noble monuments he had left us of unrivalled ability, be restored to due proportion and natural luster, by sweeping off those cobwebs, and the dust of depraved opinion, which Shakespeare was unfortunately forced to throw on them? ...The above considerations first started the idea and induced the undertakings of this edition. (Bell I: 6)

As this quote indicates, Gentleman compiled this acting edition with the belief that a stage script for performance, edited to eliminate unnecessary "cobwebs, and the dust", was the ideal text that Shakespeare had originally intended. While this logic may sound strange to modern readers who feel that Shakespeare's text should not be arbitrarily altered, when his works were considered adaptable material, it was common practice to correct and improve his text according to the tastes of the time. In this regard, Bell's edition was one of many attempts to idealize Shakespeare out of reverence for him. The second half of the quotation also reveals a similar mode of reception:

...it is our peculiar endeavor to render what we call the essence of Shakespeare more instructive and intelligible; especially to the ladies and to youth; glaring indecencies being removed, and intricate passages explained. (Bell I: 9-10)

In his seminal study, Michael Dobson suggests that Gentleman's approach involved cleansing Shakespeare's works to make them more respectable (Dobson 211).

However, Gentleman's attempt to make Shakespeare's work less bawdy and thereby more genteel was not entirely successful. This is evident from the two frontispieces of *The Tempest* in this edition. The first shows the comic trio of Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano, portrayed by Edward Edwards (Fig. 4). The caption "Come on—down and swear" (2.2.149) indicates the scene takes place

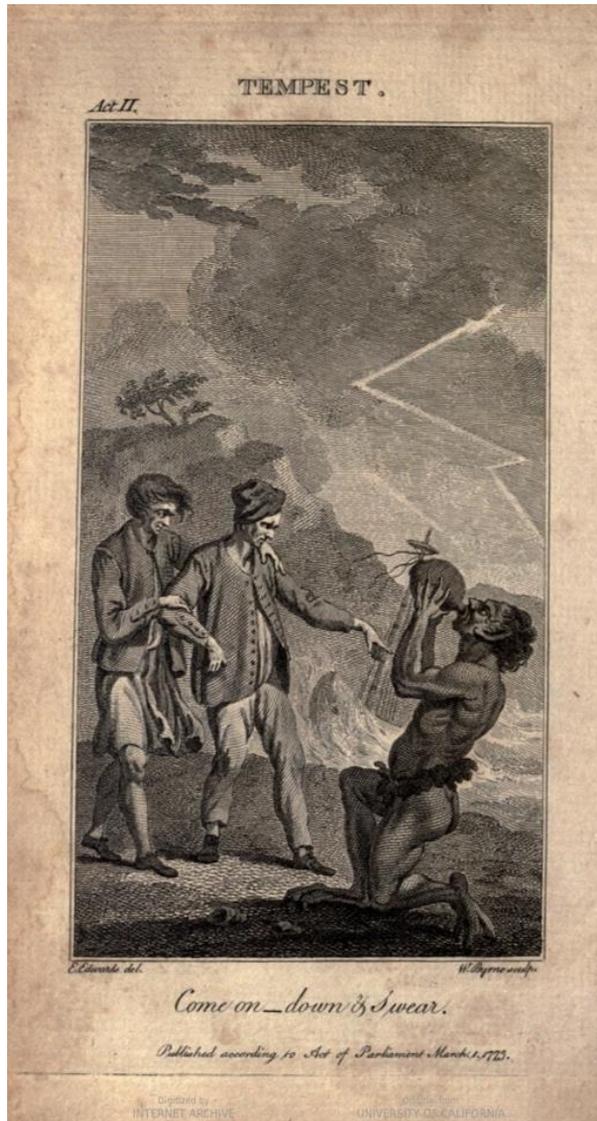


Fig. 4. Frontispiece to John Bell's edition of *The Tempest* (1774) by Edward Edwards. 29 December 2023. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3548571&seq=244>.  
By courtesy of Hathi Trust

immediately after Caliban's drunken proclamation to Stephano to kiss his foot and to be his servant. Although this scene may not be significant or noteworthy, it is certainly ridiculously funny. The publisher's choice to include it may suggest, despite the editor's intentions, how the play was received and which aspects were favored by the general public at the time.

