

**Gendering “Ariel and all his Quality” (I.II.193): Nonbinary Embodiment in Text  
and Performances of *The Tempest*.**

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### *Sammendrag på Norsk*

Denne masteroppgaven argumenterer for at Ariel fra Shakespeare sin komedie *Stormen* (*The Tempest*) best forstås som en ikkebinær karakter. Ariel har blitt tolket og fremstilt på ulike måter, og historisk har hen som oftest blitt spilt som mann eller kvinne med utseende tilnærmet en tradisjonell engelsk fe. Hvis man leser teksten finner man lite som tilsier hvilket av de to kjønnene luftånden egentlig er. Man finner derimot flere motsigende element, som maskuline pronomen og feminine beskrivelser. Ariel sin kjønnsinkongruens er et tema som sjeldent har blitt diskutert fra et transkjønnet perspektiv, og Shakespeare hadde ikke den samme terminologien som vi bruker for å beskrive identitet og livserfaring i dag. Likevel viser min analyse av teksten at Ariel sine pronomen, inspirasjonskilder, og kjønnsuttrykk har bakgrunn i kjønnsløse og ikkebinære konsept, samt at de tydeliggjør diskusjoner rundt normbrytende kjønnsuttrykk på Shakespeare sin tid. Disse diskusjonene er på vei tilbake i det 21. århundrets teater. Ariel har tidligere blitt spilt av unggutter, pikebarn, kvinner, og menn, men i moderne oppsetninger blir rollen gitt temmelig balansert til mannlige og kvinnelige skuespillere. Det er ikke bare rollebesetningen som er i forandring, men også spillestilen. Denne masteroppgaven analyserer hvordan elleve oppsetninger fremstiller Ariel som androgyn og/eller ikke-menneskelig.

Selv om man bare er en sjel og en skjorte, kan skjorten skiftes for å gi et nytt kjønnsuttrykk. Man kan velge en maskulin skjorte med knappestolpe på høyre side, feminin skjorte med knappestolpe på venstre side, eller man kan velge en av de mange skjortene fra Shakespeare sin tid som ikke hadde knappestolpe i det hele tatt. Ved å tolke Ariel som ikkebinær utvikler vi forståelsen vår av hvordan kjønn ble forstått på Shakespeare sin tid og kan bli bevisst på hvordan vi tolker og fremstiller ikkebinært kjønn i vår egen tid.

### *Abstract in English*

This master's thesis argues that Ariel from Shakespeare's comedy *The Tempest* can best be understood as a nonbinary character. Ariel has been interpreted in various ways, and has historically been performed as a binary male or female spirit, often with costumes and make-up based on traditional English fairies. The text of the play does not contain much evidence that conclusively determines the airy spirit's sex or gender as one of the two human binary options. Conversely, the play contains multiple contradictory elements, such as Ariel's masculine (he/him) pronouns and feminine descriptions. Although scholars have discussed whether Ariel should be considered a male or female role/character, this discussion has rarely been approached from a trans perspective. Shakespeare did not use the same terminology as today, but my analysis of the text shows that the pronouns and inspiration sources Shakespeare used for Ariel include concepts that are recognisable in trans theory and lived experience today. Ariel's ambiguous gender expression and the discussions this facilitates align with existing discourse around gender-nonconformity and nonbinary-sexed creatures in Shakespeare's time.

Modern performances of *The Tempest* are returning to these discussions. Ariel has been performed by boy actors, young girls, women, and men respectively through previous eras, but since the turn of the twenty-first century a balanced amount of male and female actors have been cast in the role. I have found that the performance style has also changed. My thesis analyses how eleven modern productions perform Ariel as androgynous and/or nonhuman. Clothes may make the man, but Ariel shows that appearances are nothing more than illusions and that a costume change can give a person a new gender presentation. By interpreting Ariel as nonbinary we develop our understanding of how sex and gender were understood in Shakespeare's time and can thereby become more aware of how we interpret and perform nonbinary identity in our own time.

### *Acknowledgments*

I would like to thank my supervisors, Julia King and Professor Laura Saetveit Miles, for guiding me through the “curled clouds” (I.II.192) and “foaming brine” (I.II.211) that sometimes obscured my path and made me “divide and burn in many places” (I.II.198-199).

Thanks to their feedback my thesis hopefully “flamed amazement” (I.II.198).

I would also like to thank my friends and family for supporting me through long days at study hall and graciously listening to my ramblings about nonbinary spirits. They kept me from feeling “a fever of the mad” (I.II.209), “quit[ting] the vessel” (I.II.211), and yelling “Hell is empty, and all the devils are here!” (I.II.214-215) at my computer.

A few people have influenced my thesis, perhaps without knowing how significant their contributions were. First is Professor Kathryn Prince whose units on Shakespeare at UWA reignited my interest in Shakespeare, leading me to make a D&D one-shot based on *The Tempest* where I realised that I was unable to determine which sex to write on Ariel’s character sheet. The second is my grandmother, Suzanne, who has patiently watched at least sixteen versions of *The Tempest* with me and who always has new questions that lead to interesting discussions. Third, John-Wilhelm Flattun’s weekly “Shut up and Write” seminars provided much-needed structure, and his vast knowledge is astounding and priceless. Fourth, I would like to thank Philip Milnes-Smith from the Globe Archive who gave me access to archive recordings of productions of *The Tempest* at the Globe, without which I would not have been able to sufficiently analyse the actor notes in chapter four.

Finally, I would like to (pretentiously) thank Ariel. Without Ariel I would not be staring down at my MA thesis muttering to it and myself “That’s my noble master! What shall I do? Say what? What shall I do [now]?” (I.II.299-300). Without Ariel I might be able to speak in phrases *not* borrowed from *The Tempest*, but I am willing to trade modern vocabulary for a degree. Ariel has brought me much joy and soon I too can rest and sing:

After summer merrily.

Merrily, merrily shall I live now

Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

(V.I.92-94)

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### *List of Abbreviations*

AaA:	Adopt/Ask an Actor
AI:	Artificial intelligence
AMND:	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
BIPOC:	Black, Indigenous and people of colour
CGI:	Computer-generated imaging
RSC:	Royal Shakespeare Company
s.d.:	Stage direction
SWP:	Sam Wanamaker Playhouse
VR:	Virtual Reality
WWII:	World War Two

## Introduction.

The argument of this thesis can be condensed to three words: Ariel is nonbinary. Shakespeare's airy spirit was not written with many gendered attributes, and scholars and performers have interpreted Ariel as variably male or female. These binary interpretations have truth to them, but they fall short. One could argue that Ariel is male because of the use of he/his pronouns in the text. Conversely one could argue that Ariel is female because the spirit appears in female form as a nymph and a harpy and is never described as masculine. However, as this thesis will show, there is nothing in the text that identifies Ariel as exclusively male or exclusively female. I propose that the most accurate way of interpreting Ariel's ambiguous gender is by embracing the complexity rather than attempting to disambiguate which of two ill-fitting and incomplete options is most fitting. Although Shakespeare would not have used terminology like *nonbinary*, I use the term because Ariel's gender cannot be confined to binary human systems.<sup>1</sup> Chapter one discusses why the he/him pronouns referring to Ariel may be misleading, and I have therefore elected to use they/them pronouns for Ariel throughout this thesis. As a nonbinary English-major it seemed too good to be true that Shakespeare could have written Ariel as a positive example of a nonbinary character, but I have yet to find any evidence to the contrary.

Scholars have noted the inconsistency in Ariel's gender in text and performance, as will be discussed in chapters one and three. However, most scholars focus on determining why performances re-interpret Ariel as variously male, female, child-like or virile in different periods, or they examine individual performances they deem significant in changing Ariel's gendered performance style. Only recently have scholars like Ezra Horbury analysed Ariel with a trans perspective, that is, considering how Ariel fits into transgender concepts as they were understood in Shakespeare's time rather than examining the binary interpretations of the role. Ariel differs from Shakespeare's other fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – who are gender-conforming and enforce binary oppositions regarding how to raise their stolen child – and Shakespeare's cross-dressed characters – who, like Viola from *Twelfth Night*, end up in their correct gender role in a heterosexual marriage. Ariel stands out as a nonbinary nonhuman character who is accepted and applauded for their gender-nonconformity.

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<sup>1</sup> When I use “nonbinary” in this thesis it is as an umbrella-term for anything that is not binary – that is, exclusively male/masculine or female/feminine. It can refer to sex, gender, and more specific gender-identities such as genderfluid or agender.

This thesis tackles the question of Ariel's gender from a trans perspective by using trans historicism and modern trans theory to understand the concepts and influences at work. At the time of writing, trans debates are more visible than previously in mainstream culture and politics, highlighting how trans identity and gender-nonconformity are once again at the forefront of prejudices and fears about the Other dismantling established gender systems. In the academic sphere, queer theory, gender studies, and trans theory have become established fields that are relevant in many intersectional and interdisciplinary discussions, though many topics have not yet been explored through this framework. The aim of this thesis is to provide the foundation for further discussions of trans- and gender-nonconforming gender expression in Shakespeare's works by connecting historic and current trans concepts to how Ariel is presented as a nonbinary character in text and performance.

### The Development of Trans Theory and Transgender Discussions.

The developments in theatre from the 1990s onwards correlate with the development of trans theory and an increased visibility of trans people and trans issues in society. In the 1990s, the Internet provided a safe space for trans people to connect to a community and form a shared vocabulary unrestricted by geographic isolation.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously as trans people were connecting online, trans activism was becoming distinct from queer activism focused on sexual orientation. Leslie Feinberg's pamphlet "Trans Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come" (1992) was influential in establishing transgender activism as its own movement.<sup>3</sup> Trans and gender-nonconforming people – particularly trans feminine people and feminine gay men who were self-described "fairies" – have been involved in queer activism from the start, often functioning as the more visible and transgressive examples that cis and gender-conforming gay men could distance themselves from using rhetorics of respectability politics to convince cishet lawmakers that gays and lesbians are just like "regular people."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, trans issues were often overlooked or actively ignored to give rights to cisnormative queer people "within a homonormative political landscape."<sup>5</sup> Ariel's gender-nonconformity and nonhumanity function in a similar way, their

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now - From Foundations to Futures* (Red Globe Press, 2020). p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*. p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> Emma Heaney, *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Trans Feminine Allegory* (William Paterson University, 2017). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/11z5g0mz>. pp. 29-34.

<sup>5</sup> McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*. p. 168.

Otherness being used to define what is natural and acceptable. In contrast to many discussions about gender-nonconforming and trans people, Shakespeare does not portray Ariel's gender-nonconformity as immoral, less valuable, or less natural than the genders and humanity of human characters.

Trans studies and trans theory grew out of the increased cultural and political focus on distinguishing queer sexuality from queer gender in the 1990s, and terminology has shifted as the field evolved. Trans studies started out by focusing on using transsexual identity as a theoretical framework through which the "naturalness" of sex and gender could be discussed.<sup>6</sup> The term *transsexual* puts focus on a medical transition from one sex to another. This physical focus was formative in early trans theory, but as the focus shifted from conceptual ways of dismantling naturalised systems to focusing on diverse gender identities, many trans people and academics shifted to the term *transgender* because it prioritises gender identity over physical transition.<sup>7</sup> Because gender identity, gender expression, sex, and sexuality have been interpreted in different ways over time, cross-dressing and transvestism are relevant topics when discussing historic gender-nonconformity and transgender concepts. *Cross-dressing* is the act of dressing in clothing assigned to a sex different from one's own, and can be done by anyone, whereas *transvestism* is typically associated with people who were assigned male at birth dressing in women's clothes, often for sexual pleasure, but not necessarily.<sup>8</sup> Because the terminology changes over time and gender-nonconformity has often been a taboo topic, it can be impossible to determine the motivation behind cross-dressing and transvestism. They could be for fun, for pleasure, for performances, or they could be motivated by a transgender person's need to socially transition. Cross-dressing was common in Shakespeare's plays, both for characters and actors, and did not only involve gender but also class.<sup>9</sup> This thesis therefore analyses Ariel's gender-nonconformity through modern transgender concepts surrounding identity and approached with an understanding of the diverse implications and motivations related to cross-dressing in and outside the theatre. I use *trans* and *transgender* in reference to identity, concepts and experiences relating to an

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<sup>6</sup> McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*. p. 169.

<sup>7</sup> McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*. pp. 166-168.

<sup>8</sup> Heaney, *The New Woman*. pp. 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39, 4 (1988), <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-3222%28198824%2939%3A4%3C418%3ACTTAGS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O>. p. 421.

incongruence between birth sex and gender, and *cross-dressing* when discussing historical cases and the act of dressing in opposition with one's own identity no matter the motivation.

Judith Butler's theory of performative gender was formative to trans theory in the 1990s and clarifies how the ambiguous gendering of Ariel in the text intersects with audiences' instinctive attempts at determining Ariel's gender based on their perceived sex. Butler argues that gender is a series of actions with socially constructed and enforced meanings typically used to determine a person's sex. This is complicated by gender-nonconforming people such as butch lesbians, trans people, and intersex people. The question of Ariel's gender in performance is not only defined by the performance of gendered signifiers, but the audience's interpretation of the actor's sex. Butler writes:

If one thinks that one sees a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first term of each of those perceptions as the "reality" of gender: the gender that is introduced through the simile lacks "reality," and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance. In such perceptions in which an ostensible reality is coupled with an unreality, we think we know what the reality is, and take the secondary appearance of gender to be mere artifice, play, falsehood, and illusion.<sup>10</sup>

Conforming to the gender associated with one's birth sex is seen as natural, and gender-nonconformity is seen as Other and a concealment of the "real." Butler writes that "discrete genders are part of what "humanizes" individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right."<sup>11</sup> Ariel performs femininity when Prospero orders them to take on the illusory appearance of a nymph, a harpy, and – in some productions – Ceres. The shapes and illusions are framed within Ariel's nonhuman form and abilities. Therefore, I use "nonhuman" as a classification of Ariel's sex and gender expression.<sup>12</sup> Ariel's nonhumanity is precisely how their gender-nonconformity is conceptualised and accepted in the text. Ariel's genderfluidity (from a human perspective) is not seen as negative or unnatural like other gender-nonconformity because it is an expression of Ariel's nonhuman sex rather than a transgression of a known binary human sex.

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bergen-ebooks/detail.action?docID=710077>. p. xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. 190.

<sup>12</sup> I want to address the potentially harmful connotations of labelling someone's sex as nonhuman and clarify that Ariel *is* nonhuman (and a fictional character) and due to the transformative nature of their shapeshifting it would be inaccurate to attempt to disambiguate whether their "real sex" is male, female, or intersex or which of these human sexes they most closely resemble. To categorise Ariel's body and sex as human would be as reductionist as attempting to use human sexes to categorise the "real sex" of jellyfish, clownfish, mushrooms or other organisms that can change their sex or have multiple mating types.

This thesis analyses how modern performances lean into this nonhuman-nonbinary line of thinking to facilitate an interpretation of the “reality” of Ariel’s gender which can be separated from the actor’s sex. Christine Dymkowski was the editor for an edition of *The Tempest* published in 2000 which has been influential for many scholars writing about Ariel’s performance history. She provides overviews of performance trends and explains how different characters have been used to focus on changing topics over time. Her work shows how art and culture interact with relevant social and academic discussions. Since Dymkowski’s work was published in 2000 it does not cover trends, discussions, and performances after 1999. However, this thesis expands on her work and presents a new performance trend – where Ariel is performed as androgynous and/or nonhuman – that had its beginning in the 1990s when trans themes and discussions of gender were gaining independence from queer activism and queer studies. In the early 2000s when more people were openly discussing trans topics, the new performance trend became established, and has grown more pronounced as trans awareness has increased. However, few productions, reviewers, or academics have connected Ariel’s gender-nonconformity to the developments in culture and academics. The academic focus is different from the cultural debates, but they influence one another, and are both expressed through art. One of the goals of this thesis is to make this connection clear so that the gender-nonconformity in performance can be discussed properly in both academic spaces and in meetings between audience and production.

In the early 2000s trans studies became an established field of study with the “experience of trans identity and embodiment at its centre.”<sup>13</sup> This focus on identity as a lived experience (not only performative actions) has influenced the discussions about trans representation in media, history, and real life. McCann and Monaghan write that:

Since the 1990s, awareness of trans identity has become increasingly mainstream, leading the USA’s Time magazine to announce in 2014 that “the transgender tipping point” was upon us.<sup>14</sup>

The increase of openly trans celebrities, public figures, and characters on page and screen has resulted in increased visibility for trans people. This normalises transness as a human experience, but also makes transness a more visible target for those who fear change and gender diversity. The debate about trans people’s rights became an openly politically

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<sup>13</sup> McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*. p. 169.

<sup>14</sup> McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*. p. 173.

polarising issue in American politics in 2016 – the year that North Carolina passed the first bathroom bill. The bathroom bill – a bill restricting trans people’s access to bathrooms that correspond with their identity – was passed in March 2016, and similar bills and discussions became partisan issues during the 2016 US election.<sup>15</sup> Three production companies celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare’s death in the same year by performing *The Tempest*, two of which emphasise gender. Donmar Warehouse’s production focused on gender in the prison industrial system. The Royal Shakespeare Company used ground-breaking technology to construct digital projections of Ariel that could change form, thereby framing Ariel’s genderfluidity and nonhumanity as the centre of their marvellous magic abilities. Though neither production centred transgender, nonbinary, or genderfluid discussions in their promotional material, the productions themselves are part of a recent trend to stage gender-nonconformity through Ariel. It is not a coincidence that this trend happens as transness and gender-nonconformity become more visible in society. However, the productions themselves and most scholars have not connected those discussions. This thesis aims to move the discussion forward by merging Shakespeare and trans studies by examining gender, transgender concepts, and nonbinarity in *The Tempest*.

#### Ariel as Nonbinary on Page and Performance: Chapter Structure and Arguments.

This thesis covers gender systems in Shakespeare’s time and in our time in text and performance. Chapters one and two analyse how Ariel’s gender was presented and contextualised in the text of *The Tempest* whereas chapters three and four analyse the new androgynous-nonhuman trend in modern performances. This provides a broad framework within which developments in gender presentation and discussions can be compared while also giving enough space to thoroughly analyse the nuances and close-read examples.

Chapter one begins by establishing three different views on how gender-nonconformity was understood in Shakespeare’s time. With the understanding that nonbinarity was a known concept at the time, chapter one then examines potential textual and cultural sources for Ariel. The sources show that the inspiration for Ariel was drawn from a variety of nonhuman and agender/ambiguously gendered folkloric, mythic, and alchemical creatures. Finally, chapter one problematises the use of he/him pronouns in reference to Ariel

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<sup>15</sup> Brian S. Barnett, Ariana E. Nesbit, and Renée M. Sorrentino, “The Transgender Bathroom Debate at the Intersection of Politics, Law, Ethics, and Science,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online* 46, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.29158/jaapl.003761-18>. p. 232.

and the other spirits on the island by analysing linguistic changes in Shakespeare's time and the differentiation of object and human in third person pronouns.

Chapter two builds on the connection between Ariel's ambiguous gender and their nonhuman origin by arguing that "nonhuman" can be understood as a third sex- and gender category in *The Tempest*. This argument is first supported by how the other spirits on the island are depicted as genderfluid creatures that inhabit the borders between human and nonhuman metaphorically and physically. The two remaining parts of chapter two are close readings of how Prospero defines identity and enforces the gendered transition from youth to maturity for Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand.

Chapter three and four argue that Ariel's gender in modern performances reveal a new trend in Ariel's performance history. In this thesis *modern performances* refers to performances from 2000 and later. *Performance history* is defined as the conglomeration of expectations about a character's nature and performance style arising from previous performances, often through a combination of reviews and textual evidence. This is a combination of definitions and uses from Kathrine Steele Brokaw's essay "Ariel's Liberty," the Harvard Library research guide, and the way the term was used in Kathryn Prince's 2020 course "ENGL3602: Shakespeare on Page, Stage, Screen" at the University of Western Australia. Katherine Steele Brokaw defines performance history by writing:

Actors re-author characters every time they perform, and these characters are in turn seen by audiences — audiences that include directors and actors within them — whose understanding of a role like Ariel is rewritten with every new performance. Thus, actors create a genealogy for a role which is inherited by each new actor playing that role. Theatre reviewers and critics preserve the memories of these actors' bodies in performance, turning bodies back into texts in their reviews and performance histories.<sup>16</sup>

This definition highlights how each interpretation and performance is influenced by previous performances and will influence future interpretations. The Harvard Library research guide defines performance history as "an account of significant productions of a theatrical work" which can be studied through the use of articles, reviews, playbooks, design art and other similar primary sources in order to find out how an individual or a series of performances

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<sup>16</sup> Katherine Steele Brokaw, "Ariel's Liberty," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26, no. 1 (2008), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26347664>. p. 24.



were “significant or unique in terms of style, approach, or reception.”<sup>17</sup> Performance history is therefore both a field that can be studied and the amalgamation of expectations that each performer or audience member holds based on their preconceptions about the play or character.

Chapter three establishes the development of a new trend in Ariel’s performance history which I have discovered by comparing how Ariel’s gender is presented in eleven modern productions of *The Tempest*.<sup>18</sup> My analysis shows that none of these modern productions perform Ariel as a man or a woman – as has been done in previous eras of their performance history. Rather, the productions perform Ariel on a spectrum from androgynous to nonhuman. Although the performances do not all focus on gender, they all portray Ariel as gender-nonconforming, a trend which has evolved alongside the increased visibility of transness and trans topics in society, narratives, and politics.

Chapter four examines three of the productions from the Globe from a production perspective rather than an audience perspective by using rehearsal notes from the actors who played Ariel. These notes show that the actors and directors were conscious of Ariel’s gender as a nonbinary spirit in relation to the actor’s gender as binary humans. This chapter analyses the different challenges male and female actors face when taking on a nonbinary role with such a long and diverse history.

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<sup>17</sup> James Stanley. “Research Methods - Researching Performance Histories,” Theater, Dance, and Media at Harvard. Harvard, updated 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022, [https://guides.library.harvard.edu/tdm/performance\\_histories](https://guides.library.harvard.edu/tdm/performance_histories) (Research guide for theatre, dance, and media).

<sup>18</sup> An overview of all the productions and adaptations used in this thesis can be found in Appendix II.

## Chapter One:

### How Ariel's Gender was Understood in Shakespeare's Time.

ARIEL:           Your charm so strongly works 'em,  
                  That if you now beheld them, your affections  
                  Would become tender.

PROSPERO:                           Dost thou think so, spirit?

ARIEL:           Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO:                           And mine shall.  
                  Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling  
                  Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,  
                  One of their kind, that relish all as sharply  
                  Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art? (*Tempest*, V.I.17-24)<sup>19</sup>

This exchange between Prospero and Ariel sums up Ariel's function in the play. The spirit is used to define what is, or should be, human by comparison. By highlighting that Ariel's "affections / Would become tender" if they were human, the spirit implies that if Prospero cannot see his enemies as human beings deserving of empathy, then he cannot morally be considered "One of their kind." This form of defining oneself – or a general ideal – by first establishing an Other is common, and as this chapter will show, Shakespeare drew inspiration from other creatures with this purpose when creating Ariel's character. Prospero reminds the audience that although Ariel may look human and have the capacity for morals and empathy, they "art but air" and can never physically be human. Shakespeare combined nonhumanity and nonbinary sex and gender when he created Ariel so that they could function as an Other that could inform discussions of personhood, humanity, and individual identity.

Nonhumanity dictates how Ariel's gender is embodied and understood. Ariel is labelled "an airy spirit" in the *dramatis personae*, placed between Miranda and the roles performed by other spirits despite Ariel's central role and masculine pronouns which should place them alongside the male characters. By analysing the text of *The Tempest* in relation to theories about maturation, cross-dressing, and nonbinary creatures, we come closer to understanding how Shakespeare and his contemporaries used nonhumanity and gender-nonconformity to establish the line between "normal" and Other. Although the terminology was different, the *concept* of nonbinarity existed in early modern Europe.

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<sup>19</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller, ed. Peter Holland, The Pelican Shakespeare, (New York: Penguin Books, 2016). All citations of *The Tempest* are from this edition unless otherwise noted.

This chapter provides the theoretical groundwork for understanding that although Shakespeare did not have the same terminology as exists today for trans and intersex people, nor the same understanding of gender and gender roles, we can combine findings from a variety of fields to put together an understanding of how Shakespeare and his contemporaries viewed gender-nonconformity on stage, in fiction, and in historical sources. Section 1.1 combines theories about youth and transgender fairies in fiction with the reception of cross-dressing in early modern England and the concept of foreign monstrous races with bodies outside the typical gender binary and the division between human and nonhuman. Section 1.2 examines some inspirations for Ariel, finding that none of them are traditionally gendered. Section 1.3 analyses the changes to grammar which made *his* and *its* ambiguous, analyses how the text differentiates humans from spirits through his/it, and argues that the pronouns in the stage directions are not reliable evidence for gendering Ariel.

### 1.1: Existing Scholarship about an Early Modern Understanding of Gender.

As Ezra Horbury explains in their 2021 article “Early Modern Transgender Fairies” the early modern period has been largely omitted from the recent increase of trans studies in literary studies.<sup>20</sup> In addition to Horbury’s work, I therefore draw upon two scholars whose work is relevant but not clearly defined as early modern trans studies. David Cressy’s article “Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England” from 1996 is a foundational work to understand not only the understanding of gender and cross-dressing in Shakespeare’s time, but also the differing opinions held by scholars in different literary and cultural fields regarding how gender was understood during and leading up to the Reformation. Leah DeVun’s 2021 book *The Shape of Sex* contextualises how nonbinary sex and gender were represented and used in the literature that Shakespeare likely had access to and used as inspiration for exotic settings. Using Horbury, Cressy, and DeVun as my main framework for my analysis of gender in Shakespeare’s time, I analyse the portrayal of Ariel’s gender in the

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<sup>20</sup> Ezra Horbury, “Early Modern Transgender Fairies,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-8749596>. pp. 75-77. This statement is also supported by the efforts of Simone Chess, Will Fisher, and Colby Gordon who have collected a bibliography of early modern trans scholarship ([https://docs.google.com/document/d/17CZYlay6h83JC\\_-owm9GJG\\_fDr6BsR4PWYJ6eOBr2cU/mobilebasic](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17CZYlay6h83JC_-owm9GJG_fDr6BsR4PWYJ6eOBr2cU/mobilebasic), accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022) which at the time of writing lists fifty-nine works between 1985 and 2022 relevant to early modern England (ten of which are written by Chess, Fisher and Gordon themselves). There are one-hundred and eighteen works on the list in total covering England in early modern and medieval times, general/continental early modern and medieval times, early American, and seven miscellaneous/overview works.

text of *The Tempest*, showing that the concept of nonbinary sex and identity was more commonplace in early modern England than previously thought.

While Cressy does not recognise the possibility that individual cross-dressing was undertaken due to what we now understand as trans identity, I apply the context he provides about cross-dressing in theatre and society to the trans concepts in Shakespeare's depiction of Ariel. Ariel differs from other cross-dressed or potentially trans characters at the time due to Ariel's lack of romantic intent and the fact that their feminine presentation is never mocked. Although there is no way of knowing exactly how Shakespeare and his contemporaries understood gender, Cressy uses legal records and Puritan pamphlets to argue that gender-nonconformity on stage was largely portrayed as harmless trickery leading to humiliation of the cross-dresser, rather than the Puritanical portrayal as insidious and predatory. Cressy argues that cross-dressing "was not so transgressive as critics and scholars have suggested" because theatres and cross-dressed actors were used to explore androgyny and (male) homosexuality in a safe way.<sup>21</sup> The stereotypical idea of cross-dressing in Elizabethan and Jacobean England is that female sex workers and lower working-class women would cross-dress in the streets, while male cross-dressing was kept to the stage and was heavily critiqued or censored.<sup>22</sup>

However, Cressy found that usually on stage "the cross-dressing is played for laughs, without suggestion of a gender system in trouble."<sup>23</sup> Here "cross-dressing" does not include boy actors dressed as women, for that was an expected part of the suspension of disbelief required for any story. Other cases of off-stage cross-dressing present a more relaxed, jesting, and merry attitude than was presented in Puritan pamphlets. The cases that ended in court were punished with extremely light sentences and were more concerned with potential social disorder – due to drunkenness and shenanigans – than with offending God's will on the basis

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<sup>21</sup> David Cressy, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *The Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 4 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.1086/386118>. p. 429. The "critics and scholars" Cressy refer to include Jean Howards, to whose 1988 article "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," Cressy's article is a response. He also lists existing research from literary scholars Linda Woodbridge, Laura Levine, Lisa Jardine, David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, Phyllis Rackin, Stephen Greenblatt, Mary Beth Rose, Stephen Orgel, Katherine E. Kelly, Steve Brown, Ursula K. Heise, Susan Zimmerman, and Michael Shapiro who all have influential opinions on cross-dressing in early modern England, and includes two articles by Anthony Fletcher as his only examples of non-literary historical engagement in early modern gender (Cressy, "Gender Trouble." pp. 439-440n3).

<sup>22</sup> Cressy, "Gender Trouble." p. 438.

<sup>23</sup> Cressy, "Gender Trouble." p. 453.

of unseemly clothes unless the cross-dressing took place in specifically religious spaces.<sup>24</sup> It seems cross-dressing was largely permitted in public but punished if brought to church. Overall, Cressy argues that previous literary scholars have overstated the transgressive nature of cross-dressing in early modern England and attempts a more historicist approach. Since Ariel's potential cross-dressing as a nymph and harpy are done at the bidding of Prospero, their "noble master" (I.II.299) and without intent of humiliation, the gender-nonconformity would thus be considered acceptable.

Horbury presents an alternative explanation for why Ariel's gender-nonconformity avoids the labels "predatory" and "transgressive" by establishing the concept of nonbinary youthful fairies. Horbury argues that transgender and gender-nonconforming fairies are acceptable when they are children because children in the early modern period were already considered separate from the binary adult gender matrix.<sup>25</sup> Children were largely seen as equal until boys underwent their transition into men through social transition – such as donning masculine clothes, separating from the household sphere, and receiving an education – and physical changes – such as puberty and corporeal punishment as a form of discipline. Gender nonconformity was acceptable for children because they did not yet have a binary gender they were expected to adhere to. Therefore, Horbury argues that youthful fairies were largely seen as harmless pranksters or servants, and as mischievous nonbinary youths.

Shakespeare's youthful characters are only morally successful if they grow up, but trans characters are only acceptable when they are young. Marjorie Garber argues that refusals to grow up in Shakespeare indicate lack of morality and emotional maturity as well as a resistance to natural and social order.<sup>26</sup> Miranda is a prime example of a youthful character transitioning to maturity, but all four youths in *The Tempest* – Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand – are characterised by individuation and their desires for new personal relationships:

The pattern of sexual maturation in Shakespeare is one of deliberate separation – a movement away from group identification either with peers or with a nuclear family unit, freeing the individual to contract new bonds. And this pattern of individuation is closely linked to a characteristically Shakespearean concern for fertility and the cycle

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<sup>24</sup> Cressy, "Gender Trouble." pp. 462-463.

<sup>25</sup> Horbury, "Early Modern Transgender Fairies." p. 77. Horbury explains that they "use *transgender* as a catch-all for forms of gender instability, rather than as a term designating identity." I use the term in the same way here.

<sup>26</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare* (London: Methuen & Co, 1981). p. 33.

of nature, the renewal of life and the procreation of the ancestral lineage achieved, perhaps paradoxically, by a necessary act of separation from that lineage.<sup>27</sup>

As Garber points out in a later chapter, Caliban is an example of failed maturation, as evident by his childlike lack of knowledge and a refusal to adopt civilised language.<sup>28</sup> Ariel is also, in a way, an example of failed maturity, because they do not seek sexual or romantic relationships, and they are eternally childlike – likely having remained a child longer than Caliban. Garber says that “any hint of stasis, or resistance to the cyclical pattern of growth and decay, maturity and morality, is highly suspect and leads to disaster.”<sup>29</sup> However, the acceptability of Ariel’s gender-nonconformity relies on their youth. As Horbury suggests, trans characters are acceptable when their gender-nonconformity is deemed part of youthful exploration.<sup>30</sup> Older fairies, however, pose a potential sexual threat and can only be acceptable if they – like Oberon and Titania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* – firmly adhere to binary gender roles and are sufficiently humiliated for non-heterosexual sexual deviance or desire. The difference in reception between young and old gender-nonconforming fairies is, as Horbury argues, an example of early modern transphobia and the same type of transmisogyny still prevalent to this day.<sup>31</sup> *Transmisogyny* refers to the kind of misogyny directed at transfeminine people and trans women “with the charge of either artificial or inadequate womanhood and the imperative to prove one’s womanhood.”<sup>32</sup> I draw on Horbury’s research on nonbinary fairies as evidence that a trans reading of spirits and fairies is realistic for the early modern period and use Ariel’s youth as a determining factor in why it was seen as acceptable and natural for them to be nonbinary.

Leah DeVun’s book examines how nonbinary-sexed bodies in illustrations and on maps were used as a hypothetical concept in moral and philosophical thought from genesis to the renaissance. Scholars such as J. Milton French state as widely agreed upon fact that Shakespeare used the maps and tales that DeVun discusses from *Mandeville’s Travels* and Pliny as the inspiration for Othello’s stories and travels in *Othello* I.III.<sup>33</sup> Much of the discussion in DeVun’s book pertains to people and characters who would be called intersex

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<sup>27</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. pp. 30-31.

<sup>28</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. pp. 99-100.

<sup>29</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> Horbury, “Early Modern Transgender Fairies.” pp. 78-81.

<sup>31</sup> Horbury, “Early Modern Transgender Fairies.” pp. 81-82.

<sup>32</sup> Heaney, *The New Woman*. p. xiii.

<sup>33</sup> J. Milton French, “Othello among the Anthropophagi,” *PMLA* 49, no. 3 (1934), <https://doi.org/10.2307/458379>. p. 807.

today, but also covers figures whose gender is ambiguous or whose actions and identity are closer to what we could label as transgender. DeVun uses the term *nonbinary* to cover all these variations, and uses *monstrous races* in reference to the depictions of hermaphrodites, blemmyes, anthropophagi etc. on maps and in illustrations accompanying encyclopedias and travel narratives.<sup>34</sup> When using the term *monstrous races* to describe the discussion surrounding nonbinary-sexed figures inhabiting fourteenth century maps like *Mandeville's Travels*, DeVun draws on a combination of trans studies, monster studies, and critical animal studies.<sup>35</sup> She argues that medieval scholars and theorists would use the transgression of binaries that these monsters represented as the basis for defining who did – and did not – qualify as human, some focusing on the physical aspects and others on the mental faculties and the potential for a human soul.<sup>36</sup>

As will be discussed in depth in chapter two, Ariel and the other spirits on the island resemble DeVun's monstrous races in addition to their resemblance to traditional folkloric fairies and elemental spirits. Therefore, their nonhumanity is used to define what it means to be a moral human. Depictions of mythic hermaphrodites divided humans from nonhumans as well as separating the reader from the monsters geographically, "placing the monstrous races at a distance – at the earth's most remote edges."<sup>37</sup> This is similar to the geographic isolation of the island in *The Tempest*. Concepts of foreign monstrous races that were physically separate from European humans were used as hypothetical thought experiments to define humanity before the renaissance. By combining the acceptable youthful cross-dressing Cressy and Horbury discuss with Leah DeVun's findings about illustrations of and discussions about nonbinary-sexed beings, we see that it is reasonable to expect that Shakespeare was aware of not only gender-nonconformity through cross-dressing, but also nonbinary-sexed bodies in fairy tales, mythology, and reality.

Even if early modern England was aware of nonbinary sex and gender and had a (mostly) forgiving attitude towards cross-dressing and other playful gender-nonconformity, it

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<sup>34</sup> DeVun clarifies the distinctions and explains the complexities of using modern terminology when discussing ideas from centuries ago in: Leah DeVun, *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance* (New York, New York State: Columbia University Press, 2021). pp. 7-10.

<sup>35</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 42-43, 223n9-10.

<sup>36</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 43-44, 224n21. For example, she compares Ratramnus of Corbie, Peter Abelard, and Augustine of Hippo's acceptance of rationality over physicality to Thomas of Cantimpré and Honorius of Autun's rejection of rational potential due to physical limitations.

<sup>37</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 46. For a discussion about the use of the term *hermaphrodite* see DeVun pp. 7-11, 211n20, 212n31-35.

is in no way my intention to say that Shakespeare had the same concept of nonbinary identity as exists today. This thesis also argues that Ariel's nonbinarity is an aspect of their nonhumanity and that this makes their gender-nonconformity acceptable. Therefore, I often equate nonhuman and nonbinary when analysing Ariel's gender identity, sex, and gender expression. That is not to imply that nonhuman is always nonbinary, nor that nonbinary is nonhuman. It is merely a reflection of how Ariel's sex and gender were presented and understood and is not a reflection of real trans, gender-nonconforming, genderfluid, or nonbinary people in Shakespeare's time or today. Based on Cressy, Horbury, and DeVun's research it is evident that there existed multiple ways of understanding gender-nonconformity in fiction, daily life, and philosophical debates in Shakespeare's time. Ariel falls within the category of myth and fiction, so their nonbinary nature is acceptable to the audience as a tool for discussion and as a result of youthful gender expression. However, Ariel is real to Prospero who is attempting to civilise his servants and the island itself. Prospero therefore attempts to categorise Ariel, whose usefulness comes from their elemental nature, outside human gender roles linguistically, physically, and socially so Ariel's nonbinarity does not affect Prospero's efforts to maintain human gender binaries. Prospero does not use pronouns for Ariel but uses feminine descriptions and asks Ariel to disguise themselves as female creatures despite Ariel using masculine pronouns. As stated above, Ariel is not a traditional English/Greco-Roman fairy like the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, nor are they human enough to be entirely based on the monstrous races on foreign maps. Therefore, we must examine other sources that may have inspired Ariel to understand how their gender-nonconformity is contextualised as natural and acceptable.

### 1.2: Mystical Origins: Ariel as Nonhuman.

Shakespeare's text does not tell us much about Ariel's true form, nor their origin. W. Stacy Johnson examined what sort of spirit Ariel is and how Shakespeare's audience would have interpreted Ariel. Johnson writes:

The problem as to whether he [Ariel] is a demon, angel, or symbolic creation can best be approached not according to his motivation, since he is represented as being subordinate to Prospero's will, but according to his name, manner of performance, and status *as* an elemental servant.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> W. Stacy Johnson, "The Genesis of Ariel," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1951), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2866652>. p. 205 (italics in original).



Shakespeare's audience typically understood magic and the occult as either an alchemical pursuit of "ascending toward spiritual unity with the divine," or in an orthodox context where magic stems from either God or Satan.<sup>39</sup> Magicians used aerial and elemental spirits, and Johnson writes that "the use of such a spirit would apparently be consistent with the work of causing a tempest."<sup>40</sup> This section examines potential sources for Ariel and analyses how invisibility and Ariel's song "where the bee sucks" elucidates the tensions caused by Prospero's reliance on a nonhuman and gender-nonconforming servant whom he wishes to keep secret. I argue that by establishing Ariel as a moral nonhuman creature whose gender-nonconformity and shapeshifting is useful, Shakespeare portrays Ariel's nonbinarity as natural, acceptable, and cherished by Prospero.

Johnson explains that the name Ariel is connected to the occult and the biblical. "The name itself may, in turn, be associated in memory with the Bible passage concerning voices from the earth, thunder, and a tempest."<sup>41</sup> Johnson also points out similarities in the stories in Isaiah xxix in the Geneva Bible and Bishops' Bible and the report Ariel provides about how they sunk the ship as well as the banquet scene where Ariel appears as a harpy.<sup>42</sup> The name itself holds angelic connotations through the epithet *-el*, meaning God, thus linking Ariel with angels – an established and respected host of genderqueer creatures.<sup>43</sup> However, in Jewish demonology Ariel is a water spirit, and Johnson argues that Shakespeare could have taken the character directly from the *Stenographia* of Trithemius where Ariel is one of the elemental spirits under a magician's command.<sup>44</sup> Johnson mentions that Ariel may be a neutral spirit who is either good or evil depending on who they serve. However, Ariel is not portrayed as morally influenced by either of their masters, considering they remind Prospero to reconsider his affection towards fellow humans (V.I.17-24). Prospero describes Ariel as "a spirit too delicate / To act her [Sycorax's] earthy and abhorrent commands" (I.II.272-273) with a moral compass strong enough that she imprisoned Ariel for "Refusing her grand hests" (I.II.274). This distances Ariel from the occult inspiration, but I hesitate to equate Ariel with Christian

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<sup>39</sup> Johnson, "The Genesis of Ariel." p. 205.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, "The Genesis of Ariel." p. 210.

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, "The Genesis of Ariel." p. 210.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, "The Genesis of Ariel." p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> Angels themselves are neither male nor female, for they were not created like humans. However, when they show themselves in human form, they typically appear male, and the Bible uses masculine pronouns, for example for Gabriel in Luke 1:11-19. This contrasts Ariel who typically appears as female creatures (at Prospero's bidding) despite using masculine pronouns.

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, "The Genesis of Ariel." p. 206.

angels or demons because Ariel himself uses Roman mythology in their comparisons, even claiming to be more powerful than Jove and Neptune (I.II.198-206). That type of claim would not befit an angel or an obedient servant of a god, and Ariel has shown too much empathy to be an evil spirit. Shakespeare may have taken inspiration from religious and occult texts and stories with angels and spirits called Ariel and combined it with Roman and English myth and folklore based on the references and comparisons Ariel, Prospero, and Gonzalo make.

Ariel's true form is hidden from both Prospero and the audience, for Prospero needs to suppress Ariel's independence and personal desires. As Ariel dresses Prospero as *his* true self, Milan, Ariel sings about *their* true self:

*Ariel sings and helps to attire him [as Duke of Milan].*

ARIEL

Where the bee sucks, there suck I;  
In a cowslip's bell I lie;  
There I couch when owls do cry.  
On the bat's back I do fly  
After summer merrily.  
Merrily, merrily shall I live now  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

PROSPERO

Why that's my dainty Ariel! I shall miss thee,  
But thou shalt have freedom; so, so, so.  
To the king's ship, invisible as thou art! (V.I.87s.d.-97)

This is the first time we hear about Ariel's desires after servitude, and the short song and Prospero's response give much information about their relationship and Ariel's true form. Ariel's desires are peaceful and whimsical. The activities reveal that Ariel prefers a small size, somewhere between an English pixie and a bee. We can also discern that Ariel can survive on pollen like a bee, or perhaps like nectar and ambrosia that the Greek gods eat and drink. By establishing Ariel's desires and liberated existence as nonthreatening and with minimal use of the spirit's elemental and shapeshifting powers, the song assures Prospero and the audience that Ariel will not threaten social order once they are released. Prospero's response affirms this by labelling Ariel and their desires as "dainty" before reminding them that they are still within Prospero's service by the implied "not yet" when he says "But thou shalt have freedom; so, so, so." Prospero then reiterates the importance of Ariel remaining "invisible as thou art" so that they cannot be traced back to Prospero despite his reliance on Ariel's shapeshifting and magic. Ariel reveals their true self as they dress Prospero up as his

former self, thus revealing that the appearance of both characters at the end of the song are illusory. Prospero is no longer the same duke, but he wears his old costume as he steps into the role of duke and leaves behind the role of the magician, whereas Ariel reveals that the airy figure that Prospero and the audience have seen on stage throughout the play is not actually the spirit's preferred appearance. "Where the bee sucks" reveals Prospero's dependence on maintaining control over Ariel's appearance while establishing Ariel's fluid body as non-threatening.

Ariel's origins are a combination of many sources, each complicating the spirit's relationship with human gender roles and presentations. The name may have biblical or occult origin and is reminiscent of angels and the air. Elemental spirits appear in many sources, and Shakespeare seems to have combined these with fairies and pixies from English folklore to create a spirit that is simultaneously foreign and mystical but still recognisable to an English audience. The tension between Prospero's fear of and reliance on feminine nonhumanity is alleviated by the affirmation that Ariel's femininity stems from obedience to Prospero and the reassurance that Ariel does not wish to use their magic nor their gender-nonconformity and shapeshifting to oppose Prospero's power. Although we do not know whether Shakespeare intended Ariel's shapeshifting as an indication of genderqueerness, Ariel's nonbinarity is presented as a natural and positive effect of their nonhumanity. Many of the sources are genderless and nonhuman, and all Ariel's appearances are illusions, so there is no way of knowing how they interpret gender. Attempting to label Ariel as either male or female is impossible due to the number of incongruous indications of gender and the genderless or genderfluid sources of inspiration. As will be discussed in chapters two and three, this means that Ariel's nonbinary gender can best be understood as "nonhuman" since their feminine, masculine, androgynous, and ungendered traits all stem from the fact that they are not human.