The second frontispiece likely supports this conjecture. This is one of the new extra series added to the third edition (1776) that portrayed "costumed actors in poses of significant action" (Burnim and Highfill 21). In *The Tempest*, Robert Baddeley in the role of Trinculo, was depicted by Thomas Parkinson (Fig. 5). He joined the Drury Lane company in the 1762-1763 season, and had already established his popularity as a comic actor at the time. (*DNB* 3: 193-194). As the caption "Ay, but to lose our bottles in the pool—" (4.1.208) shows, this engraving captures the scene where Trinculo, Caliban, and Stephano emerge from a polluted pool after being thrown in by Ariel. Trinculo's soaked hair and clothes are visible, adding to his comic effect. This frontispiece, as well as the first one, suggests that a considerable part of the audience came to see *The Tempest* as a light entertainment, much as Samuel Pepys had enjoyed it a century earlier. See, for example, his diary entry for Monday, February 3, 1668:

At noon home to dinner; and thence after dinner to the Duke of York's house, to the play, *The Tempest*, which we have often seen; but yet I was pleased again, and shall be again to see it, it is so full of variety; and particularly, this day I took pleasure to learn <the tune of> the Seaman's dance—which I have much desired to be perfect in, and have made myself so. (Pepys IX: 48)

Thus, Gentleman's intention to idealize and sanitize Shakespeare's works is contradicted by the two frontispieces of *The Tempest*, which suggest a different mode of reception of Shakespeare by the general public. It can be assumed that they, too, would have appreciated Shakespeare, but their sentiment was probably not veneration for the National Poet, but rather an affectionate feeling for the author of delightful entertainment.

Shakespeare's popularity during the eighteenth century peaked at the Shakespeare Jubilee in 1769, which was presided over by David Garrick, and Bell's acting edition continued to be published throughout the 1770s. However, the publication ceased when Garrick, a rare presence who could unite two modes of reception of Shakespeare, passed away. At the turn of the century, another kind of the complete works of Shakespeare was published for new customers with different tastes.



Fig. 5. Frontispiece to Bell's edition of *The Tempest*, *Mr Baddeley in the Character of Trinculo* (1776) by T. Parkinson. 30 December 2023. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/650369/mr-baddeleyinthecharacteroftrinculo>. By permission of Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2023

### Alexander Chalmers' Edition (1805)

Finally, let's consider Alexander Chalmers' early nineteenth-century edition. Chalmers, a prolific Scottish journalist, combined the latest fifth edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1803) edited by George Steevens with frontispieces by Henry Fuseli, making his edition unique. It used Steevens' text but removed almost all of his extensive notes. Chalmers' goal was to provide a simplified scholarly edition for educated readers who wanted to enjoy Shakespeare with authorized and correct texts and minimal notes. The 1831 edition was advertised in newspapers at 96 shillings for the complete collection, with individual volumes available for 14 shillings each. Although the price was not low, Chalmers' edition hit the mark because it was published consecutively in 1811, 18, 23, 26, and 31 (St. Clair 710-711). His decision to hire Fuseli as the frontispiece artist would also be viewed as an attempt to lend authority to this edition and boost sales. Fuseli was then a prominent figure in the art world because he had been a professor at the Royal Academy since 1799.

Moreover, Fuseli was an ardent admirer of Shakespeare's works and the acting of David Garrick. John Knowles' biography describes Fuseli's first visit to England in 1764 as follows:

At this time, Garrick was in the height of his reputation; and as Fuseli considered the theatre the best school for a foreigner to acquire the pronunciation of the English language, and Garrick's performance an excellent imitation of the passions, which would give him a lesson essential to historical designs; he never missed the opportunity of seeing him act, and he was generally to be found in the front row of the pit. (Knowles I: 39)

Inspired by his experiences at the theater, Fuseli made two superb sketches on paper. One depicts David Garrick and Hanna Prichard as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, while the other portrays Garrick in the role of Richard III (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 67). As a result of his talent, John Boydell, an eminent publisher, commissioned Fuseli to create large paintings based on Shakespeare's scenes for his gallery, which opened at 55 Pall Mall in 1789. Fuseli's works were stunning, and since then he became known as "Shakespeare's painter." This must have been another reason why Chalmers chose Fuseli as his illustrator.

The frontispiece of Fuseli's *The Tempest* (Fig. 6) is examined below. The caption reads as follows:

*Miranda sleeps*

**Prosp.** Come away, servant. I am ready now  
Approach my Ariel; come. (1.2.187-188)

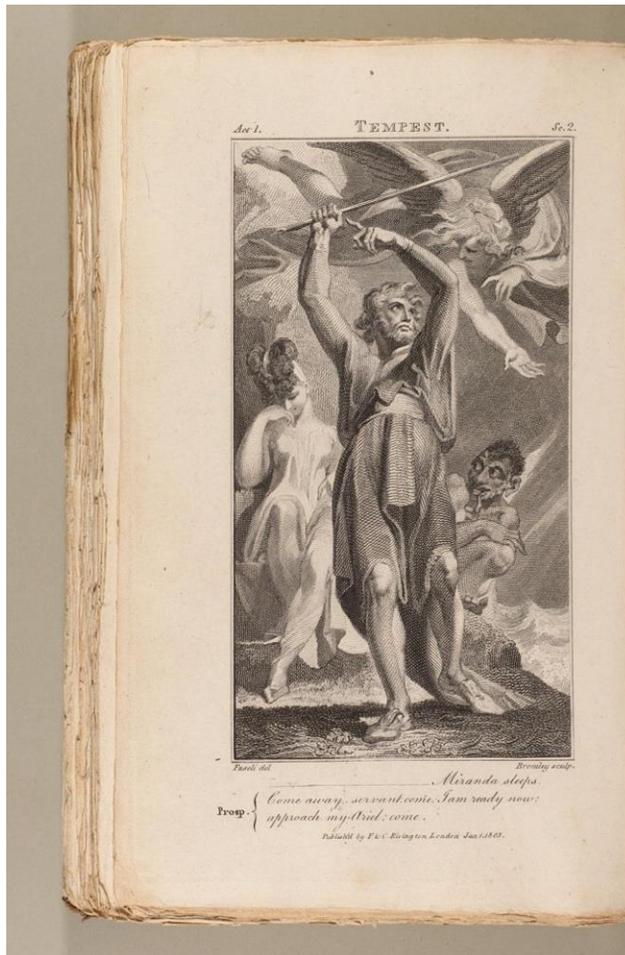


Fig. 6. Frontispiece to Alexander Chalmers' edition of *The Tempest* (1805) by John Henry Fuseli. 30 December 2023. <https://archive.keiyou.jp/akitaunivrare/contents/index/2005?volumeid=129505125>. By permission of Akita University Library

This quote refers to the scene in which Ariel first appears after Miranda has fallen asleep. However, the engraving also shows Caliban, who appears later. Fuseli wants to contrast Ariel as an angel with Caliban as a devil on the same plane. Miranda is positioned behind Prospero, while her lover Ferdinand is missing from the frontispiece. In doing so, Fuseli deliberately erases the essential love-romance element of *The Tempest*. As a result, the frontispiece appears to reflect a Christian allegory, in which Prospero is depicted as God Almighty, surrounded by a heavenly messenger, a demonic figure, and a submissive woman with her eyes looking downward. Fuseli's portrayal of Prospero as a deity may be linked to his position in the cult of Shakespeare. During

the eighteenth century, it was common to find biographical details about Shakespeare in his works. It is then unsurprising that the character and speeches of Prospero, the powerful magician in Shakespeare's final masterpiece, were thought to reflect his state of mind when he retired (Vaughan & Vaughan, *A Critical Reader* 18-19). This would explain why Peter Sheemakers' statue of Shakespeare, placed in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey in 1741 (Fig. 7), points to Prospero's famous passage on the scroll without any explanation. It reads as follows, although it contains some errors (qtd. in Dobson 146):

The Cloud capt Tow'rs, The Gorgeous Palaces,  
The Great Globe itself  
Yea all which it Inherit, Shall Dissolve;  
And like the baseless Fabrick of a Vision  
Leave not a Wreck behind. (4.1.152-56)



Fig. 7. Statue of Shakespeare in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey (1741) by Peter Sheemakers. 30 December 2023. [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/Shakespeare\\_memorial%2C\\_Poets%27\\_Corner.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/Shakespeare_memorial%2C_Poets%27_Corner.jpg). By courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

In short, the statue was carved on the assumption that Prospero was a portrait of Shakespeare. This association became even stronger in the nineteenth century, as evidenced by Coleridge's passage in his famous *Shakespearean Criticism*, where he stated:

Prospero, the mighty wizard, whose potent art could not only call up all the spirits of the deep, but the characters as they were and are and will be, seems a portrait of the bard himself. (Coleridge 2: 253)

Given that Prospero was widely recognized as Shakespeare's persona at the time, it is natural that Fuseli, a longtime Shakespeare enthusiast, would depict Prospero as a deity to express his ardent belief in the bard. Similarly, contemporary readers could quite likely have associated the godlike Prospero in the frontispiece with Shakespeare himself. If that is the case, then what we find here is a form of worship that goes beyond mere admiration: the deification of Shakespeare.

## Conclusion

The phenomenon of Bardolatry, previously perceived as an outpouring of Shakespeare's genius, has recently been reinterpreted as a product that was created, transformed, and disseminated over a long time. However, the process by which this phenomenon was invented with various theatrical cultures has not yet been fully elucidated. This paper explores the evolution of the worship of Shakespeare through the study of frontispieces, taking *The Tempest* as an example. The examination indicates that they contributed to and reflected the rise of Shakespeare's popularity as a playwright, ultimately leading to his deification. In other words, they prove how the myth of Shakespeare, the National Poet, was born and nurtured throughout the long eighteenth century.

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