### 1.3: The Pronoun Problem: Grammatical Changes, Autonomy, and Credibility.

The only seemingly concrete indication of Ariel's gender in the text is the use of three masculine pronouns. However, due to the changes in the English language at the time, the pronouns had a different meaning than they do today. I argue that the changes to the pronouns *its* and *his* means that Ariel's use of *his* could be interpreted as a potentially ungendered pronoun for themselves and other spirits. As Horbury writes:

To conclude that Ariel's use of "his" grants Ariel a male gender is not only to ignore early modern pronoun usage, but to arbitrarily privilege such pronoun use over Ariel's choice of physically female forms, as well as insisting that Ariel should conform to human understandings of gender rather than the very different sphere of fairy gender.<sup>45</sup>

While I agree with Horbury's dismissal of using pronouns as the sole tool for identification, my thesis argues that the feminine forms we see Ariel in throughout the play are not the spirit's choice, but Prospero's. Horbury's reading of Ariel as one of three examples of early modern transgender fairy gender is brief but skims the surface of many areas. I expand upon their analysis of trans and gender-nonconforming concepts in early modern pronouns and interpretations of youth and fairies. My analysis of pronouns reveals that Shakespeare used different systems of linguistic gender when writing dialogue based on how educated and high-ranking the speaking character was. As discussed in the previous section, Ariel's youth and shapeshifting as a spirit place them in a fluid gender-category, thereby situating Ariel's gender in liminal spaces linguistically and physically. This section starts by contextualising the linguistic changes to possessive pronouns and grammatical gender in Shakespeare's time through linguistic research. Then I analyse how *his* and *its* differentiates human from nonhuman. Ralph Crane likely wrote the two stage directions that use "he" and "his" in reference to Ariel as a harpy, therefore I problematise the credibility of their use in gendering Ariel. Finally, I have included an overview over what pronouns modern scholars and actors use to reference Ariel.

During Shakespeare's lifetime third-person pronouns underwent a change to distinguish the use of *his* referring to objects and *his* referring to male humans as English departed from using grammatical gender. As linguist Terttu Nevalainen explains: "the third-person singular non-personal pronoun generalised its weak subject form *it* to both subject and object functions, so losing its strong variant *hit* and the old neuter objective case form *him*."<sup>46</sup> Nevalainen explains this as part of the shift from grammatical gender – a system where nouns are grammatically gendered through for example inflection – to natural or notional gender – a system which uses the gender of the referent rather than grammar to indicate gender. Nevalainen goes on to explain that:

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<sup>45</sup> Horbury, "Early Modern Transgender Fairies." p. 80.

<sup>46</sup> Terttu Nevalainen, "Nouns and Pronouns," in *Introduction to Early Modern English* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006). p. 80 (italics in original).

the problem that Early Modern English speakers had even after the levelling of the object forms of *it* was the non-personal possessive *his*, which coincided with the masculine possessive *his* ... This clash between personal and non-personal gender was resolved by the introduction of the new possessive form *its*.<sup>47</sup>

This form of *its* was first used in 1598 and became standardised in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>48</sup> The change happened during Shakespeare's career though he used *its* occasionally in plays before 1598. Looking at the use of *its/his* pronouns in *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, and *Twelfth Night*, I have found a pattern where noble and well-educated characters use *its* and *itself* regularly while lower class and uneducated characters typically use grammatical gender.<sup>49</sup> Shakespeare frequently used grammatical gender even after English had transitioned to notional gender. Ariel is a living, breathing, intelligent being and it therefore makes sense for them to self-identify with a neutral *his* than to mark themselves as an object by using *its*.

Shakespeare was a regular user of grammatical gender in personification, and there are several examples in *The Tempest* where the pronoun *his* is used in place of *its* for non-person objects. The most prominent is I.II.295 when Prospero says "his knotty entrails" when referring to an oak. A footnote clarifies "**295 his its.**"<sup>50</sup> Other instances where he/him pronouns are used for inanimate objects are: "a strange fish" (II.I.112-113), "yond black cloud" (II.II.20-21), and a fish that turns out to be Caliban (II.II.25-26). He/him is also used for people of undetermined gender: passengers or crew on the Neapolitan ship (I.II.207-208), one of Prospero's spirits which turns out to be Trinculo (II.II.17), and an invisible taborer (III.II.151). Ariel uses "his" when referring to himself (I.II.193), the personification of conspiracy (II.I.300-301), and the other spirits (IV.I.46).<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare used *his* frequently

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<sup>47</sup> Nevalainen, "Nouns and Pronouns." p. 81.

<sup>48</sup> Nevalainen, "Nouns and Pronouns." p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> I looked at cases of *its* and *itself* and did not include *it* because it is not within the scope of this master's thesis to undertake such an extensive study. I used the PDFs from Folger Shakespeare and have not accounted for potential variation in other editions. *AMND* has no cases of *its* or *itself*, and there is no use of *its* in *Macbeth*, *Othello*, or *Twelfth Night*. The plays that use *its* on its own are: *Hamlet* where Horatio refers to the Ghost of Old Hamlet with *its* (I.II.227) and Hamlet refers to the unknown person (Ophelia) in the coffin with *its* (V.I.228); *King Lear* where Albany uses *its* when chastising Goneril (IV.II.41); *Measure for Measure* where First Gentleman asks Heaven for *its* peace (I.II.4); *Romeo and Juliet* where the Nurse refers to young Juliet with *its* (I.III.57); and *The Tempest* where Prospero, Ferdinand, and Gonzalo are the only ones who use *its* (I.II.115, I.II.471, II.I.179).

<sup>50</sup> Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. ed. Peter Holland. p. 17n295.

<sup>51</sup> Ariel also refers to Neptune, Prospero, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, and Alonso with "his" but that is expected.



not know if Ariel sleeps, but they certainly dream of freedom. The distinction between human and spirit may not be as clear as Prospero presents it. Shakespeare must therefore remind the audience that Prospero upholds the division linguistically. Immediately after differentiating between humans and spirits through Ferdinand's pronouns and physiology, Prospero thanks Ariel by saying "Spirit, fine spirit, I'll free thee / Within two days for this" (I.II.421-422), thereby defining Ariel as a spirit and servant. "Spirit" places Ariel in a physically different gender system to humans, and Ariel's position as servant places them in a different linguistic gender system than the noble and well-educated characters.

The central discussion throughout Ferdinand's introduction is disambiguating binary oppositions in identity through shared language. Ferdinand asks Miranda whether she is a goddess or maid, and when she answers "certainly a maid" (I.II.429) he forgets his initial question and instead comments on her ability to speak his language (I.II.422-431). Prospero then uses Ferdinand's claims of linguistic prowess to make Ferdinand self-identify as the new king of Naples. The proper and enthusiastic use of a shared language as the source of belonging in this encounter contrasts Caliban's rejection of Prospero and Miranda's attempts at teaching him their language as a way of civilising him and turning him more human.

I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour  
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but would'st gabble like  
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes  
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,  
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures  
Could not abide to be with...

CALIBAN

You taught me language, and my profit on't  
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
For learning me your language! (I.II.353-365)

Ferdinand's claims of being "the best of them that speak this speech" (I.II.430) identify him as a peer, whereas Caliban's rejection of and intentional misuse of language mark him as Other. Ariel, however, is fluent in Prospero's language, but regularly struggles with the human aspects of it. They describe characters with nonhuman imagery throughout, but notably as a way of convincing Prospero to remember that his prisoners are human and that if Prospero forgets their humanity he will lose his own humanity and be as

nonhuman/inhumane as Ariel.<sup>52</sup> Since Ariel is written as a fluent speaker and adept communicator, their use of pronouns should be interpreted as seeming intentional. Ariel's use of the older form *his* could show an attempt at assimilating to the binary genders of a human system Ariel does not understand, or it could be used as a neutral pronoun for a spirit who does not want to label themselves as an object without agency.

Although the above analysis places much significance on the linguistic changes at the time, we must also consider the role of spelling mistakes and editing. Scholars have suggested that the stage directions – which are uncharacteristically elaborate yet unhelpful in directing and instructing the players – were likely edited and expanded by the King's Men's scrivener Ralph Crane when he transcribed *The Tempest*.<sup>53</sup> John Jowett argues that the unique vocabulary – which deviates from Shakespeare's usually helpful addition of new adjectives – as well as the frequent use of parenthesis are signs that the stage directions were not written by Shakespeare, but by someone more intent on making a script engaging for a reader than an actor.<sup>54</sup> These are also common traits found in Crane's transcriptions, and Jowett analyses fifteen stage directions that he suspects Crane expanded from the original. Both stage directions relating to Ariel as a harpy are included in Jowett's list. This use of masculine pronouns in reference to Ariel as a harpy – a mythological creature who is part bird and part human female – is another example of pronouns not aligning with appearance. The stage directions which introduce the spirits were, according to Jowett, likely “elaborately reconstructed by Crane” and we must therefore be cautious in assuming that any part of the descriptive stage directions in this scene were entirely as Shakespeare wrote them.<sup>55</sup> This includes the use of pronouns relating to Ariel as a harpy, thus potentially rendering void two thirds of the instances of assumed gendering of the airy spirit.

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<sup>52</sup> Daniel R. Gibbons, “Inhuman Persuasion in *The Tempest*,” *Studies in Philology* 114, no. 2 (2017), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90002150>. pp. 304-305.

<sup>53</sup> Horbury, “Early Modern Transgender Fairies.” p. 80; Paul Yanchin. “Critical Introduction - *The Tempest*,” University of Victoria, updated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021, [https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Tmp\\_GenIntro/index.html](https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Tmp_GenIntro/index.html). section 9; William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. J. S. Bratton and Julie Hankey, ed. Christine Dymkowski, Shakespeare in Production, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000). p. 3. For an in depth analysis, see John Jowett, “New Created Creatures: Ralph Crane and the Stage Directions in ‘*The Tempest*’,” *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983).

<sup>54</sup> Jowett, “New Created Creatures.” pp. 110-111.

<sup>55</sup> Jowett, “New Created Creatures.” p. 112.



Looking closer at what parts of the stage directions that were likely influenced by Crane, we see that he likely did not leave much of the original direction, if there was any.<sup>56</sup>

*Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariell (like a Harpey) claps his wings upon the Table, and with a quiuent deuice the Banquet vanifhes.*<sup>57</sup>

*He vanifhes in Thunder : then (to foft Muficke.) Enter the fhapes againe, and dance (with mockes and mowes) and carrying out the Table.*<sup>58</sup>

The use of “*quiuent deuice*”, the vague description of the shapes in III.III.19 s.d. and III.III.82 s.d. and the lack of instruction in “*He vanifhes in Thunder*” are all examples of the narrative focus typical of Crane, rather than the instructional description expected from Shakespeare. Additionally, Crane’s interference can be seen through the use of round brackets and the word *with* in “(with mockes and mowes)” and Jowett suggests that “Crane may have been so preoccupied with adding content to the direction that he dropped part of it – in this instance ‘*exeunt*’” by potentially muddling the phrases *exeunt carrying out the Table* and *carrying out the Table they depart* in line with the previous departure of the Shapes.<sup>59</sup> Crane also – presumably – mistakenly wrote *he* referring to Sycorax in I.II.282, though this is usually edited to *she* in most publications. Though it is impossible to say with certainty what the intentions of two people in the early seventeenth century intended or overlooked, we should acknowledge that the use of masculine pronouns when referring to Ariel in the stage directions cannot be used to argue that Ariel is male.

The dubious reliability of the pronouns is apparent when examining what pronouns modern scholars and other authors use when referring to Ariel. Chart 1.1 (below) shows the division of pronouns used for Ariel in texts referenced in this thesis. In addition to scholarly works, it includes actors’ notes and non-academic works, but not adaptations of *The Tempest* because I am interested in what pronouns people use when discussing Ariel as a character, not their word choice when adapting the play. For the sake of scope, I have limited the corpus

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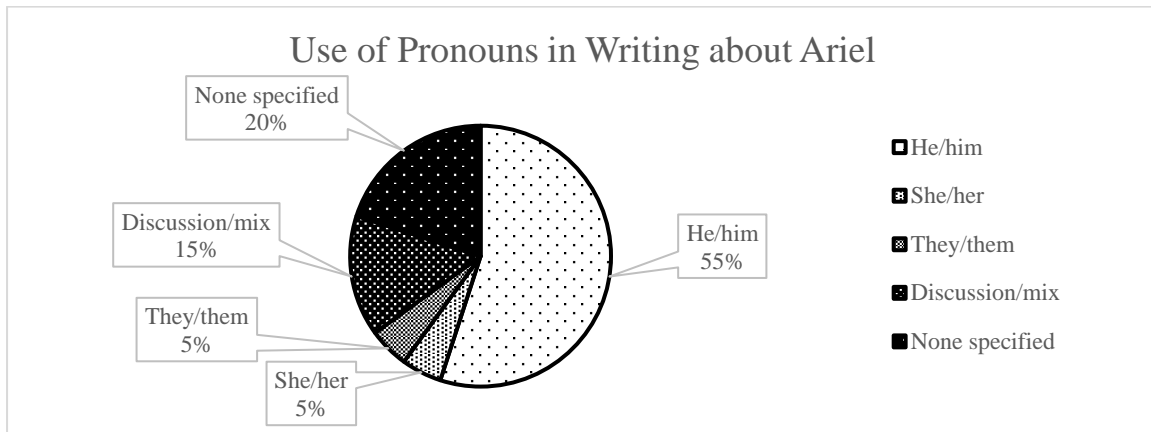
<sup>56</sup> As Jowett notes, scholars such as Howard-Hill and W.W. Greg have hypothesised that Crane’s edition may have been a prompt book, but that the lack of helpful direction – particularly *with a quiuent deuice* – makes this theory unlikely. Jowett comments that Crane used the literary aspects of the play – such as titles and descriptions used later in the play – to make his stage directions appealing to a reader, and “that he might not notice the need for directions when they were missing in his copy.” (Jowett, “New Created Creatures.” p. 115).

<sup>57</sup> William Shakespeare, Digital facsimile of the Bodleian First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays, Arch. G c.7, 1623, Digital Bodleian, <https://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/book.html>. f. B1r.

<sup>58</sup> Shakespeare, Digital facsimile of the First Folio. f. B1r.

<sup>59</sup> Jowett, “New Created Creatures.” p. 113.

to the nineteen texts cited in this thesis which discuss Ariel, and the chart can therefore not be interpreted as an exhaustive review of literature relating to Ariel. The chart shows that slightly over half the texts use the masculine pronouns as presented in the script, and that there is significant discussion about the pronouns. Most of the older texts use he/him pronouns, whereas there is more discussion and variety in newer texts. The amount of variety and discussion shows that authors and scholars are uncertain of what Judith Butler would call Ariel’s “real” gender, a discussion this thesis approaches with a trans framework.



**Chart 1.1:** The division of pronouns referring to Ariel by the nineteen authors discussing Ariel referenced in this thesis. See Table A1.1 and A1.2 in Appendix I for further information on who uses what pronouns.

A person’s choice of pronouns is indicative of how they wish to present their gender, and Shakespeare differentiated between which pronoun systems different characters used to distinguish between class, gender, and belonging, meaning that Ariel’s use of “his” for himself (I.II.193) and the other spirits (IV.I.46) was likely intentional though the meaning is not necessarily an indication of masculinity.<sup>60</sup> Due to the ambiguous origin of the pronouns in Crane’s stage directions we cannot rely on them to indicate Ariel’s gender as intended by Shakespeare. As shown above, the linguistic changes and traditions in Shakespeare’s time complicate our ability to identify the intention behind the use of *his* as either masculine or neutral. Ariel’s use of the older form *his* for himself and the other spirits contrast Prospero and Miranda’s use of *it/its* pronouns for spirits and could signify a linguistic division between high society native speakers and lower class language users like Ariel, Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano. Since the pronouns cannot give a distinctive answer, we must look to other ways of identifying Ariel’s gender.

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<sup>60</sup> This includes the differentiation between the formal you and less formal thee/thou based on social rank, as well as the distinction between grammatical and notional gender between characters with different education levels, as I have explained above.

#### 1.4: Conclusion: An Illusion which Cannot be Labelled.

Ariel's sex and gender cannot be determined from the sources that inspired Shakespeare's creation of the airy spirit, nor from the pronouns used in the text. Though we cannot know precisely how – if at all – Shakespeare and his contemporaries understood what we call nonbinary gender today, we should acknowledge that nonbinarity and gender-nonconformity were known through transgender and nonbinary themes and concepts in literature and discussions, and through cross-dressing in theatre and society. Ariel differs from Shakespeare's cross-dressed characters because the audience cannot know whether the spirit is dressed in accordance with or against their airy sex, which is unknown and may be different from human sex. Ariel also differs from Shakespeare's other fairies by not conforming to gender roles and by actively showing off their shapeshifting abilities. Both the sources and the pronouns in the text connect gender-nonconformity and genderqueerness with nonhumanity in a way that helps define the Human through the Other.

The lack of tangible evidence which could be used to conclusively label Ariel as either male or female strengthens the argument that Ariel can best be understood as a nonbinary character who combines some binary human gendered characteristics, like pronouns and appearance, with nonhuman characteristics like the youthful shapeshifting of the spirits. It can be difficult to recognise trans representation in older works because the authors and audience had different understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality.<sup>61</sup> Therefore it is critical to examine portrayals of genderqueerness within the framework in which they were created in addition to the framework through which we interpret them today. While the following chapters provide analysis from a modern nonbinary perspective, this chapter argues that when *The Tempest* was first performed Ariel was likely created and interpreted as a nonhuman spirit who did not conform to human gender norms. As chapter two argues, Prospero's attempts at fitting Ariel into the feminine side of the gender binary are not attempts at repressing the spirit's true gender, nor are they meant as punitive or humbling measures for Ariel like the transmisogyny aimed at older fairies. Rather, Ariel's nonhumanity and gender-nonconformity is used to educate, celebrate, civilise, and punish *other* characters.

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<sup>61</sup> Though gender and sexuality are not correlated, they are often banded together, particularly before the twentieth century. In Shakespeare gender-nonconformity and homoeroticism is typically acceptable as long all parties end up in heterosexual marriages by the final act (or die). Ariel does neither.

## Chapter Two:

### How Names and Descriptions Gender Ariel as a Nonbinary Spirit.

If gender in *The Tempest* could be summed up in an image of current political debates about trans people's rights, it would be one of those bathroom door signs that hover between being gender inclusive and transphobic. The type of sign that places a stick-figure in trousers alongside a stick-figure in a skirt, a stick-figure wearing half a skirt and one trouser-leg, and an alien, with text saying "Whatever, just wash your hands."<sup>62</sup> The implication is that everyone is equal, and their value and belonging only based on their actions, but it simultaneously suggests that nonbinary gender is comparable to being an alien, that nonbinary people are nonhuman. Ariel's gender can be best understood as a combination of the alien and the stick-figure split down the middle in a skirt and trousers. The alien is nonhuman, and the stick figure performs the familiar human gender binaries but in an unfamiliar way. The fact that the sign is on a bathroom door is of course indicative of the increasing number of so-called bathroom bills passed since 2016 and the misconception that trans people may present a threat in these spaces, or that the sex on a cis person's birth certificate would stop them from entering the wrong bathroom if they had made their minds up to assault someone. For the sake of metaphor, the alien represents Ariel, the half-and-half stick-figure represents the other spirits on the island, Prospero is a hypothetical guard at the door determining people's gender, and Caliban is the cis scumbag.

The descriptions of Ariel and the other spirits reveal that their shapeshifting and connection to other cartographic monstrous races mark them as nonhuman. This means that their Otherness and gender-nonconformity is seen as a natural part of their nonhuman origin. Shakespeare used this fluidity and nonhumanity to create contrasting youthful characters and productions highlight these aspects to facilitate discussions that define human in comparison to nonhuman. This chapter analyses how the names Prospero uses for Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand fit into Marjorie Garber's process of maturation. I argue that Prospero is unable to confine Ariel to human binary gender because this system is entirely incongruous with the fluid sex and gender of Ariel and the other spirits. Since the spirits' gender-nonconformity is presented as natural and non-threatening, Prospero defines these traits as

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<sup>62</sup> An abundance of examples can be found by searching for images with the phrase "bathroom door sign man woman alien." There are many combinations, and creative bathroom door signs can be an informative source when examining expectations surrounding gender.

valuable in Ariel while condemning nonhumanity in Caliban. This chapter begins with a close reading of the descriptions of the other spirits on the island. To understand how Ariel's gender-nonconformity functions in the play, we must examine the similarities and differences between Ariel's gender presentation and value in relation to human characters. This chapter therefore follows the analysis of other spirits with two sections focused on how Prospero's descriptions of the four young characters mark their value, purpose, and gender.

### 2.1: Strange Shapes: The Nonbinary Nature of Ariel's Meaner Fellows.

The spirits in *The Tempest* are not the familiar fairies and hobgoblins of English folklore, but resemble the monstrous races that Leah DeVun describes.<sup>63</sup> This section argues that the descriptions of the other spirits on the island contribute to the audience's understanding of Ariel as Other. Although we do not know whether Ariel is from the same race of spirits as the other spirits on the island, descriptions in the play establish that it is natural for spirits to take "strange shapes" (III.III.19 s.d.) and that they are Ariel's subordinates and "fellows" (IV.I.35). Since Ariel cannot be seen by others than Prospero – and, as established in chapter one, Ariel's appearance is not representative of their natural form – the descriptions of the other spirits contain clues about additional sources of inspiration. These sources affirm that Shakespeare was aware of nonbinary-sexed creatures, thus making it likely that Ariel and the other spirits were consciously placed within a nonbinary nonhuman framework.

First, we must examine how the spirits compare to Shakespeare's other fairies to understand why *The Tempest*'s spirits' Otherness comes from their sex and gender rather than simply their mythological origin. The differences between Shakespeare's fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the "divers Spirits" (IV.I.254 s.d.) of *The Tempest* are clearest when comparing Iris and Prospero's descriptions of traditional nymphs and fairies to the Italian nobles' descriptions of Ariel's rabble. *AMND* is a fitting comparison to *The Tempest* because the green world and Greek/Roman and English myth are interwoven in both plots, and both are plays that do not have clear origins from history books or popular stories

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<sup>63</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 40-69.

like most of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>64</sup> The fairies in *AMND* are entrenched in gender roles and are typically portrayed as human in appearance, though they have strange and nonhuman names like Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed (*AMND*, III.I.161) and have nonhuman habits (*AMND*, III.I.165-173).<sup>65</sup> There are certain similarities between Ariel and the spirits in *AMND*: Puck can change his shape (*AMND*, III.I.104-110) like Ariel, and Titania wishes to "purge thy [Bottom's] mortal grossness so, / That thou shalt like an airy spirit go" (*AMND* III.I.159-160) thereby distinguishing elemental spirits from humans. However, all the fairies in *AMND* adhere to human gender roles, and the main conflict between Titania and Oberon stems from the two disagreeing on whether to raise their stolen child in a feminine or masculine manner. Ariel and the other spirits in *The Tempest*, however, are far more nonhuman. Although Prospero sometimes describes them as "goblins" (IV.I.258), "elves" (V.I.33), and "demipuppets" (V.I.36) and they appear in humanoid form as nymphs and reapers (IV.I.128-138 s.d.), these appearances are presented as idyllic illusions in comparison to what the Italian nobles interpret as the spirits' natural shapes. The spirits in *AMND* and *The Tempest* are comparable in some aspects, but the spirits in *The Tempest* diverge from myth and folklore in a way that the fairies in *AMND* do not, thereby marking them as more nonhuman and less susceptible to human gender norms.

The Italian nobles in *The Tempest* immediately draw on foreign imagery and monstrous creatures when faced with the spirits. Shakespeare thereby frames the context for the audience, establishing that the spirits and their abilities are different from hobgoblins and fairies. This reflects DeVun's research about nonbinary-sexed creatures appearing alongside other foreign creatures in illustrations on maps. In the first scene with the Italian nobles, scene II.I, Gonzalo presents his vision for a perfect society. In their second scene, III.III, the nobles see that the foreign island is not deserted, making them question whether all the other unbelievable tales from travellers may also be true (III.III.43-49).

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<sup>64</sup> They both have many sources of inspiration, as has already been discussed in relation to Ariel's origin. Many elements in *AMND* are inspired by Ovid, but these two plays are less reliant on pre-existing stories than most of Shakespeare's plays. See: Christine Dymkowski, "Introduction," in *The Tempest*, ed. Christine Dymkowski, Shakespeare in Production (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000). p. 3, and Henry David Gray, "The Sources of the Tempest," *Modern Language Notes* 35, no. 6 (1920), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2914632>. For more on *AMND* see Walter F. Staton, "Ovidian Elements in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1963), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3816813>.

<sup>65</sup> William Shakespeare, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996). pp. 279-301. All citations from *AMND* are from this edition unless otherwise noted.

ALONSO

Give us kind keepers, heavens! What were these?

SEBASTIAN

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

ANTONIO

I'll believe both;

And what does else want credit, come to me,  
And I'll be sworn 'tis true. Travelers ne'er did lie,  
Though fools at home condemn 'em. (III.III.20-27)

The shapes are not gendered, and neither are any of the comments about them. They are likened to guardian angels and characters from a puppet show.<sup>66</sup> Shakespeare draws on other foreign creatures and mentions of fantastical travellers' tales to describe the strange shapes. Pliny the Elder popularised the legend of "monstrous races" in regions outside of Europe.<sup>67</sup> It was a way of separating the civilised Europeans physically and morally from other cultures, and it was a popular concept in education, literature, bestiaries, maps and the like.<sup>68</sup> J. Milton French argued that Shakespeare drew inspiration from *Livre des merveilles* (*Mandeville's Travels*) and Pliny when describing "The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (*Othello*, I.III.144-145).<sup>69</sup> Gonzalo also references "such men / Whose heads stood in their breasts" (*Tempest*, III.III.46-47). As DeVun makes clear in her book, these maps also featured illustrations of nonbinary-sexed creatures. Therefore, the references to foreign stories and the chest-headed people in connection to the spirits set them up as the Other from which the Self/Familiar is defined and show that Shakespeare was familiar with the monstrous races and nonbinary-sexed creatures from maps.

Like the fairies and spirits in medieval and early modern fiction who inhabited the green world, "the nonbinary figures of the *Livres des merveilles* appear with three animals and an unblemished wilderness, itself a symbol of the primordial, pre-societal, and pre-familial."<sup>70</sup> Henri Auguste Omont noted that the figures and the overall composition and content of the illustration has enough similarities to an illustration of Adam and Eve on a

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<sup>66</sup> See section 1.2 for a discussion of angels as nonbinary creatures and a potential source for Ariel.

<sup>67</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 40.

<sup>68</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 40.

<sup>69</sup> William Shakespeare, "Othello, The Moor of Venice," in *The complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996). pp. 819-857. All citations from *Othello* are from this edition unless otherwise noted.

<sup>70</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 51.

neighbouring folio that he considers the hermaphrodites to be a depiction of Adam and Eve in Paradise.<sup>71</sup> DeVun draws a connection between the nonbinary-sexed figures and the creation story through the shared aspects of the *Livres des merveilles* illustrations and the hypothesised location of Eden in the East.<sup>72</sup> Regarding the illustration of nonbinary-sexed creatures in *Livres des merveilles*, DeVun writes:

Nakedness among monsters could connote wildness and bestiality, yet in this image, the nonbinary-sexed figures' nudity and peaceful coexistence with animals suggests an innocence and closeness to nature in its most positive sense, one in defiance of those who would brand them as unnatural... These mythic hermaphrodites' lack of sexually divided labour may also have hinted at remaking society outside of conventional structures of kinship, an effort that – if earlier writings on the primal androgyne were any indication – at least some Christians longed for as a return to the condition of paradise.<sup>73</sup>

DeVun explains a lingering stance towards nonbinary existence that seems to remain through the Middle Ages and the early modern era, as discussed in chapter one in relation to Horbury's youthful transgender fairies and Cressy's interpretation of cross-dressing as acceptable. While wildness and connection to nature can be seen as uncivilised or unevolved – as with Caliban – it can also represent a longing for a return to nature and freedom from societal norms and binaries, like we see in the Romantic period. Gonzalo comments that he “cannot too much muse/ Such shapes, such gesture, and such sound” (III.III.36-37) as the spirits show him, which reflects back on his attempts to imagine the Ideal through the Other: “I' th' commonwealth I would *by contraries* / Execute all things” (II.I.147-148 – emphasis added). His lines show a dream of a return to Eden: “No occupation; all men idle, all; / And women too, but innocent and pure” (II.I.154-155) where “All things in common nature should produce / Without sweat or endeavor” (II.I.169-160). Ariel's rabble only take on binary gender roles at Miranda and Ferdinand's wedding where they perform nymphs, reapers, and goddesses – roles imposed on them by Prospero to impart knowledge on Miranda about the expectations she should have for marriage and her role as an adult woman. By contrasting Gonzalo's ideal society with his reception of the spirits, Shakespeare presents the spirits and their genderless forms as a natural return to wilderness which the noble characters discuss as they attempt to establish themselves and seek new power on the island.

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<sup>71</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 52, 226n60.

<sup>72</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 52-53.

<sup>73</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 53.





essential to humanity and morality. Ariel's function, however, is to be an individual representative of this "divers" (IV.I.254 s.d.) and monstrous race, a figure that is at once relatable to all and distinct from the familiar norms and structures, thereby filling in the edges of the map and reminding the characters and the audience that they are human and are expected to act humanely.

## 2.2: Prospero's Names: Possession, Youth, and Value.

Words in this play are more than mere suggestions, they are definitions. When Prospero describes a character, the words he uses shape the way the audience and the other characters interpret the personality and identity of that character. Prospero acts as a puppet master – or as a director of a play – shaping the world and people around him through orders and monologues to serve his revenge plot. Gabriella Giorno suggests that the characters are all driven by speaking, reading, or acting Prospero's commands (often delivered through Ariel).<sup>75</sup> Giorno asserts that memories on the island are – at least partially – created by Prospero, and that none of the other characters have a sense of their own history or independence without Prospero's reminders about their past.<sup>76</sup> As Kevin Ohi writes: "Prospero's power is above all a power to make others lose track of themselves; his is an art of forgetfulness."<sup>77</sup> This and the next section identifies how the names that Prospero gives to Ariel, Caliban, Miranda, and Ferdinand create their identities in the play. This section argues that Ariel's nonbinarity and nonhumanity are determined to be the markers that give the spirit value, based on how the youths' freedom, purpose, family lineage, and individuality are represented as positive or negative by Prospero. To understand why Ariel's nonbinary gender and nonhuman identity are important we must also understand how they compare with others.

The names in *The Tempest* are indications of what a character represents. As discussed in chapter one, Ariel's name may have biblical, alchemical, and/or occult origins and is a homophonic reminder that Ariel is an aerial spirit. Prospero's name alludes to prospering, but it may also be inspired by Richard Haydocke's 1598 translation of *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* wherein "Vicont Prospero a Knight of Millan and a great scholler" is mentioned in relation to a painting of a feast so realistic that birds attempted to peck the

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<sup>75</sup> Gabriella T. Giorno, "The Reflected Tempest and Prospero's "Calling Word"," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 11, no. 1 (2005), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41274301>. p. 203.

<sup>76</sup> Giorno, "The Reflected Tempest." p. 210.

<sup>77</sup> Kevin Ohi, "The Tempest: Forgetting *The Tempest*," in *Shakespeare - A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon (London: Duke University Press, 2011). p. 354.

illusory berries from the canvas.<sup>78</sup> Other sources for Prospero's namesake are politicians and a riding-master, but none who are quite as closely connected to art, illusion, learning, and Italian politics as Haydocke's Prospero.<sup>79</sup> As an antithesis to the prosperous blessing in Prospero's name, scholars have asserted that Caliban's name may be a derivation of *cannibal*, or of *cauliban/kaliban* which means *black*.<sup>80</sup> Caliban's name may also be a combination of the Greek *caco/kakos*, meaning *bad* or *evil*, and Old Norse *ban/bannan*, meaning *cursed/cursing* and from Old French it is a summons or banishment.<sup>81</sup> Ferdinand means *traveller, peaceful, or brave*.<sup>82</sup> When Ferdinand asks for her name, Miranda is initially caught up in the romance, but swiftly remembers the power that names hold when she answers: "Miranda. – O my father, / I have broke your hest to say so!" (III.I.36-37). By giving Ferdinand her name, she betrays her father, despite Prospero only using her name twice in the entire play (see Table A2.3 in Appendix I). The names given to the characters by Shakespeare are not the only names that shape their identity in the play, however. The names they are given by Prospero are equally significant in instructing the audience on how the characters should be interpreted.

To analyse the identity-shaping power of Prospero's names and descriptions and their importance within the play I have undertaken a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the names and descriptive phrases Prospero uses for Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand. Although some scholars have examined individual descriptions of Ariel like Prospero's use of "delicate" and "spirit" in relation to language and how Prospero's words shape the world of the play and draw attention to the metatheatricality of the worldbuilding, there is no conclusive overview of all the markers.<sup>83</sup> I have made a table each for Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand showing every time Prospero references the given character with a proper name or identity-marker (See Tables A2.2-A2.5 in Appendix I). I use the term *marker*

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<sup>78</sup> Alan R. Young, "Prospero's Table: The Name of Shakespeare's Duke of Milan," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1979), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2869477>. pp. 409-410.

<sup>79</sup> Young, "Prospero's Table." pp. 408-409.

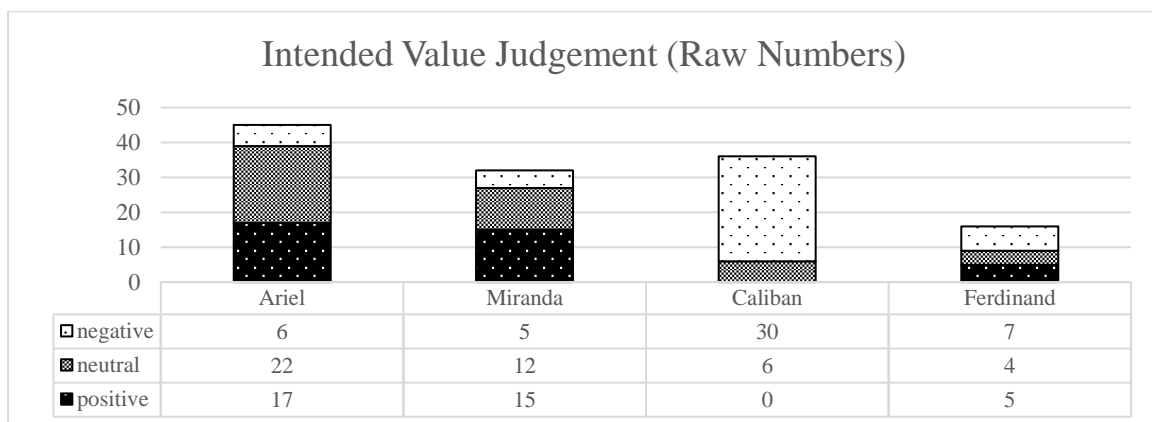
<sup>80</sup> Tom McAlindon, "The Discourse of Prayer in 'The Tempest'," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 41, no. 2 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1556192>. pp. 344-345.

<sup>81</sup> McAlindon, "Discourse of Prayer." p. 345. Merriam-Webster, "Ban," in *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ban>.

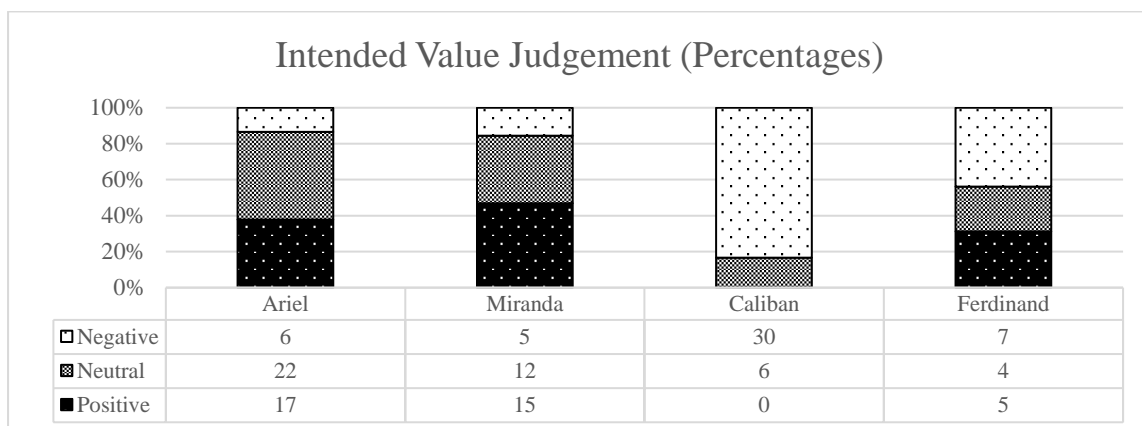
<sup>82</sup> Patrick Hanks, "Ferdinand," (Oxford University Press, 2006). <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195081374.001.0001/acref-9780195081374-e-19494>.

<sup>83</sup> These scholars include: Dymkowski, "Introduction.;" Giorno, "The Reflected Tempest.;" Horbury, "Early Modern Transgender Fairies.;" Johnson, "The Genesis of Ariel.;" Ohi, "Forgetting *The Tempest*.;" and Young, "Prospero's Table."

to mean names, references to the characters (not including pronouns), and descriptions of the character’s appearance or personality that identifies them in Prospero’s mind. I have categorised each marker in terms of positive, neutral, or negative intent as well as whether it is possessive, and – if applicable – how it is gendered and/or marks the character as nonhuman. I have chosen to examine markers spoken by Prospero due to his central role and his ability to shape the world around him, to limit the corpus and avoid bias or opinions from other characters, and because my focus is on how the other young characters’ markers are comparable to Ariel, and Prospero is the only character who can see Ariel outside of the illusions. I present the entirety of my findings with value, possession, and gender judgements in Appendix I, and visualise the data through charts and explain my findings here.



**Chart 2.1a:** Chart showing whether Prospero had positive, neutral, or negative intent when referring to Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand. Here shown in numbers to best visualise the total amount of markers in direct comparison. For complete notes see Tables A2.2-A2.5 in Appendix I.



**Chart 2.1b:** Chart showing whether Prospero had positive, neutral, or negative intent when referring to Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand. Here shown in percentages to best show the differences in individual values. For complete notes see Tables A2.2-A2.5 in Appendix I.

Charts 2.1a and 2.1b show that Prospero values Ariel and Miranda equally, though Prospero values them both as possessions: Ariel as a servant and Miranda as a daughter who can restore his power through her marriage. Caliban’s mistreatment is justified – in

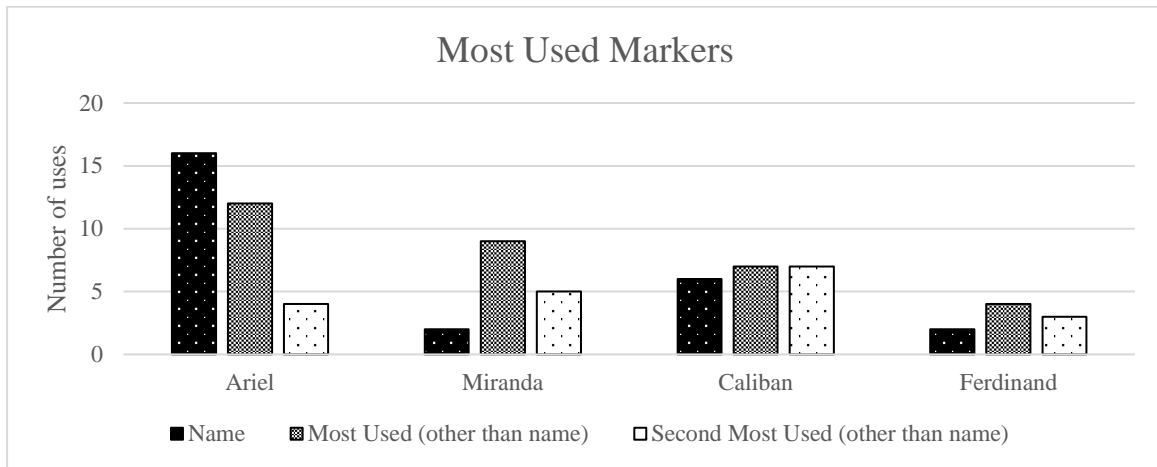
Prospero's mind – due to his refusal to be civilised. At the same time, Prospero cannot fault Ariel for their impatience and moody responses, because he acknowledges that they are not human, they “art but air” (V.I.21) yet strive to understand and communicate human values, even reminding Prospero of his own humanity. This means that although Prospero attempts to enforce human gender roles by asking Ariel to present as female, he knows that the female illusions are not only false, but also still nonhuman. Ariel's value lies in their fluidity and nonhumanity; therefore, Prospero is more positive towards them than Caliban – whose nonhumanity is what threatens Prospero and Miranda's existence on the island.

Nonhumanity and gender-nonconformity are often used to negatively Other people and characters. However, my analysis of the markers' values shows that Shakespeare presented Ariel's nonhumanity and nonbinarity as positive. I have found that the value of the four characters come from how useful Prospero considers them. Miranda's value lies in her ability to secure Prospero's lineage and political influence through marriage. Caliban's usefulness is almost at an end since Prospero intends to leave the island, so Caliban's physical strength has little value but poses a significant threat to Prospero's plans and life. Ferdinand is only a threat to Prospero when Ferdinand might “break [Miranda's] virgin-knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies may / With full and holy rite be ministered” (IV.I.15-17) because the young prince may then be bored with the prize too lightly won (I.II.452-453), thus leaving Prospero with a daughter who cannot be used as a bargaining tool. The same is true for Caliban, though he is a threat regardless of what Miranda or Prospero want, because if Caliban had successfully “peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (I.II.350-351) Prospero would not gain political influence and Miranda would be useless in future political marriage bargains. When comparing the intended value of the markers with percentages, we see that the division of positive, negative, and neutral markers are similar for Ariel, Miranda, and Ferdinand, although Miranda is slightly more positive, Ariel slightly more neutral, and Ferdinand slightly more negative.<sup>84</sup> Caliban, however, is almost entirely negative, with only six of thirty-six markers ending up neutral and none positive. Considering that Caliban has almost as many nonhuman markers as Ariel (see Chart 2.4a-b) a character's status as human – or lack thereof – is not the defining factor in whether a character is portrayed as valuable.

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<sup>84</sup> Ferdinand's negative markers are not necessarily negative outright because most of them are in the context of Prospero attempting to make Miranda and Ferdinand think he disproves of their relationship even though Prospero, Ariel, and the audience know that his goal is for them to get married.

Likewise, Ariel’s gender neutrality does not ruin their value in Prospero’s eyes because Ariel’s value lies in their ability to shapeshift and perform tasks that no human could perform.



**Chart 2.2:** Chart showing the most used category of markers in comparison to the character’s name when Prospero refers to Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand. Note: The categories here include combination uses of the markers. The numbers in the table below indicate uses of the base marker on its own with combination uses counted in parentheses. For complete notes see Tables A2.2-A2.5 in Appendix I.

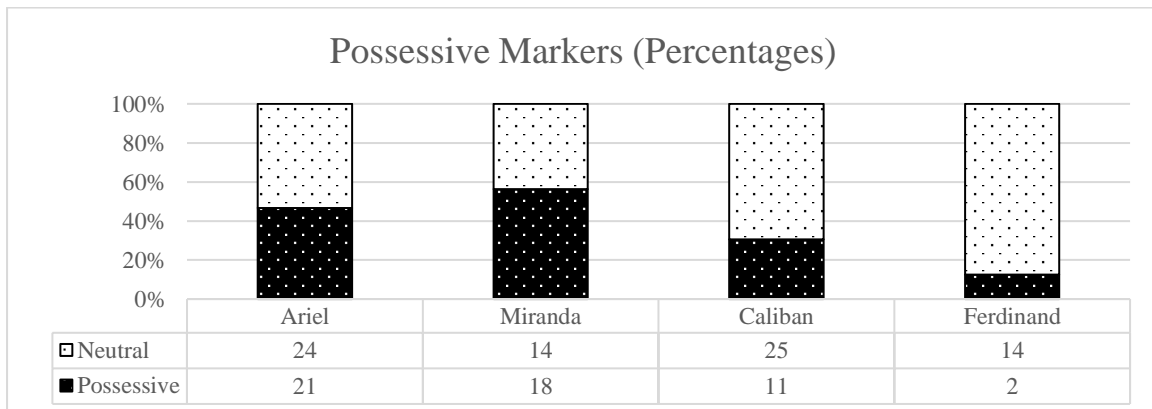
Name:	Most Used Marker (besides name):	Second Most Used Marker (besides name):
Ariel: 7 (+9)	Spirit: 8 (+4)	Servant/slave: 2 (+2)
Miranda: 2 (+0)	My daughter: 5 (+4)	Dear/dear one: 3 (+2)
Caliban: 4 (+2)	Slave: 3 (+4)	Devil (hell-spawn): 3 (+4)
Ferdinand: 0 (+2)	Sir: 3 (+1)	Good person: 2 (+1)

**Table 2.1:** Clarification of the most used markers. As in Chart 2.2: this includes base markers, combination uses, and variations that are close enough to be considered interchangeable. The numbers in the table indicate uses of the base marker on its own with combination uses counted in parentheses. For complete notes and citations see Tables A2.1-A2.5 in Appendix I.

Ariel’s parentage – and physical origin – is unknown, which separates them from the three others who are defined by heritage and origin through their markers. The frequency with which Prospero uses certain markers tells us what aspects of the youths’ identities Shakespeare wanted to bring attention to. Miranda’s most frequent and Caliban’s second most frequent markers refer to their parents: Miranda being Prospero’s daughter nine times, and Caliban being variations of hell spawn and hag-seed seven times.<sup>85</sup> Ferdinand’s value relies on his birth right to rule Naples so Prospero makes sure to not bring Ferdinand’s noble birth into question. Prospero defines Ferdinand as a “gallant” (I.II.414) and a “goodly person” (I.II.417) when Miranda first sees him, and makes Ferdinand self-identify as the king of Naples by asking “What wert thou, if the King of Naples heard thee?” (I.II.432). Ferdinand

<sup>85</sup> For a complete overview over markers see Table A2.3 for Miranda and Table A2.4 for Caliban in Appendix I. Table A2.1 in Appendix I provides explanation for how the most common markers have been categorised.

replies that he *is* the king because of the death of the king, his father. Ferdinand’s origin does not need to be established by Prospero in the same way as Caliban’s and Miranda’s because Shakespeare uses other means to identify him. Ariel identifies Ferdinand in I.II, calling him “the king’s son Ferdinand” (I.II.212) and explains that he is alone: “The king’s son have I landed by himself” (I.II.221), whereas Ferdinand helps remind the audience of who he is and where he came from when he first takes the stage by saying “Weeping again the king my father’s wrack” (I.II.391) and explaining that Ariel’s song “Full fathom five” “does remember my drowned father” (I.II.406). Not accounting for their names, my analysis shows that the four youths’ most used markers all identify how they are useful to Prospero, whereas the second most used marker identifies what Prospero thinks of them. The repetition of Ariel’s name therefore sets them apart from the others as an individual without familial bonds. They are useful to Prospero as a spirit (their most used marker), so they must remain a servant (their second most used marker). As I will explain in section 2.3, the combination of Ariel’s nonhumanity and genderfluidity is weaponised by Prospero to affirm and establish gendered hierarchies and relationships, thereby making these traits valuable where they would be threatening in characters like Caliban.



**Chart 2.3:** Chart showing the percentage of markers that indicate ownership, belonging, or possession, such as “slave” (I.II.374), “these our dear beloved” (V.I.310), or “this my rich gift” (IV.I.8) respectively. Note: two of Miranda’s markers have double possession, though they are each only counted once. Since the youths do not all have an equal number of markers, the numbers below the columns give an overview over the total number of markers in each category. For complete notes see Tables A2.2-A2.5 in Appendix I.

As Marjorie Garber established, coming of age in Shakespeare involves finding one’s own identity, gender role, sexuality, and establishing new relationships.<sup>86</sup> Prospero regulates this process of maturing by defining different systems of possession, belonging, and ownership in relation to gender and individual- and group identity. Miranda, Caliban, and

<sup>86</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. pp. 30-31.

Ferdinand are primarily identified by their family whereas Ariel is marked as an individual through the frequent use of Ariel's name and their lack of familial bonds. Yet Prospero's frequent use of possessive markers establishes that Ariel is not free simply because they are an individual without family ties. Despite Caliban and Ariel being his slaves, Prospero makes more claims of possession over Miranda when comparing the percentages (see Chart 2.3). All of Miranda's possessive markers are caused by her relation to Prospero as his daughter, as his virtuous and feminine preserver, or by her role as a prize for Ferdinand to marry. Both of Ferdinand's possessive markers are when Prospero claims him as his son in law. Miranda and Ferdinand's values are dependent on them giving in to their erotic/romantic desires, the culmination of their youth through marriage, and the joining of their families.

Ariel and Caliban are the exact opposite of Miranda and Ferdinand: they would ruin Prospero's political power if they were his family, their servitude is reliant on them retaining their youthful subordination, and the realisation of their potential erotic/romantic desires would be disastrous. Their possessive markers show that they are servants, but because Ariel has been promised freedom and Caliban has not, they serve under different conditions. Much has been written about the role of servants controlling their masters in Shakespeare, but I focus on how Ariel and Caliban's servitude is connected to their youth, gender expression, and nonhumanity.<sup>87</sup> Prospero frequently uses "my Ariel" and "my spirit" but only four slave and/or servant markers for Ariel, thus framing Prospero's ownership in connection with Ariel's individuality and nonhumanity rather than through possession of Ariel as a servant. Ariel is named, they are defined as a spirit – a creature with power and agency despite being tied to Prospero's service – and they are marked by Prospero's ownership. However, since Ariel is nonhuman, they cannot be constrained to Prospero's service eternally for Ariel will outlive and overpower Prospero whose remaining strength "is most faint" (Epilogue, 3). Ariel's youth and nonhumanity place them below Prospero in a human hierarchy, but also give Ariel the necessary power to overthrow Prospero if the spirit wanted to.

Caliban is similarly positioned, but he is more of a threat than Ariel because of his desire to act on his masculinity and sexual urges. Caliban's possessive markers label him as Prospero's slave and the bastard son of an evil witch. Caliban is constantly labelled nonhuman to suppress his masculinity and autonomy, and Prospero's efforts to infantilise

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<sup>87</sup> See for example: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. ed. by Peter Holland p. xxxiii. And Dymkowski, "Introduction." pp. 43-44, 52-56.



Caliban's relation to his deceased mother reminds Caliban and the audience that he is stranded in an unfulfilled childhood, forever an orphaned "hagseed" (I.II.365) and a "freckled whelp" (I.II.283). Caliban's stunted maturity is exemplified by Prospero's reminders that he attempted to treat Caliban as an adopted child, but blames Caliban's nature for his inability to conform to Prospero's idea of civilisation and maturity. Prospero does not take responsibility for Caliban's education the way he credits himself for Miranda's superior education (I.II.172-174), blaming Caliban's birth, mother, and age for Caliban's anger, while ignoring the effects of Prospero's constant administration of cramps and pinching spirits:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature  
Nurture can never stick: on whom my pains,  
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost!  
And as with age his body uglier grows,  
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all, (IV.I.188-192)

Caliban's birth is his first sin, his second sin – in Prospero's eyes – is rejecting Prospero's kindness, his third sin is physically growing older without maturing past a traumatic childhood. Yet Prospero's words portray him as terrified that Caliban will mature because then Prospero would no longer be the fittest adult male, and, as discussed in chapter one, maturity involves the realisation of sexuality and individuality. Therefore, Prospero's markers need to firmly establish Caliban as unworthy of respect and maturity by labelling him as nonhuman, mentally stuck in childhood, and above all, a slave. Ariel is Prospero's servant, like Caliban, and although Prospero threatens to torture each of them if they disobey him, he places more trust in Ariel and shows them more fondness. Multiple scholars and directors have interpreted that this fondness parallels, if not rivals, the fondness Prospero has for his daughter, Miranda, due to the eternally youthful aspects of Ariel and the parental tone of Prospero's admonitions and discipline.<sup>88</sup> Caliban's childishness, however, is presented as a failure rather than a virtue.<sup>89</sup> Caliban's masculinity is a threat to Prospero if he is allowed to explore it in youth and actualise it in maturity, therefore Prospero must begrudgingly keep Caliban in service.

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<sup>88</sup> For scholars see Horbury, "Early Modern Transgender Fairies.," and Deanne Williams, "Prospero's Girls," *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 9, no. 1 (2014), <https://borrowers-ojs-azsu.tdl.org/borrowers/article/view/153/303>. Some directors and authors who have taken this approach include Udovicki 2000, Herrin 2013, and Atwood 2016.

<sup>89</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. pp. 99-100.

Ariel's genderfluid youth and lack of sexual and romantic desire make the termination of their service unthreatening. Though all four young characters go through the four stages of maturation that Garber outlines, Ariel is the only one not motivated by sexual maturity. These stages are: 1) Moving away from group identity: Ariel is marked as an individual by the frequent use of their name, Miranda (thinks she) goes against her father's wishes, Ferdinand makes his own decisions as an individual rather than as the king's son (V.I.188-191), and Caliban plots to overthrow Prospero. 2) Making new bonds: Ariel does not reveal themselves to anyone new, but their investigation of humanity will be discussed in depth in chapter four, Miranda discovers that the world is full of "goodly people" (V.I.182), Ferdinand finds love, and Caliban realises that his new masters are drunken fools who think of him as a monstrous mooncalf. 3) Getting involved with "fertility and the cycle of nature:" Ariel arranges Miranda's wedding, Ferdinand and Miranda get married, and Caliban offers Miranda's virginity and womb to Stephano (III.II.97-104).<sup>90</sup> 4) The start of a new life honouring ancestral lineage "by a necessary act of separation from that lineage:" Ariel is freed to the elements by taking on unnatural forms, Miranda discovers a "brave new world" (V.I.183) which she will rule in the future, Ferdinand has "received a second life; and second father" (V.I.195) when he thought his own father was drowned, and Caliban reclaims his mother's rule of the island by rising up against Prospero.<sup>91</sup> As Gonzalo says: "all of us [found] ourselves / When no man was his own" (V.I.212-213). But unbeknownst to Gonzalo, every newfound identity and confused memory is Prospero's doing. Prospero determines value, identity, belonging, and humanity. He puts maturation on hold, or speeds it up as he deems necessary. His word is law. But he cannot seem to define Ariel's gender because, as section 2.3 argues, Ariel's gender is embodied through their nonhumanity which, in turn, is what gives Ariel value and eternal youth, thereby freeing the airy spirit from the necessity of completing maturation by assimilating into gender, sexuality, and new relationships.

### 2.3: Prospero's Names: Defining Human Through the Nonhuman.

Prospero controls Ariel's appearance, confining them to the feminine side of the human gender binary, while also maintaining their nonhumanity through the shapes of mythological creatures rather than human women. Prospero orders Ariel to take the shape of

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<sup>90</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. p. 30.

<sup>91</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. p. 31.

a nymph o' the sea, a harpy, and possibly Ceres.<sup>92</sup> We know that Ariel appears humanoid to Prospero based on Prospero's comment that when Ariel was confined in the cloven pine Caliban was the only "human shape" (I.II.284) on the island, insinuating that Ariel has a human shape when they're not imprisoned in a tree. My analysis of Prospero's use of gendered descriptors and his weaponization of monstrous femininity reveals that "nonhuman" can be considered a third sex and gender category in *The Tempest*.

Brittney Blystone argues that Sycorax is Prospero's opposite in discussions of power and gender.<sup>93</sup> Sycorax has been influential on Ariel, Caliban, and Prospero despite being absent from the play, and her banishment to the isle resembles Prospero's and Miranda's: "This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child / And here was left by th' sailors" (I.II.269-270). Like Prospero, her rule of the island lasted twelve years.<sup>94</sup> Prospero measures his power against hers when asserting dominance over Ariel by first claiming victory over her by assuming that she did not have the power or knowledge to undo her imprisonment of Ariel but that Prospero's art "made gape / The pine, and let thee out" (I.II.292-293). He also tries to one-up her by threatening to recreate her punishment of Ariel's disobedience by "rend[ing] an oak/ and peg[ging] thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters" (I.II.294-296). Prospero's opinions about Sycorax are informative to how he reacts to powerful women who are skilled magicians. This complicates Ariel's gender in relation to

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<sup>92</sup> There is discussion amongst scholars and directors whether Ariel performed Ceres, due to the ambiguity of the line "when I presented Ceres" (IV.I.167). I would like to do an in depth analysis of how the three figures of nymph, Ceres, and harpy compare and combine as maiden, mother, and crone, particularly in their motherly role in arranging the marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda. Another angle would be how the nonhuman female figures show how Ariel has more agency and opportunity within the framework of Ariel and Caliban as eternal youths. However, due to the scope of a master's thesis these discussions must find life elsewhere.

<sup>93</sup> Brittney Blystone, "Extremes of Gender and Power: Sycorax's Absence in Shakspeare's The Tempest," *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference* 5, 6 (2012), <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/spovsc/vol5/iss2012/6>. p. 73.

<sup>94</sup> That is, Ariel was imprisoned for twelve years and Sycorax died at some point within that time span. We do not know whether she imprisoned Ariel immediately upon arrival or after a few years, but she must have survived long enough to raise Caliban past infancy, otherwise he probably would not have survived nor had memories of her appearance as in III.II.99-102. Either way, her power over Ariel lasted twelve years, just like Prospero's power, assuming he freed Ariel within his first year on the island, a likely scenario considering that Ariel's imprisonment "was a torment / To lay upon the damned" (I.II.289-290) and it is unlikely that Prospero would stay sane listening to Ariel's groans which "Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts / Of ever angry beasts" (I.II.288-289). This also explains why Caliban is troubled, having spent twelve formative years listening to Ariel's agonised screams.

their power, for Prospero orders them to appear female in all the displays of Ariel’s power that the audience are witness to.<sup>95</sup>

Despite never meeting Sycorax, Prospero measures himself against her and is affected by her legacy. Blystone writes: “Sycorax exists only as a contradiction to Prospero and his masculinity. Sycorax’s absence gives Prospero the opportunity to construct her fully into a symbol of the evil woman, the opposite of himself” making Sycorax “an antagonist to Prospero and the patriarchy he represents.”<sup>96</sup> As Blystone points out, using Sycorax as the embodiment of all evil through her wicked use of magic both strengthens the necessity for Prospero’s civilised patriarchy and threatens the naturalisation of masculine dominance. The more powerful Sycorax is, the more legitimate are the measures taken to punish her, but it also requires an admission that women may be powerful enough to pose a legitimate threat to male dominance. We do not know any specifics of her magic or why she was demonised, but it seems likely that her gender and possibly her dark skin influenced the interpretation of her as pure evil. We also do not know who gave Prospero information about her, but I have collected his descriptions of himself and Sycorax to highlight the parallels between them:

<b>Sycorax</b>	<b>Prospero</b>
Old and envious/malicious (I.II.258-259).	Old and vengeful (IV.I.159-160).
Performed “mischiefs manifold, and sorceries terrible” (I.II.264).	Uses his magic mainly to inflict suffering on others, though he deems it a worthy cause and therefore delights in their suffering (III.III.88-93, IV.I.171-187*, V.I.7-19*).
Was marooned on the island against her will for misuse of her magic powers (I.II.263-266).	Was marooned on the island against his will for prioritising magic over his political duties (I.II.69-87).
Survived banishment because of her child (I.II.266-270).	Survived banishment because of his child (I.II.152-158, IV.I.3-4).
Was a powerful magician who relied on “her more potent ministers” (I.II.275) to enact her vengeance.	Is a powerful magician and “potent master” (IV.I.34*) who relies on his “meaner ministers” (III.III.87) to enact his vengeance (V.I.40-50).

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<sup>95</sup> Though some productions include Ariel and/or Prospero in the initial tempest in I.I, Ariel is not mentioned in the text, and we do not know whether Prospero ordered them to appear a certain way, though Ariel’s descriptions are nonhuman. Ariel’s final charge – giving Prospero and company safe passage back to Naples – also does not specify the spirit’s appearance but it is likely that Ariel will take the shape of either a nymph or the elements herself.

<sup>96</sup> Blystone, “Extremes of Gender and Power.” pp. 74-75.

Used corporeal punishment/painful torture to keep her slave (Ariel) obedient, resulting in the slave hating their master (I.II.270-281, I.II.286-293).	Uses corporeal punishment/painful torture to keep his slave (Caliban) obedient, resulting in the slave hating their master (I.II.325-330, I.II.367-371, IV.I.188-193, IV.I.258-263).
Kept Ariel imprisoned for twelve years (I.II.279).	Kept Ariel in his service for twelve years (I.II.53, I.II.291-293).
“was a witch, and one so strong / That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her [the moon’s] command without her power” (V.I.269-271)	Has “bedimmed / The noontime sun” (V.I.41-42) – the moon’s masculine counterpart – and raised storms with the help of spirits who worship the moon and sea (V.I.33-54).

**Table 2.2:** Sycorax and Prospero compared. All descriptions spoken by Prospero except those marked with \*. These are: IV.I.171-187 wherein Ariel describes suffering and Prospero comments his approval; V.I.7-19 which is an exchange between Ariel and Prospero where Ariel must convince Prospero to be humane; IV.I.34 spoken by Ariel.

Prospero sees Sycorax as a reflection of himself, but by dehumanising her and discrediting her magic as monstrous and emotional femininity he claims his own rational and masculine magic as natural and superior. And yet he orders Ariel to perform nonhuman femininity whenever they interact with other characters. Blystone writes that “in the seventeenth century, women could twist the logic of patriarchy against itself by arguing that their lack of citizenship and rights excused them from society and its laws.”<sup>97</sup> This should apply doubly to Ariel who does not have a human form nor gender, but whose power is far stronger than Prospero’s, who must rely on Ariel and Ariel’s fellows despite Caliban’s claims that Prospero’s “art is of such pow’r / It would control my dam’s god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of him” (I.II.372-374). If Prospero fears being displaced by a powerful and dehumanised woman, why does he enforce nonhuman femininity on Ariel? Perhaps because he controls the outcomes and uses Ariel’s nonhuman female shapes to frighten and overpower other men. This establishes his rightful dominance as a man who deposed other men by making them submit to a woman, and worse, a woman who should by all rights be their natural subordinate as a foreign monstrous creature.

This use of nonhuman femininity creates problems for Prospero, for Ariel could use their superior power against Prospero when they are freed, and Prospero would likely not be applauded if the other nobles were to find out that Prospero humiliated, tortured, and emasculated them by means of an intentionally nonhuman female-presenting spirit. It is therefore imperative that Ariel is “subject / To no sight but thine [Ariel’s] and mine

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<sup>97</sup> Blystone, “Extremes of Gender and Power.” p. 75.

[Prospero's], invisible / to every eyeball else" (I.II.301-303). The audience has to witness how Ariel's nonhumanity and femininity discredits the nobles' right to rule as Western, civilised men, but the lords must think that the nymph and harpy are aspects of the island, not chess pieces moved about by Prospero to manipulate them. Since the spirit goddesses are clearly under Prospero's command and their services positive, their obedience is natural in a gender structure, but reinforces Prospero's magical prowess because even female gods are still gods. Prospero is very careful about when he wants Ariel to be visible – and then only in illusory forms – and makes sure that Ariel's meaner fellows are introduced as strange and monstrous "people of the island" (III.III.30). Neither Caliban nor Miranda are aware of Ariel, though both are aware of the island's spirits in general and of Prospero's power. Neither Ariel nor the other spirits have shown themselves to Miranda in female form based on her statement that she has never seen another woman (III.I.48-50), and Prospero congratulates himself for providing her with a better education than other princesses (I.II.172-174). Shakespeare does not indicate that Prospero used Ariel or the other spirits to raise Miranda, who therefore understands gender roles explicitly based on what Prospero has deemed necessary to teach her. Prospero uses Ariel's gender-nonconformity and nonhumanity to disgrace the nobles but cannot admit to using gender and nonhumanity as weapons or educational tools, therefore keeping Ariel's existence a secret from not only the newcomers, but from Caliban and Miranda as well to keep his place as rightful patriarchal ruler.

Although Prospero uses Ariel's illusory nonhuman femininity to control others, he does not attempt to constrict Ariel herself to a specific gender presentation. The potentially feminine markers like "delicate" (I.II.442), "dainty" (V.I.95), and "chick" (V.I.317) are outweighed by the constant reminders that Ariel is a spirit and that their form is an illusion. These markers can be understood as Prospero's attempts at mitigating the potentially threatening aspects of Ariel's nonhuman nonbinarity, rather than as Prospero's attempts at enforcing femininity. This section untangles the gendered identities Prospero assigns to Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand to show how these crafted identities are built on a system that divides sex and gender into male, female, and nonhuman. My analysis shows that although Ariel and Caliban are both marked as nonhuman possessions of Prospero, their nonhumanity has vastly different effects on how Prospero perceives their expressions of gender. Ariel's nonhumanity is the cause of their gender-nonconformity, whereas Caliban's nonhumanity is a factor in making his masculinity threatening. Building on Leah DeVun's idea of nonbinary-sexed monstrous races, we see that Prospero's attempts at delineating

gender as masculine, feminine, and nonhuman are acceptable for Ferdinand, Miranda, and Ariel, because they each represent one category respectively. However, because of Prospero's focus on invalidating Caliban's masculinity by dehumanising him through his parentage and origin, Caliban's gender is transgressive because it is a combination of masculine and nonhuman. This contrasts Ariel's nonhuman femininity, and an understanding of how gender and nonhumanity are contextualised enable us to critically assess the portrayal of these identities individually and when they intersect, as they do in modern productions as will be discussed in chapters three and four.

As discussed in section 2.1, monstrous races and nonbinary-sexed creatures were used as hypothetical and legal examples from which "normal" humanity could be derived through omission. On the topic of the Self in comparison to the Other, Leah DeVun writes that:

the monsters of medieval *mappaemundi* played an ambiguous role in such divisions: while monsters helped to solidify boundaries, they also threatened to tear them down... The expulsion of nonbinary monsters to the world's farthest edge neutralized the peril they supposedly presented, facilitating the creation of European – and human – identity.<sup>98</sup>

Ariel and Caliban represent the unfamiliar creatures at the geographic margins, Ariel in terms of nonbinary sex and gender and Caliban as a representative of the uncivilised and physically and morally impure. I use *nonhuman* as a third gender category somewhat correlating to the nonbinary umbrella, thus making the options for sex and gender in the play male/masculine, female/feminine, and nonhuman. This is in no way meant to support transphobic rhetoric that would argue that trans people are unnatural or monstrous. Rather, it is a reflection of the ways in which nonbinary sex, cross-dressing, and gender-nonconformity were understood in Shakespeare's time and in the sources he may have taken inspiration from, for better or worse. Since this thesis focuses on Ariel's gender, I focus on how Caliban's nonhumanity intersects with his gender and maturation process, but do not have the scope to give the intersection of Caliban's race and humanity the attention it deserves and has received from other scholars.<sup>99</sup>

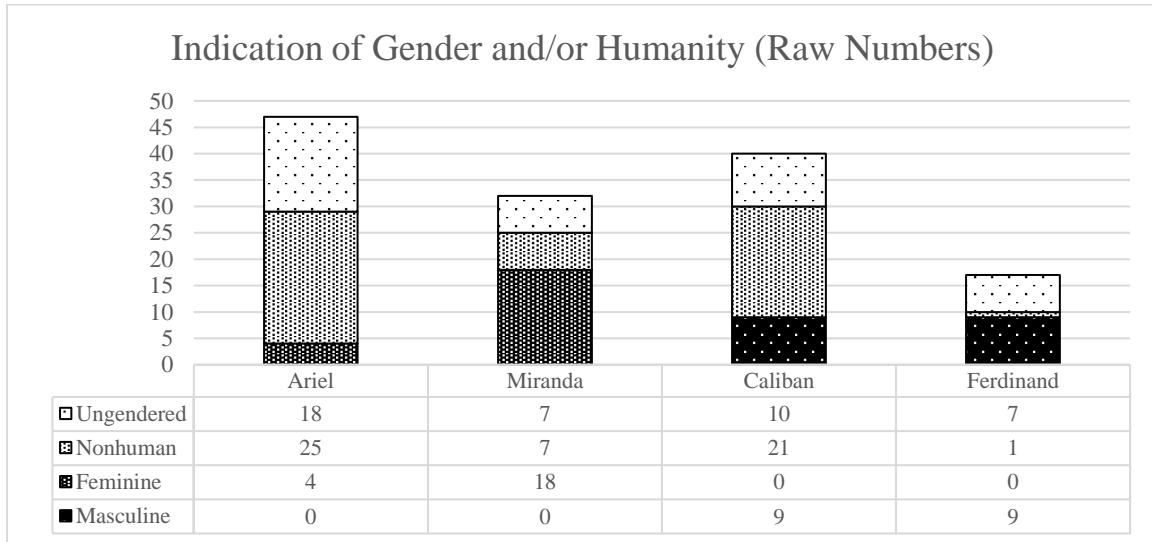
Part of maturation is exploring one's sexuality and gender. In Shakespeare this exploration can include cross-dressing – like Viola in *Twelfth Night* –, and/or homoerotic

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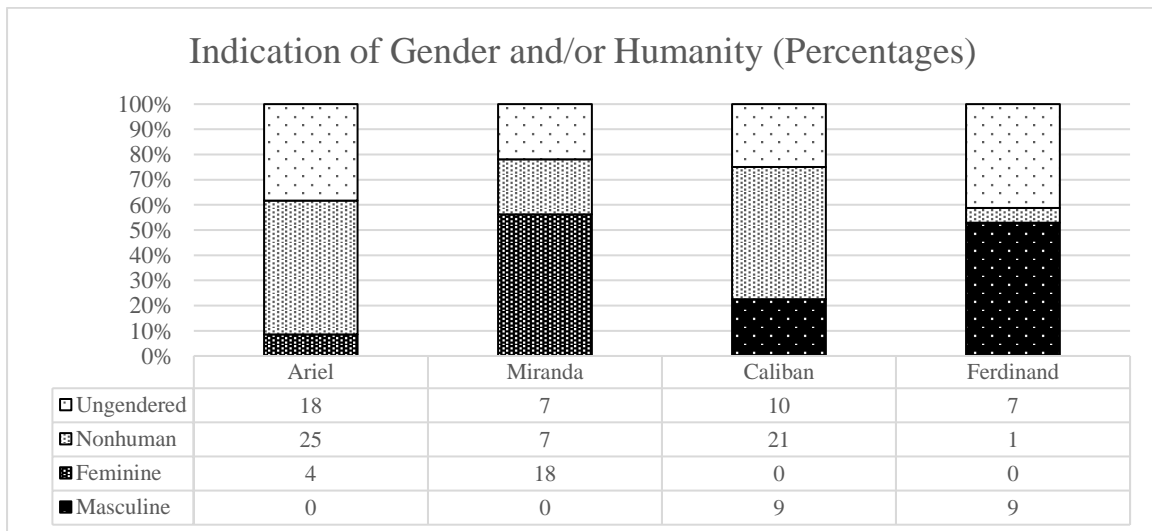
<sup>98</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 55.

<sup>99</sup> Other scholars have written extensively about Caliban's race as a factor in (or the reason for) his dehumanisation. Scholars mentioned in this thesis who write about this include: Blystone, "Extremes of Gender and Power."; Brokaw, "Ariels Liberty."; Dymkowski, "Introduction."; and McAlindon, "Discourse of Prayer."

relationships – like Orsino, Sebastian, Viola, and Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, or Hamlet and Horatio in *Hamlet* –, as long as cis-heteronormative order is restored by the end through death – like in *Hamlet* – or heterosexual marriage – like in *Twelfth Night*. It is Prospero’s role as father and ruler to ensure that all his children and youthful subjects successfully transition from youth to maturity by finding their correct gender role. However, since *The Tempest* involves a third gender, nonhuman, the gender roles intersect with his use of dehumanising language as a method of subjugating and degrading Caliban.



**Chart 2.4a:** Indication of gender and humanity in the markers used by Prospero when referring to Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand. Shown in raw numbers. Note: Some of the markers are counted twice because they fit in multiple categories.<sup>100</sup> For complete notes see Tables A2.2-A2.5 in Appendix I.



<sup>100</sup> Two of Ariel’s feminine markers are also nonhuman, and are thus counted twice, making the total in this chart 47 rather than the 45 markers listed in Table A2.2. Likewise, four of Caliban’s masculine markers are also nonhuman and are counted twice, making the total here 40 rather than 36 as in Table A2.3. The one nonhuman marker that Ferdinand has is also counted as a masculine marker and his total here is therefore 17 rather than 16 as in Table A2.5.



**Chart 2.4b:** Indication of gender and humanity in the markers used by Prospero when referring to Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, and Ferdinand, shown in percent. For complete notes see Tables A2.2-A2.5 in Appendix I.

Miranda and Ferdinand are the examples of successful cis-heteronormative transitions from youth to maturity. As the above charts show, Ariel and Miranda have zero masculine markers, whereas Caliban and Ferdinand have zero feminine markers, but all characters have at least one nonhuman marker. Miranda is mostly feminine and Ferdinand is mostly masculine or ungendered. Miranda's nonhuman markers have a similarly supporting function in her role as a woman. Four markers call her a prize or gift, two relate her to heavenly virtue, and one "Poor worm" (III.I.31) when Prospero comments on her quick infatuation with Ferdinand.<sup>101</sup> These all affirm her purpose as a virtuous "cherubin" (I.II.152) who preserves her father's will to live and who is ready to be given away to her future husband. Miranda and Ferdinand's nonhuman markers are notably binary. The nonhuman, and particularly the heavenly, markers are used to instruct them on how to best perform ideal human genders.

Most of Ferdinand's ungendered markers could be interpreted as masculine if one assumes masculinity as the default: "This gallant" (I.II.414), "A goodly person" (I.II.417), "the best?" speaker of his language (I.II.431), "a spy" (I.II.456), and a "traitor" (I.II.461, I.II.470). Ferdinand's only nonhuman marker is when Prospero tries to convince Miranda that Ferdinand is ugly and claims that "To th' most of men this is *a Caliban*, / And they to him are *angels*" (I.II.481-482 – italics for emphasis). Caliban's appearance and supposed demonic origin is used to humble Ferdinand, but it is only a simile. One that the audience knows Prospero does not truly believe, for he has let the audience know that he needs to sew discord between the two young lovers. Additionally, Ferdinand's nonhuman marker does not question his human gender, in fact, it connects him with a wider social group of men. Once again nonhumanity is used to define the human. Caliban represents bad nonhumanity, and angels – which are a potential source of Ariel's name and origin and do not have human genders – represent the unattainable ideal that Ferdinand and Miranda should aspire towards.

Caliban has more than twice as many human gendered markers as Ariel, though they are relatively close in nonhuman markers. I argue that the genders in *The Tempest* are masculine, feminine, and nonhuman, and an analysis of Caliban's high number of both masculine and nonhuman markers reveals that Prospero frames Caliban's monstrous birth as the cause of his failed maturation and civilisation. Although Ariel has four more nonhuman

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<sup>101</sup> See Table A2.3 in Appendix I for the complete list of Miranda's markers.

markers than Caliban, comparing the percent of nonhuman markers reveals that they are almost equal: Ariel's 53.2% nonhuman markers only barely beating Caliban's 52.5%. Both are predominantly nonhuman, but Caliban's masculinity cannot be repressed, despite Prospero's attempts at dehumanising him, as evident by the amount of Caliban's masculine markers. This is likely due to Caliban's human origins. Prospero admits that Caliban has a human shape, though he also says that Caliban's shape grows more and more deformed. When reminding Ariel of Sycorax, Prospero says:

Then was this island  
(Save for the son that she did litter here,  
A freckled whelp, hag-born) not honored with  
A human shape.

ARIEL                      Yes, Caliban her son. (I.II.281-284)

Even as Prospero admits that Caliban was born the same way as humans and that his shape is human, he highlights Caliban's masculinity and nonhumanity. Prospero contextualises Caliban's sex with abandonment by an evil mother as "*the son* that she did litter here." Caliban's masculinity is often tied to his role as Sycorax or the devil's son and as a bastard. Prospero's final words to Caliban consist of conflating Caliban's "disproportioned" shape and manners (V.I.291-292), a scornful "sirrah" (V.I.292) which marks Caliban with a human title typically directed at young and inferior men, and socially ranking him alongside a jester and a drunken butler. Prospero thereby signifies Caliban's transition from nonhuman to a morally and physically corrupt male human of exceedingly low standing. This transition is only possible once Miranda is safely married off and Prospero has regained his power as duke of Milan and is free to leave the island. Prospero decides that a male servant is easier to control than a nonhuman king of a deserted island. Caliban seems to accept Prospero's decision of which side of masculine or nonhuman Caliban belongs to, promising to be "wise hereafter, / And seek for grace" (V.I.295-296). The play does not tell us whether Caliban keeps his male identity and travels with Prospero and crew to Naples and Milan or stays on the island. Prospero succeeds in gendering Caliban the same way Trinculo jokes that England turns monsters into men (II.II.27-30).

Ariel may be a monster, but they are not a man. The few feminine markers they have are mostly descriptions that have more feminine than masculine connotations but are not direct indicators of sex or gender. Ariel themselves is not explicitly gendered, only the markers referring to their appearance imply gender expression. Prospero orders Ariel to appear in female forms, but as previously discussed, these are not examples of human femininity, and

in fact affirm Ariel's nonhumanity. The distinction between Prospero's attitude towards Caliban and Ariel's nonhumanity can be explained by their birth/origin. Ariel belongs to what DeVun calls a monstrous race, whereas Caliban is a monster due to his monstrous birth which is the result of his mother's evil deeds.<sup>102</sup> DeVun writes that:

During the thirteenth century and after, medieval theorists tended to draw clear distinctions between the monstrous races and monstrous births: the former was a manifestation of God's diverse creation, while the latter was a troubling transgression of natural law.<sup>103</sup>

DeVun establishes the importance of distance and tangibility of the subject in question when determining whether they should be perceived as acceptable or as threatening. Ariel's monstrous race is the same as that of angels and spirits: they belong to a hypothetical foreign race of intelligent beings. Caliban is an example of a monstrous birth: something went wrong with the status quo which must indicate fault with the parent and/or child. DeVun posits that when nonbinary sex was hypothetical it could either be seen as a symbol of chaos and primitivity, or in a positive light as natural or divine.<sup>104</sup> However, intersex babies were considered human in Roman Law, not monstrous, and Cressy suggests that cross-dressing was largely permitted in private and public, but punished in religious spaces where it was considered a direct affront to the sex and gender divisions that God created.<sup>105</sup> Both monstrous races and monstrous births "revealed the natural and transcendent order" and "could convey divine messages."<sup>106</sup> Although body and morality were seen as reflections of one another, the children from monstrous births close to home were judged to have reason and the capacity for moral virtue, and deemed human. Caliban, as a monstrous birth, is therefore able to become human when he accepts his faults, whereas Ariel, a representative of a monstrous race, does not need to be human to be deemed morally valuable and their self-proclaimed lack of human affection and reason (V.I.17-20) ensures that they remain Other.

Since Ariel is youthful, their gender-nonconformity is presented in the text as the harmless explorations of childhood. Ariel follows the rule of Prospero – the civilised man – and is therefore not seen as threatening, nor do they show any indication of wanting to charm

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<sup>102</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 56-59.

<sup>103</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 56.

<sup>104</sup> For more on this see DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 53-55, particularly the analysis of illustrations from *Livre des merveilles (Mandeville's Travels)*.

<sup>105</sup> Cressy, "Gender Trouble." pp. 462-463. DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. p. 57.

<sup>106</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*. pp. 57-58.

Miranda or impose their gender system on the humans. Ariel's sex and gender come from their race, they have not chosen it or been cursed with it, like Caliban, therefore Ariel is regarded as an acceptable monster. This is still transphobic and Caliban's nonhumanity is racist and in reality trans people are and should be regarded as regular humans: neither monstrous predators nor divine entities of spiritual guidance and community healing. However, the way Shakespeare combines nonhumanity and gender-nonconformity in the text explains why Ariel's nonhuman monstrosity was regarded as acceptable, or even positive, whereas Caliban's nonhuman monstrosity is strictly negative because it comes from his mother's evil magic and rejection of (and expulsion from) human society. Ariel's nonhumanity is the reason they can take on various forms, therefore it would go against their nature if they tried to progress from youth to maturity by transitioning into a binary human gender.

#### 2.4: Conclusion: Industrious Servant or Malignant Thing?

Ariel is introduced and freed within a nonhuman framework. Through Prospero's markers, Shakespeare never allows the audience to forget that Ariel's human form on stage – presented by the actor – is merely a temporary form limited by the actor's body on par with the illusions of the nymph, harpy, and Ceres. Ariel introduces themselves in act I.II by describing their flight and supernatural abilities, comparing themselves to Jove and Neptune, thereby establishing themselves as nonhuman in their first introduction to the audience. When Ariel describes their ideal freedom in act V.I they use imagery that is reminiscent of insects and fairies, yet again reminding the audience of their nonhumanity during their last song. This is reinforced by Prospero's last farewell to the spirit, asking Ariel to provide "calm seas, auspicious gales, / And sail so expeditious that shall catch / Your royal fleet far off" (V.I.315-317) before reminding the audience of Ariel's elemental origin as he frees the airy spirit with goodwill by saying "Then to the elements / Be free, and fare thou well!" (V.I.318-319). Ariel's nonbinarity is an expression of their nonhumanity. By framing Ariel's character development with influential and positive nonhumanity, therefore, Shakespeare presents Ariel's nonbinary gender as natural and beneficial.

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **How Modern Productions Portray Ariel's Nonhuman Gender.**

Since the turn of the century *The Tempest* has been performed and adapted in a screenplay and multiple professionally filmed stage performances, festivals, a holographic stage production, novels, comics, a jigsaw puzzle, two operas, a live performance in virtual reality, and the Globe alone has staged five productions and miscellaneous events with a sixth production in the works. After watching, reading, and interacting with many of these productions and adaptations I have discovered that the way they portray Ariel's gender has changed from the way it was portrayed in older productions, with their strict gender binaries.<sup>107</sup> I found that in these modern productions Ariel is performed on a different scale, from androgynous to nonhuman. This new trend became the established performance style simultaneously as trans people, trans theory, gender studies, trans activism and feminist theatre grew in popularity and visibility in mainstream academic and cultural spaces from the 1990s and 2000s. This chapter breaks down the developments over time and today before analysing a case study from each of the four new categories I have divided Ariel's new performance style into, which map different balances between androgynous and nonhuman.

Each production has its own interpretation of the plot and characters, which when compared reveal that modern productions problematise gender through nonhuman costuming and contrasting relationship dynamics. This chapter combines trans theory with performance analysis when examining Ariel's gender presentation in modern performances. By analysing how Ariel's gender is performed in productions and adaptations of *The Tempest* from 2000 to today we see that not only is there a much more balanced casting of male and female actors than in previous centuries, but the performance style has moved away from the traditional masculine and feminine expectations for spirits or fairies. Modern performances of Ariel tend to portray the figure as nonhuman and/or androgynous, and when binary gender expression is shown it opposes the actor's own gender. This marks a new stage in the figure's performance history which can be best understood from a trans framework because both Ariel's and the actor's gender is either made irrelevant or is consciously problematised.

This chapter analyses four productions with different approaches to Ariel's gender and explains how Ariel's relative levels of androgyny to nonhumanity affect the central

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<sup>107</sup> Complete overviews of all productions and adaptations discussed in this thesis and which may have influenced my interpretations can be found in Appendix II.

discussions of a production. The productions are by Donmar Warehouse (2016), the Globe (2005), The MET Opera (2011), and The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) (2016). By examining the medium of the production, the actor's gender, Ariel's performed gender, the costumes, the central discussion(s), and the adaptation and use of the original text, I analyse each production according to its own form and intent while also examining the factors that constitute gender in performance.<sup>108</sup> To understand queer gender in performance one must understand that gender itself is performative. Judith Butler argues that gender is performed – with varying degrees of cognisance – as a series of actions and learned behaviours which have been given significance and placed on an ever-changing socially constructed scale ranging from masculine to feminine.<sup>109</sup> Butler's concept of *gender performativity* should not be confused with *gender identity*, which is one's own sense of gender and often corresponds with one's birth sex and gender presentation. As part of my analysis of modern performances I combine the performance history scholarship of Christine Dymkowski, Katherine Steele Brokaw, and Amanda Eubanks Winkler, who write about Ariel's gender through a cis perspective, with the trans framework that Sawyer Kemp applies to Shakespeare. By combining these perspectives, I show that although Ariel's gendered performance history has often been tempestuous, there has been a shift to a distinctly gender-nonconforming or ungendered Ariel in recent years, thus establishing them as a figure who can be best understood through a trans framework.

### 3.1: Performance History of Ariel's Gender: Male, Female, Decline to Answer.

Before we can understand why the new performance style is significant, we must first look back at Ariel's performance history. Ariel's perceived gender informs the discussions surrounding Miranda and Caliban in particular, and affects how the audience views Prospero's power and the power dynamics of the play. Therefore, it is significant that the character has been played by actors of various genders. The gendered trends develop in tandem with the dominant discourses in society at any given time. Previous scholarship outlines four gendered periods in Ariel's performance history: 1) genderfluid spirit performed by boy actors (1611-1670s), 2) masculine and heterosexual servant with disagreement about

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<sup>108</sup> These focuses are derived from the works of Elinor Fuchs and Maurice Hindle regarding analysis of theatre and of Shakespeare on film: Elinor Fuchs, "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play," *Theater (New Haven, Conn.)* 34, Summer 2004, no. 2 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1215/01610775-34-2-5>. Maurice Hindle, *Shakespeare on Film*, 2 ed. (United Kingdom: Pallgrave, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. 190.

the actor's gender (Restoration era), 3) young feminine sprite performed by female actors (1700s-1930s), and 4) a mercurial fairy performed by male actors (1940s onward).<sup>110</sup> By understanding how Ariel was portrayed and what discussions Ariel's gender promoted in these different periods, we are better equipped to analyse the discussions that Ariel's androgynous and/or nonhuman gender presentation embodies today.

Little is known about the original costuming, performance styles, and central discussions during the period where Ariel was performed by boy actors. Since chapter one and two discuss the themes that Ariel represented in the text in the first period, we can skip ahead to performances in the Restoration era. Two adaptations of a parody of *The Tempest* define this period. The first, and most relevant to my thesis, is William Davenant and John Dryden's *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*, from 1667, which was rewritten as an operatic production with songs composed by Thomas Shadwell in 1674. The second, *The Mock Tempest, or The Enchanted Castle*, written by Thomas Duffett in 1674 was a burlesque parody of the Davenant-Dryden-Shadwell production, but set in a London prison and featuring brothels and lewd jokes. Discussions tend to centre on *The Enchanted Island*, and scholars disagree about whether the Restoration era parodies featured a gender-nonconforming Ariel who was performed by women or an Ariel who was a cisnormative heterosexual male. Christine Dymkowski argues that although there is anecdotal evidence that the female actors Moll Davis, Jane Long, and Mrs. Gosnell played and/or sang all or parts of Ariel's role in *The Enchanted Island*, the parody goes to lengths textually and plot-wise to establish separation between the sexes and that Ariel needs to be presented as a heterosexual male in order to prove that Prospero's power is unwavering.<sup>111</sup> Dymkowski explains:

Princely authority is neither demonstrated nor affirmed by female subservience, which simply reflects women's expected obedience to men. Instead, princely authority must be validated by male obedience, by a responsible counterpart to the anarchic mariners.<sup>112</sup>

This reflects how Shakespeare chose nonhuman feminine forms for Ariel so that the spirit's gender would discredit the nobles' authority, as discussed in chapter two. Despite

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<sup>110</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." pp. 34-35. See also: Brokaw, "Ariel's Liberty." p. 24.

<sup>111</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 35n70. See also: Amanda Eubanks Winkler, "A Thousand Voices: Performing Ariel," in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan (United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2016). p. 523.

<sup>112</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 36.

counterarguments that Ariel himself could be female based on the inclusion of female actors in both parodies, Dymkowski's theory that Ariel's gender was used to establish Prospero's power seems sensible. However, Amanda Eubanks Winkler argues that "if one considers musical conventions for spirits during this period, I believe it is more plausible that a woman took the role."<sup>113</sup> She argues this based on the high register required for the ethereal quality of the role, and the convention of casting women as airy spirits of all genders in Restoration plays.<sup>114</sup>

As female actors were allowed on stage in the Restoration, *The Enchanted Island* introduced multiple female parts: Dorinda (Miranda's sister), Sycorax (Caliban's twin sister in the parody), Milcha (Ariel's romantic partner, presumably played by a female actor but only identified as "it" in the parody), and Hippolito (Dorinda's love interest, a breeches role).<sup>115</sup> Some scholars use this to prove that Ariel may also have been a female or breeches role, while others use it to say there was no need for additional female parts.<sup>116</sup> Lori Leigh points out that Hippolito is explicitly introduced as a breeches role which incorporates that magic transformation into the metatheatricality of the play itself.<sup>117</sup> Ariel's metatheatricality is often used in a similar way in modern productions by enabling Ariel to interact with scenography and lighting to highlight their function as Prospero's and Shakespeare's tool. The prologue to *The Enchanted Island* explains the "magic" of employing a breeches role:

[We] Who by our dearth of Youths are forc'd t'employ  
 One of our Women to present a Boy.  
 And that's a transformation you will say  
 Exceeding all the Magick in the Play.<sup>118</sup>

This prologue only makes a point of one breeches role, and since we know that Hippolito was a breeches role it is fair to assume that the reference is to Hippolito. Therefore, it seems unlikely that they would perform Ariel as an additional cishet male breeches role without mentioning it alongside Hippolito's introduction. The most likely remaining options are that

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<sup>113</sup> Eubanks Winkler, "A Thousand Voices." p. 523.

<sup>114</sup> Eubanks Winkler, "A Thousand Voices." pp. 523-524.

<sup>115</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." pp. 6-8, 35. Lori Leigh, "No Woman Is an Island: Female Roles in Dryden and Davenant's *The Tempest*, Or *The Enchanted Island* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," in *Shakespeare and the Embodied Heroine* (Springer, 2014). p. 67.

<sup>116</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 35n70. See also discussions about the meta jokes about Hippolito as a breeches role in Leigh, "No Woman Is an Island." pp. 83-97.

<sup>117</sup> Leigh, "No Woman Is an Island." p. 84.

<sup>118</sup> From the prologue of Dryden and Davenant's *The Enchanted Island* qtd. in Leigh, "No Woman Is an Island." p. 84.



Ariel was performed as 1) a heterosexual male spirit performed by a male actor, 2) a homoerotic male spirit performed predominantly by a male actor but with the songs sung by one or more female actors, or sung by a castrato or pre-pubescent male actor, 3) a homosexual female spirit performed by a female actor, or 4) a genderless or genderfluid spirit whose speaking parts were performed by male actors and whose songs were performed by female actors. Keeping in mind that this stage of Ariel's performance history evolved from a nonbinary spirit performed by boy-actors, I find it likely that the performances in the latter part of the seventeenth century either attempted to tone down the genderqueerness by making Ariel appear like a cishet male or explore the earlier ambiguity further through introducing new layers to cross-dressing and same-sex relationships by casting female actors to perform a more delicate and musical Ariel.

Despite the disagreements about when Ariel began being performed by women, there is clear agreement that from the eighteenth century until World War II Ariel was considered a female role which highlighted the figure's feminine and ethereal traits. It would make sense to adapt Ariel's role to parallel Miranda's femininity to retain some discussion of girlhood and paternal relationships after establishing Prospero as a parental role in the Dryden-Davenant play where he raised two biological daughters (Miranda, Dorinda) and three adopted youths (Caliban, Sycorax, Hippolito). Deanne Williams argues that Ariel's girlish freedom was a counterweight to a Miranda who was used to showcase the domestic obedience expected from young girls.<sup>119</sup> She points out that the tradition of casting a female actor as Ariel coincides with when Miranda's "Abhorred slave" speech (I.II.351-362) was given to Prospero instead of Miranda. Williams therefore argues that "what is suppressed by the longstanding practice of silencing Miranda is expressed in the freedom embodied by a girl Ariel."<sup>120</sup> Though an interest in girlhood and Prospero as a father would explain the feminisation of Ariel, I think the theme of girlhood is more likely the *result* of Ariel being performed as feminine rather than the *cause* of the evolution in Ariel's performance history.

Dymkowski also centres Prospero's performance history as a paternal figure in her theory for why Ariel – in her opinion – suddenly became female, but she argues that the focus lies on Prospero rather than his daughter(s). She writes: "such a paternalist interpretation of Prospero necessitates a demure Miranda, a beast-like Caliban and an Ariel whose willing

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<sup>119</sup> Williams, "Prospero's Girls." p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> Williams, "Prospero's Girls." p. 11.

servility is seen as natural and inevitable: in other words, a gossamer female fairy.”<sup>121</sup> *The Enchanted Island* remained popular after the Restoration with its acrobatic entertainment, whereas performances of the folio text (sometimes edited) portrayed Ariel as useful to Prospero but without much autonomy or independent desire. Ariel’s physical abilities became more important as the spirit’s inner qualities were dismissed. Williams writes:

The nineteenth-century Ariel is now prized not for her musical but for her acrobatic abilities. Retaining her prominence at the center of the action, she becomes a figure of costumes, special effects, and gymnastic prowess, with visual cues, rather than vocal, taking over the job of conveying the quality of the airy spirit.<sup>122</sup>

Although the spirits were always the focus of the play’s spectacle, and special effects and music were used to set them apart from the other characters, this new acrobatic performance by predominantly young female actors helped establish Ariel’s immense powers as nonthreatening to Prospero like the youthful and feminine markers discussed in chapter two. This theatrical show of transformative and physical power is also apparent in the nonhuman-androgynous and nonhuman productions I analyse later in this chapter. Through video projection and lighting effects these recent productions give Ariel the ability to interact with and affect the scenography and lighting in ways that even Prospero cannot. Cause and effect are difficult to ascertain, but it seems that the feminisation of Ariel and Miranda’s reliance on Prospero – through the redesignation of her “Abhorred slave” speech – corresponded to a performance style where Ariel’s superhuman abilities were framed as entertaining, thus affirming Prospero’s superiority over feminine characters as a learned magician and tutor.

Although the “gossamer fairy” performance style lasted for 200 years, Ariel’s gender shifted once more after WWII.<sup>123</sup> Ariel was now predominantly played by men and the role took on a more Puckish tone.<sup>124</sup> Many productions retained a near-nude aesthetic established in Victorian illustrations, both on stage and in film, often incorporating a metallic costume or

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<sup>121</sup> Dymkowski, “Introduction.” p. 37.

<sup>122</sup> Williams, “Prospero’s Girls.” p. 17.

<sup>123</sup> Brokaw, “Ariel’s Liberty.” p. 24.

<sup>124</sup> Dymkowski, “Introduction.” pp. 34-35. See also: Brokaw, “Ariel’s Liberty.” p. 24.

body paint.<sup>125</sup> Brokaw notes this aspect of Ariel's performance history as a masculine spirit, writing:

The nearly-nude bodies of these Ariels seem to read "ayrie spirit" as the human form at its most exposed and vulnerable, as if the best way to represent "spirit" is through exposing the vulnerability of the human flesh, even if Ariel is specifically a non-human spirit trapped in the body of Prospero's servant, or the body of an actor.<sup>126</sup>

After two centuries of feminine Ariels in flowy and revealing costumes, the performance style abruptly shifted to a visibly masculine Ariel. The post war Ariel retained the dancing and acrobatic feats that Victorian actresses established, but this physicality was presented more as an exhibition of control and athleticism. Again, Ariel's gender informed the interpretation of their actions and physical movement, but this time the human body was used as a reminder of the spirit's imposed limitations rather than as a reason for their willing submission to Prospero. But although the change in gender affected Ariel's relation to Prospero's power, it likely did not occur purely to redefine their relationship.

Dymkowski suggests that the similar positions that Ariel and Caliban have – both being familiar with the island before Prospero enslaved them, and both being described as nonhuman – were used in a similar way to the comparisons between Ariel and Miranda in the previous era. That is, by directly comparing Ariel and Caliban productions were able to highlight the widely different treatments they received from Prospero. Dymkowski reasons that an increased interest in Darwinism and colonialism probably informed the central discussions on stage:

Whether colonialist readings of the play pushed Caliban's portrayal towards the more fully human or whether Caliban's increasing humanity encouraged colonialist interpretations is a moot point ... just when Caliban became recognizably human on stage, Ariel became established as a male role.<sup>127</sup>

This presents an interesting contrast between Caliban, who had increasingly been portrayed as an apelike 'missing link' through the latter half of the nineteenth century and was now gaining humanity, and Ariel, who had been portrayed as a harmless but visually appealing

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<sup>125</sup> Dymkowski mentions two stage plays (Lena Ashwell Players 1925 had a silver Ariel, and Harcourt Williams 1930 had a nude, golden Ariel) in: Dymkowski, "Introduction." pp. 39-40. Movies include John Gorrie's *The Tempest* (1980) which had a bronze nude Ariel; Peter Greenway's *Prospero's Books* (1991) which had three nude male actors of different ages as Ariel; and Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (Touchstone Pictures 2010) which featured a nude, translucent Ariel. Metallic nudeness is also hinted at in Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed*.

<sup>126</sup> Brokaw, "Ariel's Liberty." p. 24.

<sup>127</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 41.

girl who had now transitioned into an athletic young man.<sup>128</sup> Both transitions show how productions in the twentieth century used the intersections between human gender and nonhuman origin to ascertain who is deserving of humane treatment, as discussed in relation to Caliban's masculinity and dehumanisation in chapter two.

As interracial casting became accepted, black actors were typically cast as Caliban, and the role continues to be largely performed by BIPOC actors to this day to highlight the colonialist themes of the play.<sup>129</sup> Dymkowski explains the correlation between the more human Caliban and the newly virile Ariel: "to suggest that the oppression of both Caliban and Ariel is in some way unjust, the one had to become human and the other *male*."<sup>130</sup> Therefore we see how changing Ariel's performance style through gender allows for new discussions. In this instance, both Caliban and Ariel's performance styles were altered in tandem. Although Caliban's performance style currently varies between human and nonhuman, these differences are interpretations of the same debate: is Prospero's treatment of Caliban justified by Caliban's incorrigible nonhuman nature and sexual pursuit of Miranda, or is Prospero's dehumanisation of Caliban due to Prospero's superiority complex as a coloniser making him unwilling to see Caliban's human emotions and origin? While Caliban's level of nonhumanity can be used to argue or critique either interpretation, his performance style is centred on discussions regarding himself and his relation to other characters. The different trends in Ariel's performance history, however, are used to develop discussions about power dynamics and themes relating to other characters. Ariel functions as a comparison more than the locus of discourse, thus making their two most disputed traits – (non)humanity and gender – the ideal markers to shift whenever the desire arises to stage a new discussion.

### 3.2: A New Trend and Approach: a Trans Perspective on Modern Productions.

Through Ariel's performance history directors have changed the spirit's gender to better accommodate discussions about Miranda's girlhood, Prospero's power, and Caliban's mistreatment, but there is little scholarship examining developments in the twenty-first century. Since modern performances show a new trend – one where Ariel is performed as androgynous and/or nonhuman – it is important to understand the developments and the purposes they serve. As stated earlier, *modern performances* are considered performances

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<sup>128</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." pp. 52-55.

<sup>129</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 55.

<sup>130</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 44 (emphasis in original).

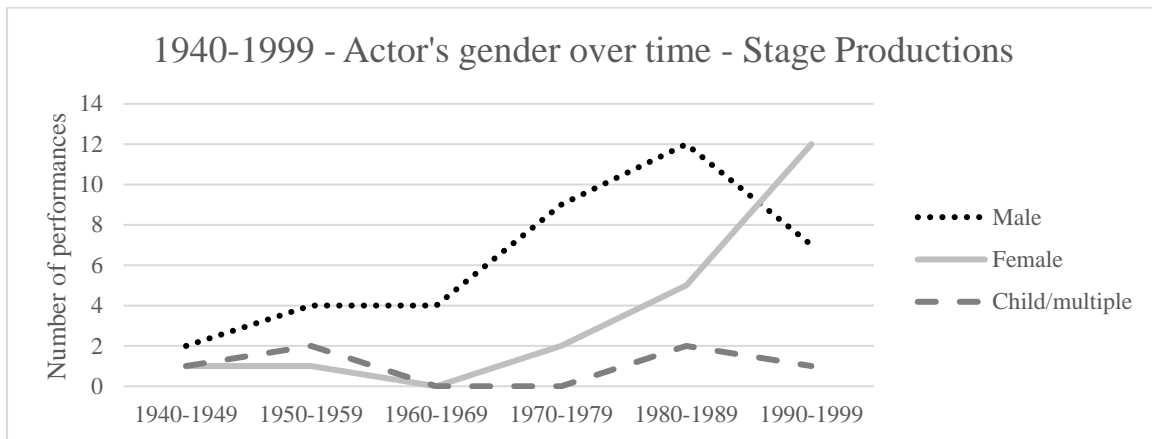
from 2000 onwards in this thesis. Although the developments began in the 90s, I do not have access to recordings of performances from that time, and Dymkowski's discussions of Ariel's gender do not indicate that the new trend was fully established by the end of the 90s. Therefore, looking at productions after 1999 – the final year in Dymkowski's extensive performance history overview – both fills a gap in scholarship and is logical in terms of mapping the new trend from the point where most productions began to follow it.<sup>131</sup> Modern productions combine Ariel's gender and nonhumanity to perform the spirit in one of four styles: androgynous, androgynous-nonhuman, nonhuman-androgynous, or nonhuman. Although Ariel's gender presentation breaks with binary gender expectations, the productions do not necessarily use this to critique gender systems or comment on compulsory cisnormativity. This chapter argues that we have entered a new period where actors of all genders perform an Ariel who ranges from nonhuman to androgynous rather than relying on gendered stereotypes, often using Ariel's ambiguous gender and fluctuating level of humanity to guide the central discussion(s) of the production through comparison to other central characters.

Using Dymkowski's "Appendix 2: list of principal players" I have charted the genders of the actors performing Ariel between 1940 and 1999 to pinpoint where the most recent shift in Ariel's performance history occurred. The performance style began to change in the 1990s when the steadily increasing number of male-performed Ariels suddenly decreased and were replaced by female-performed Ariels. As seen in Chart 3.1, the total amount of productions increased after WWII, but the number of female actors cast as Ariel remained low until the sharp rise in the 90s. To establish whether this change was abrupt or gradual, I divided the data from the 80s and 90s into smaller sections (see Chart 3.2). This revealed that the change is more abrupt than the decade averages on Chart 3.1 indicate, going from zero female-performed Ariels and eight male-performed Ariels between 1987-1989 to seven female-performed Ariels and only three male-performed Ariels between 1990-1992. This is the beginning of the new performance trend which we see take form from the 2000s onwards. In the eleven productions in my corpus Ariel is performed by six female actors, four male actors, and one production where the actor's gender is unknown because Ariel is performed

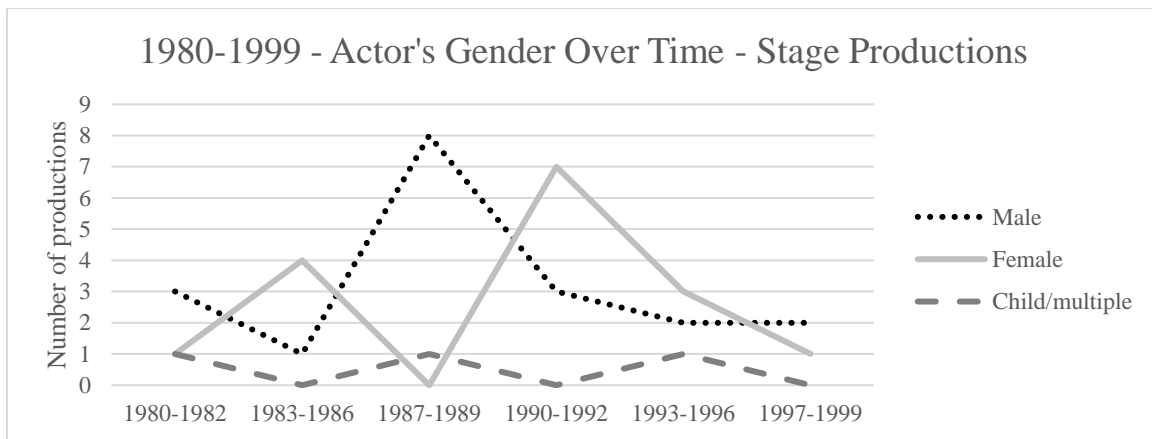
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<sup>131</sup> All 11 productions examined for this chapter follow the new trend, as do all the other modern adaptations I have had access to, but without having seen everything, I cannot make the claim that *all* productions of *The Tempest* for the past 22 years follow the four new gender categories I have defined in my production analysis.

by anonymous audience participants. As in earlier periods, the development of new trends in Ariel's performance history correlate with the evolution of new debates in society.



**Chart 3.1:** The evolution of Ariel's actors' genders from 1940-1999 (shown in ten-year increments) based on the list of principal actors in English productions of *The Tempest* which Dymkowski provided.<sup>132</sup>



**Chart 3.2:** The evolution of Ariel's actors' genders from 1980-1999 (shown in 3-4 year increments) based on the list of principal actors in English productions of *The Tempest* which Dymkowski provided.<sup>133</sup>

This change in casting occurs simultaneously with a heightened focus on gender roles and a push to cast female actors in more roles in general and to use cross-gender casting in historical plays to allow female actors to take on more central roles than the traditional love interests, mothers, or daughters that had previously been the most available options.<sup>134</sup> A fair amount of productions have cast female Prosperos, sometimes making the character female, like in Julie Taymor's 2010 film, or attempting a gender-blind approach like in the Globe's 2000 production, or by casting only female actors like in Donmar Warehouse's 2016 production. However, productions are hesitant to cast a female actor as Caliban, with only

<sup>132</sup> Dymkowski, "Appendix 2: list of principal players."

<sup>133</sup> Dymkowski, "Appendix 2: list of principal players."

<sup>134</sup> Tiina Rosenberg, *Byxbegär* (Göteborg: Anamma, 2000). pp. 115-116, 120.

two instances of this occurring in the sixty-five productions Dymkowski lists from 1940-1999. Both productions with a female actor as Caliban also cast a female actor as Ariel, thus continuing the comparison between the two nonhuman characters' gender presentation.<sup>135</sup> Feminist theatre came about so that “womanhood would get its own language, and this language would be born with and from the female body.”<sup>136</sup> The occasional casting of female actors as Prospero was part of this push to create female roles and tell female stories on stage. Due to Ariel's undefined gender, however, the role allows directors to cast actors of any gender without *requiring* changing lines or relationship dynamics between characters, despite how Ariel's actor's gender has previously steered the interpretation and performance of the character. By making Ariel's gender in performance ambiguous, directors can decide which themes and relationships they wish to highlight rather than being limited to a gendered performance history or making a point of going against the current trends.

Although the gender of Ariel's actors started to shift in the 90s, the performances did not fully settle into the four styles that I have identified in modern productions until the 2000s. Since Dymkowski's title was published in 2000 and scholars typically use her work as their foundation, there is little scholarship examining the current stage of Ariel's gendered performance history. As this chapter shows, Ariel's recent performance history went from a male-performed masculine servant after WWII to a freedom-seeking spirit performed as androgynous and/or nonhuman regardless of the actor's gender in the new millennium. This return to the nonhuman framework used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries to contextualise gender-nonconformity and nonbinary sex comes at the same time as discussions of transness and gender-nonconformity resurged in politics and media, as discussed in the introduction. A special issue of *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* from 2019 claims to be the first to combine early modern studies and trans studies, noting that the latter is “a well-established and thriving academic discipline that boasts almost three decades of scholarship.”<sup>137</sup> So although trans studies has tackled mainstream debates about gender from at least the 90s, until recently it has not interacted sufficiently with Shakespeare studies.

This thesis therefore has the unique opportunity to provide an analysis of Ariel through a new lens – trans studies – and thereby provide the framework for future research to

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<sup>135</sup> Dymkowski, “Appendix 2: list of principal players.” pp. 343, 346. These were Arias 1986 and Lepage 1992.

<sup>136</sup> Translated from Rosenberg, *Byxbegär*. p. 115.

<sup>137</sup> Simone Chess, Colby Gordon, and Will Fisher, “Introduction: Early Modern Trans Studies,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19, Autumn, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1353/jem.2019.0035>. p. 2.

build from. Feminism, queer theory, gender studies, and the increased visibility of trans experiences contributed to more mainstream debates about gender in society, on stage, in politics, and in media. From a theatrical perspective the trans concepts and discussions may intersect with a more metatheatrical interpretation of Ariel's *function* in *The Tempest* as a play about theatre where Ariel's body gives context to the other characters' identities.

Although scholarship on Ariel's gender in modern productions is scant, there is some research that analyses individual performances. Katherine S. Brokaw's 2008 article analyses how Julian Bleach (RSC 2006) performed an Ariel that critics claimed broke with the traditional sprite by analysing what the traditional Ariel is and what made Bleach's performance ground-breaking. She argues that "spirit" has dual meaning: the mystical creature, and a synonym for human emotion and the soul.<sup>138</sup> Brokaw uses this to argue that actors who perform Ariel must (in conversation with the director) decide whether to perform Ariel with relatable humanity or as a mystical creature, concluding that:

Bleach's particular contribution to an understanding of *The Tempest* in performance is to call attention to the way in which a body on stage can both suggest the tried and true binaries of male and female, frightening and fearful, black and white, living and dead, enslaved and liberated, and break away from them, embodying the more uncomfortable realm which is none of these things.<sup>139</sup>

I have not had access to recordings of this production, so it is not included in my corpus, but based on Brokaw's analysis it fits the new trend in Ariel's gendered performance history. She specifies how Bleach's costume, voice, and body language made the actor appear nonhuman and androgynous, and that his interpretation of the role focused on Ariel's function within the play and how the spirit's fight for freedom parallels the actor breaking away from gendered interpretations. She claims that Bleach's Ariel "[broke] down one of the play's central dialectics, that of human versus other. Resolving this dialectic is central to an actor's problem of playing Ariel, that its non-humanness is always embodied in human form."<sup>140</sup> Brokaw's analysis and the production's discussion of Ariel's narrative- and metatheatrical roles correspond to the new trend that I have found, where Ariel's gender is performed on a scale from androgynous to nonhuman to facilitate different discussions about the other characters. As will be discussed in depth in section 3.7, the productions where Ariel is most nonhuman –

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<sup>138</sup> Brokaw, "Ariel's Liberty." pp. 26-27.

<sup>139</sup> Brokaw, "Ariel's Liberty." p. 39.

<sup>140</sup> Brokaw, "Ariel's Liberty." p. 32.



like in Bleach's performance – typically use advanced technology and/or costumes to showcase Ariel as an influential part of the narrative- and physical scenography of the play, as well as using Ariel's Otherness to explore what personhood means.

Sawyer Kemp's research centres transness in the theatre-going experience, and in genderqueer productions, and suggests how theatre companies can have a more conscious approach to how they interact with trans and genderqueer themes and characters. They comment that in casting Rad Pereira, a nonbinary actor, as Ferdinand in an "all-female" production and not explicitly rewriting the role as female – unlike all the other roles –, the Pittsburgh Public Theatre's 2019 production of *The Tempest* explored transness without Othering the character.<sup>141</sup> Particularly in comparison to what Kemp calls "the androgyny stunt" that in recent years is frequently used to Other Caliban and Ariel from the Italian characters and make the two "distinct from the Human."<sup>142</sup> Although Kemp here notes the new trend pertaining to Ariel's androgynous nonhumanity, they do not discuss how Pereira's gender was repeatedly hidden through the advertising and reviews that declare the production to be "all-female" despite Pereira being openly nonbinary. Kemp's articles show that trans topics are being incorporated into Shakespeare, but that most theatre companies and individual productions have yet to effectively interact with trans theory and contemporary trans experiences when representing genderqueerness in historical plays.

Kemp critiques how theatre institutions like the Globe use cross-dressed characters like Viola (*Twelfth Night*) and Rosalind (*As You Like it*) to stay socially and politically relevant with young audiences and the LGBTQ+ community without critically considering how these comparisons inadvertently simplify the trans experience to donning a false disguise.<sup>143</sup> Kemp writes: "in Shakespeare, the magical transvestism of The Pants is instant and absolute."<sup>144</sup> The false equivalence between cross-dressing and transness thereby trivialises the struggle real trans people face when trying to pass. While I agree with this and think modern productions could do more to facilitate a discussion of Ariel's genderqueerness

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<sup>141</sup> This production is not included in my analysis because I did not have access to a recording of it. From the limited material available, it seems like Ariel was performed as a female character without much influence on the discussions in the play. Ariel is barely featured in the trailer, nor mentioned much in reviews.

<sup>142</sup> Sawyer K. Kemp, "Transgender Shakespeare Performance: A Holistic Dramaturgy," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19, Autumn, no. 4 (2019), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/765326>. pp. 277-278.

<sup>143</sup> Sawyer K. Kemp, "'In That Dimension Grossly Clad': Transgender Rhetoric, Representation, and Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Studies* 47 (2019), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2303661684?fromopenview=true&pq-origsite=gscholar#>. pp. 120-121.

<sup>144</sup> Kemp, "In That Dimension Grossly Clad." p. 123.

rather than only using it to discuss other topics, I also argue that Ariel's genderqueerness is not equivalent to cross-dressing because they are established as nonhuman in form and nature, thus making them nonbinary, meaning that they cannot *cross*-dress as the opposite gender. Conversely, one could argue that Prospero orders Ariel to cross-dress when taking on the appearance of a nymph or a harpy, and many earlier productions interpreted it in this way, though I maintain that it is the actor who cross-dresses, not Ariel.<sup>145</sup> Kemp's analysis of how costumes and disguises function – donning trousers makes all other characters see a female character as a man without question or necessity for other methods of passing – does not correspond with how differently gendered clothes and nonhuman costumes are used to obscure Ariel's gender rather than communicate their “real” or “illusory” gender.

Since Ariel's nonhumanity is the reason for their fluid sex and gender, any perceived gender-nonconformity or incongruous gender signifiers between the actor and the character can be seen as an expression of Ariel's nonhuman sex rather than a transgression of human binary sex. As established in the introduction of the thesis, I use Judith Butler's discussions of performative gender to explain how actors consciously employ gendered traits and social norms to obfuscate Ariel's gender in relation to their own. Butler points out how seeing gender-nonconformity often results in searching for the “truth” of the gender-nonconforming individual's sex to establish what their gender should be. This is also true on stage, where the actor's sex affects how the audience interprets the character's gender, thus making it harder to identify nonbinary or otherwise genderqueer characters when they are not specifically labelled as such.

This chapter fills a gap in Shakespeare studies and in discussions of Ariel's performance history by analysing modern performances through a trans framework. Although some researchers, like Kemp and Horbury, merge trans- and Shakespeare studies, my analysis also involves performance studies in order to show how a trans interpretation can expand our understanding of a character. I also discuss how this is already implemented in modern productions. The performance trends that began in the 90s and became established in the 2000s have not been analysed as a group, and there is hardly any scholarship examining Ariel as trans or nonbinary. This chapter provides the analysis that proves that modern

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<sup>145</sup> For example, the initial casting choice for Ariel in Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed*. For more information on productions that cast male and female actors to play different parts of Ariel's role see Dymkowski, “Introduction.” p. 37; Dymkowski, “Appendix 2: list of principal players.”; and Williams, “Prospero's Girls.” p. 19.

performances have established a new trend in Ariel's performance history, no longer portraying them as a pre-teen, a girl, a woman, or a man, but as a spirit. By changing the level of Ariel's nonhumanity, productions can define how many recognizably (human) gendered traits Ariel shows. Notably, these traits are always either a combination of masculine and feminine traits, or they oppose the actor's sex, thereby making Ariel appear androgynous like the monstrous races discussed in chapters one and two. As in previous eras, Ariel's gender and nonhumanity are used to highlight discussions pertaining to other characters or to explore power dynamics and Ariel's metatheatrical function as creator and servant.

### 3.3: From Androgynous to Nonhuman: Scope, Method, and Definitions.

Modern productions perform Ariel's gender as a sliding scale from androgynous to nonhuman. Whereas *androgynous* indicates human gender expressed through combining masculine and feminine performative elements, *nonhuman* is used to describe portrayals of Ariel where the spirit's deviation from human appearance and physical ability is more dominant than potential masculine or feminine elements. Since portrayals typically combine nonhuman *and* androgynous elements, I have categorised the performances based on whether the focus of Ariel's costume and physical movement is to distinguish them from the human characters or to obfuscate their gender. I also compare the relative visual humanity of Ariel and Caliban since Caliban and Ariel's nonhumanity continue to be linked in text and performance. The distinction between the androgynous-nonhuman and nonhuman-androgynous categories largely comes down to costumes: the three androgynous-nonhuman productions use human clothes for Ariel but distinguish the spirit from humans through make up or physical abilities, whereas the nonhuman-androgynous productions use costume elements like wings or moulting feathers to distinguish Ariel visually from the human characters in addition to their acrobatic or magical abilities. My corpus includes eleven productions. I compare seven stage productions and adaptations, two opera adaptations, and a virtual reality (VR) adaptation, all of which were distributed on DVD or otherwise made digitally available to me. I have divided the productions into four categories, as shown in Table 3.1 below. Although each production embodies Ariel's gender and humanity uniquely, I limit my analysis to one production from each category which best exemplifies the overall trends and functions of each category.

Androgynous	Androgynous-nonhuman	Nonhuman-androgynous	Nonhuman
<u>Donmar Warehouse (2016)</u>	The Globe (2000)	<u>The MET Opera (2011)</u>	Touchstone Pictures (2010)
	<u>The Globe (2005)</u>	The Globe (2013)	The MET Opera (2012)
	The Globe (2016)		<u>The Royal Shakespeare Company (2016)</u>
			Tender Claws (2020)
			The Globe (2021)

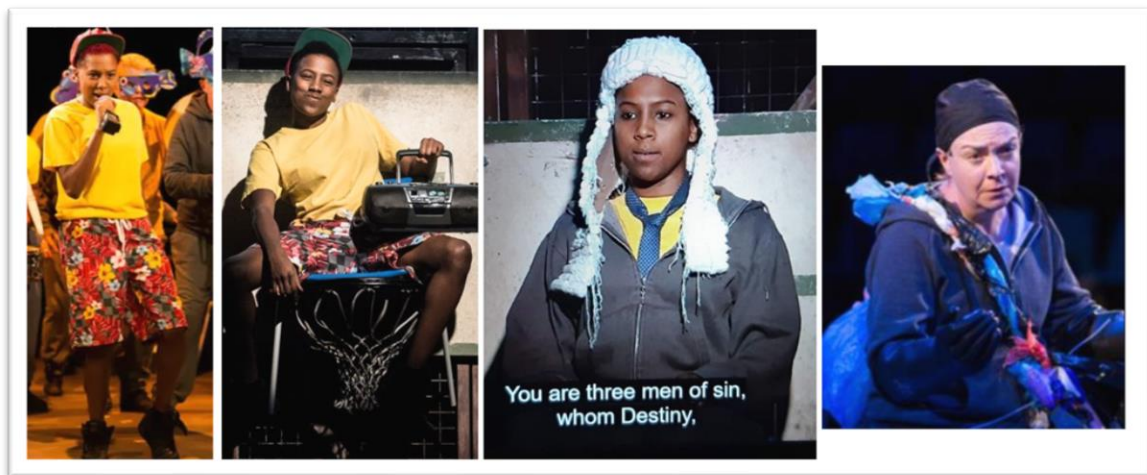
**Table 3.1:** Categorisation of the eleven productions of *The Tempest* analysed for this chapter. The productions used as case-studies in this chapter have been underlined and bolded.

The androgynous example is the all-female Donmar Warehouse production, *The Tempest* (2016), distributed on DVD by Opus Arte, directed for film and stage by Phyllida Lloyd. The androgynous-nonhuman example is a three-man production, *The Tempest*, by the Globe (2005) directed for stage by Tim Carroll, with non-commercial footage made available to me by the Globe Archive. The nonhuman-androgynous example is The MET Opera's 2011 production, *The Enchanted Island*, a pastiche opera mashup of *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* produced for screen by Metropolitan Opera Live in HD and distributed by Virgin Classics, devised and written by Jeremy Sams and directed for stage by Phelim McDermott. The nonhuman example is The Royal Shakespeare Company's technologically ground-breaking 2016 production, *The Tempest*, produced for screen by Illuminations and distributed by Opus Arte, directed for stage and screen by Gregory Doran with digital character creation by The Imaginarium Studios.

The new androgynous to nonhuman performance trend shows that modern productions use Ariel's ambiguous gender as a springboard for contextualising their overall discussions in a way that was not possible in previous eras where Ariel's gender adhered to that of the actor. That is not to say that Ariel was never performed as androgynous or nonhuman previously, but those performances were outliers rather than part of a trend. The large amount of nonhuman performances, particularly in recent years, indicate that modern productions have found the nonhuman to androgynous trend beneficial for both exploring what personhood means and to show off technology and grand costumes. This development can in part be explained by emerging queer, feminist, and trans theories about gender as well as technological advances allowing for further separation of the actor's and the character's bodies. These advancements help facilitate an artistic response to the ongoing discussions about binary gender roles, historically queer characters, and the intersections of class, race, and gender-nonconformity. As discussed in chapters one and two, the role Ariel functions as

a defining Other through which the audience can understand the border between individuality within the Familiar group and individuality that marks someone as Other. Ariel's gender presentation has, as discussed above, long been used and altered by productions to steer the definitions of Sameness/Otherness in tandem with changing social norms and debates. With the renewed focus on Ariel's gender as androgynous/nonbinary and/or nonhuman as cultural, political, and academic debates cover more trans topics, it is important for academics, audiences, and those involved in productions to understand how Ariel's gender functions so that the discussions of Otherness can be reflected and purposeful.

### 3.4: Ariel as Androgynous.



**Fig. 3.1:** Jade Anouka (first three images) as Ariel and Sophie Stanton (final image) as Caliban in Donmar Warehouse's *The Tempest* (2016).

The Donmar Warehouse (2016) production *The Tempest* illustrates how Ariel's androgyny can make them stand out in a same-sex cast, similar to how Ariel would have been interpreted in Shakespeare's all-male productions. This production was the final instalment of Phyllida Lloyd's trilogy where she reimagined Shakespeare plays with a frame narrative that a women's prison was performing them. The previous plays were *Julius Ceasar* (2012) and *Henry IV* (2014). Lloyd used the all-female cast to respond to *Hag-Seed: The Tempest Retold*, Margaret Atwood's re-imagining of *The Tempest* which brings an educational theatre program to a men's correctional facility in Canada so that the plot of *The Tempest* simultaneously plays out on the prison stage and through the lives of Felix (the theatre director) and the other characters (who all parallel characters from the play). Since both *Hag-Seed* and Lloyd's production are frame narratives discussing imprisonment in the play and in our contemporary society, the production responds to the discussions in Atwood's novel by introducing the intersections of gender, sexuality, and familial bonds to the prison setting.

When the actors enter, they enter as their frame-roles and Prospero's actor, Harriet Walter, introduces "herself" as the frame-role Hannah. She explains why she is in prison and contextualises the theme of imprisonment and separation from families that the production focuses on:

For most of us here, prison is a time of reckoning. It's a time of coming to terms with our crimes and the damage we've done, with our anger at those walking free, who are often a large part of the reason we're in here, and dealing with the separation from our families, and our fear for our children's future.<sup>146</sup>

Since Ariel does not have a known past or a family they cannot be defined by relations outside the prisons of Prospero and Sycorax's making. Ariel's disconnected origin is evident because Ariel is not bound by the same rules as the human prisoners. Ariel has access to technology and food which is not available to the other prisoners, such as a boombox they carry with them and use to distort their voice, play music, and record and replay Trinculo's "Thou liest" lines in act III.II.

The gender expression in the costumes set Ariel the character apart from other characters and Anouka's frame role. Ariel's colourful shorts and yellow t-shirt contrast the grey suits and prison uniforms worn by the others. Though some of the other characters show splashes of yellow uniform under hoodies or loose t-shirts, the colour represents Ariel and the spirits and when the other actors take the roles of spirits they remove grey layers to reveal more yellow. When Prospero and Caliban's actors are left on stage alone after all the other prisoners have been released, Ariel's actor is given a fitted blue dress with a short flowing skirt, which contrasts Ariel's base costume in colour and gender presentation and links back to a blue tie the harpy-judge wore. This reinforces that even outside the internal world of *The Tempest*, the frame-role performs gender entirely differently from the character. By making Ariel androgynous in costume and action and making Anouka's frame-role one of the most traditionally feminine prisoners (none of the others wear a dress), the Donmar Warehouse production shows that even in a production series that focuses on gender and incarceration, Ariel is defined outside the gender binary and the normal restrictions of imprisonment.

Since all the actors were female but the roles remained male, all the characters except Miranda (Leah Harvey) and Ariel (Jade Anouka) were portrayed as breeches-roles. This resulted in a demonstration of the queer gender performativity Butler discussed in relation to

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<sup>146</sup> Phyllida Lloyd, "The Tempest," (Opus Arte, 2016), DVD. 1:47-2:10.

sexuality and drag. Butler writes that the “notion of an original or primary gender identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities.”<sup>147</sup> In Lloyd’s production, the female actors vary in their portrayal of masculinity. Some – like Alonso (Martina Laird) and Prospero (Harriet Walter) – perform their male characters as men, whereas others – like Trinculo (Karen Dunbar), and Stephano (Jackie Clune) – come across more like drag kings in their portrayals of a caricatured masculinity with over-packed boxers. Caliban (Sophie Stanton) comes across as a butch lesbian because of a certain softness and a lack of focus on his masculine sexuality as a facet of his imprisonment, despite the cishet masculinity of his spoken lines.<sup>148</sup> Stanton’s more soft and feminine portrayal of Caliban was supported by how similar Caliban was to the frame-role, the only observable difference being that the frame-role was not covered in garlands of rubbish, though she did wash the floors and remain imprisoned with Hannah when all the other frame-roles were given parole.

Although Ariel could be interpreted as a butch lesbian in a similar way as Caliban, the constant reminder of how constructed the illusion of their gender is, makes Ariel more androgynous and therefore marks them as Other in a production which otherwise frequently uses gender as an entrance point to discussions about desire and incarceration. Although Anouka portrayed Ariel as a spirit, all their powers were channelled through human means: using a boombox to distort their voice and provide music, dressing up as a judge to scare the nobles, chloroforming the nobles rather than magically putting them to sleep. Even the other spirits were represented as human creations. All the spirits wore masks made of packaging from snacks and hygiene products that would be available in commissary and showed more of Ariel’s signature prison yellow, thereby connecting Ariel’s domain to a prison institution.

The performance of Ariel’s song “Come unto these yellow sands” shows how the production framed Ariel and the spirits as part of the process of incarceration.

Donmar Warehouse 2016:

Bow wow wow wow.  
 Hark, hark!  
 I hear the strain of a strutting chanticler.  
 Come unto these yellow sands and take hands.  
 Everybody grab a lover, be it lady, be it man.

Original lyrics:

Come unto these yellow sands,  
 And then take hands.  
 Curtsied when you have and kissed,  
 The wild waves whist,  
 Foot it feately here and there;  
 And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.

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<sup>147</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. 187.

<sup>148</sup> For simplicity and consistency, I use the pronouns associated with the character rather than the actor when referring to a character.

<p>Twerk it with your partner, wind it to the floor.          We dancing till the sun goes down and then we'll          dance some more!          Foot it featly here and there till you hear the          chanticleer.          Forget about your worries, put your hands up in the          air.          [Chorus:] cry cock a-diddle-dow.</p>	<p>Hark, hark!  <i>Burden, dispersedly.</i> Bow-wow.          The watchdogs bark.  <i>Burden, dispersedly.</i> Bow-wow.          Hark, hark! I hear          The strain of a strutting chanticleer          Cry cock-a-diddle-dow          (I.II.375-387)</p>
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The song is abruptly cut off by the sound of sirens, and Ariel puts on a police hat before giving Ferdinand his father's passport and some belongings in a zip-lock evidence bag. The "bow wow" of the watchdogs become allusions to sirens and police brutality, whereas the "take hands" turns into "put your hands up in the air" which at first seems to allude to partying, but when the sirens start blasting their meaning retroactively morphs into the "hands up" order given during arrests or other confrontations with the police. Donmar Warehouse's version specifically includes multiple options for the gender of a lover "be it lady, be it man," which is reflected in Ferdinand's question to Miranda "If you be maid or no?" (I.II.428), and in Ferdinand and Miranda's wedding scene where they both wear skirts and top hats, thus giving a queer angle to Ferdinand who has hitherto been portrayed as a man in a suit and tie. This song introduces multiple ways in which Ariel's androgyny and human technology is used to drive the discussions about gender and sexuality in prison. The song establishes that the spirits are connected to the prison through imagery in the lyrics and the spirits' commissary-masks and yellow uniforms. The singing and freestyle performance shows that Ariel's abilities come from human technology like the boombox that provides backing music and Ariel's vocal distortion. Ariel's androgyny and the production's explorations of gender roles and sexuality are also introduced thanks to the inclusion of different options for a lover's gender and through Ariel's costume which goes against all the traditions of making Ariel's nymph costume extra feminine.

The importance of costume and voice come full circle at the end of the play. When Ariel is freed, Anouka sings "where the bee sucks" in a higher pitch (more natural sounding) and without the boombox, then Prospero/Hannah gives Ariel the frame-role's blue dress and Anouka leaves the stage. By equating Ariel to the prison system – from police officers, prison guards, and judges – Ariel's androgyny can be used to introduce and discuss how gender presentation and sexuality differently affects women in prison from the outside perspective the spirits have in the text and in this production.



This production uses the contrast between Anouka's feminine frame-role and androgynous Ariel to make it clear that Ariel's androgynous presentation is intentional. Ariel's androgyny is important because it makes the figure comparable to both Miranda and Ferdinand's relationship and Caliban's butch appearance. The androgynous category shows how Ariel's nonhuman abilities can be presented through human means: using human costumes and revealing Ariel's abilities to be the results of human technology. The two scenes where Ariel's abilities are truly nonhuman use technology to involve the audience and break the fourth wall. After Miranda and Ferdinand's wedding ceremony and dance (a rave), the spirits fill the stage with white helium balloons at a cue from Ariel. Videos representing freedom are projected onto the balloons, but Prospero pops them and all the house lights turn on. The audience becomes startlingly visible – since the stage is in the middle of the room the audience surround the stage and cannot help but see each other across the room – but as Prospero calls for Ariel the lights return to normal. Later Ariel instructs the audience to hold up small lights to create a sea of starry lights as Prospero has his “Ye elves” monologue (V.I.33-87) on an otherwise dark and empty stage.

Many other productions similarly use Ariel's control of lighting, stage elements, and the audience to highlight how Ariel functions on a metatheatrical level, shaping the story and controlling the other characters like Ariel's actor directs the performance and the audience. Donmar Warehouse's 2016 androgynous production made this interpretation clear before Ariel broke the fourth wall by establishing them as an extension of the prison system, giving them access to technology, food, and other goods not available to the other inmates, and by connecting their illusory forms to the police officers, judges, and guards responsible for placing the inmates in prison in the first place. This reflects how Shakespeare used Ariel's nonhuman feminine illusions as a way of humbling the Italian nobles and subjugating them in a hierarchy held up by binary human gender roles. Ariel's androgyny makes the human relationships they represent and reflect more obvious, thus allowing the androgynous category to use Ariel's gender to discuss intersecting *human* identities.

### 3.5: Ariel as Androgynous-Nonhuman.



**Fig. 3.2:** Edward Hogg (first two images) as Ariel and Alex Hassell (final image) as Caliban in the Globe's *The Tempest* (2005).

Unlike the androgynous production where Ariel's performed gender set them apart from the human characters, the androgynous-nonhuman productions make Ariel's gender presentation the lens through which the spirit attempts to understand the other characters' humanity. The Globe's 2005 production split fifteen roles between three male actors, with dancers and a choir performing ensemble and spirit roles. Ariel and Miranda were among the roles performed by Edward Hogg, so Prospero's two agreeable companions are directly comparable in a similar way as during the Restoration. However, because Ariel is defined by their nonhuman nature and ambiguous gender, it is no longer the differences in the "girlhood" of Prospero's daughter and elemental servant that is in focus. Rather, the comparison of their relationship to Prospero revolves around their (un)willingness to disobey the patriarch and what actions invoke compassion or reprimand in a frame of power dynamics rather than gender roles. Similarly, the comparison between Ariel and Caliban is drawn from what they represent as contrasting aspects of Prospero's mind and how they seek freedom, rather than comparing their mistreatment through a colonial or nonhuman frame. Alex Hassell's Caliban is more human than many, perhaps because none of the actors have significant costume changes between roles, so the audience interprets them all within the same human framework. As in the other two androgynous-nonhuman productions, Ariel's costumes combine elements from historically male garments that are interpreted by modern audiences in a more feminine manner, and the central discussions of the productions are not focused on gender. Therefore, Ariel's gender is not the nucleus of discussions like in the androgynous

category, but the androgynous-nonhumanity allows Ariel to be comparable to humans regardless of the humans' genders.

The Globe has, as Sawyer Kemp comments, recently attempted to draw more attention to genderqueerness and trans parallels in their plays featuring cross-dressing female characters.<sup>149</sup> Though they have long produced all-male productions in line with how the plays would originally have been performed, the discussions of gender have often been restricted to costume rather than identity. We see this superficial exploration of gender-nonconformity in form of costume in all three productions in the androgynous-nonhuman category. Kemp claims that cis-performed androgyny typically only uses hair, makeup, and costumes “to either inject sexualized androgyny into or de-gender a role.”<sup>150</sup> However, since Hogg wears the same costume for all his roles, this production highlights the need of androgynous-nonhuman Ariels to make their *movement* distinct from human characters since costumes alone do not distinguish them from human characters. Since the androgynous-nonhuman Ariels are clothed in human clothes – unlike the nonhuman-androgynous Ariels – they use body language or acrobatic movements to distinguish themselves physically from humanity. This builds on the physically expressive dancer-Ariels from the 1700-1800s and the athletic and strong Ariels from the post war era. By maintaining a predominantly human or human-adjacent costume and makeup for Ariel the productions in this category cannot divorce themselves from the associations tied to gendered clothing, even though the actors find inspiration in nonhuman sources and endeavour to perform a nonhuman character who is either genderless or genderfluid.<sup>151</sup>

The Globe 2005 production shows how the androgynous-nonhuman category focuses on inter-character relationships, character motivations, and how Ariel and Caliban function as aspects of Prospero's power in comparison to how Ariel and Miranda function as representations of Prospero's desire. The 2005 production made this explicit by having only three actors, thereby making the discernible characterisation of each individual character more important than distinctions in appearance. Since all the actors are male and Miranda is the only explicitly female character, the actor and character's sex is not enough to determine gender, so the actors focused on movement, speech, and motivation. Hogg experimented with

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<sup>149</sup> Kemp, “In That Dimension Grossly Clad.” p. 120.

<sup>150</sup> Kemp, “In That Dimension Grossly Clad.” p. 121.

<sup>151</sup> Geraldine Alexander (the Globe 2000) describes her make-up as one of the visual aspects that marks Ariel as nonhuman, though from a distance she merely looks pale. I discuss the actors' inspiration in chapter four.

physically marking the transformation between characters with twirls or other visible cues.<sup>152</sup> His first role-transformation establishes this physical shift when Prospero puts Miranda to sleep, and instead of sinking to the floor, Hogg “steps into” Ariel and immediately takes on a more upright demeanour. When Hogg speaks as Ariel, his voice is more nasal and the speech pattern is more clipped compared to Miranda’s gently inquisitive voice. Additionally, his Ariel is much more assertive, even leading a blind Prospero around the stage by a noose when telling him about how Ariel boarded the ship in the initial tempest. As will be discussed in chapter four, the actors’ physical movement and portrayal of character motivation were essential for the audience to distinguishing the characters from one another.

The three androgynous-nonhuman productions perform Ariel predominantly as a nonbinary spirit with an interest in understanding the relationships between the other characters. The Globe’s 2005 production exemplifies how an androgynous-nonhuman Ariel provides a bridge between Miranda and Caliban’s parallel discoveries and explorations of humanity and personhood. As with the androgynous category, the androgynous-nonhuman Ariel is easily comparable to both Miranda and Caliban because the comparisons rely on relationships, not gender roles. However, by portraying the spirit with some nonhumanity, Ariel provides an outside perspective for the audience to examine what it means to be *human* in a society rather than focusing on what it means to be *gendered* in society.

In the text both Miranda and Caliban show reverence for the men they meet, but Miranda does so out of love and a sense of belonging, whereas Caliban has been taught that his Otherness places him below the humans he meets no matter how useless he comes to realise that they are. In androgynous-nonhuman productions Ariel is somewhat of a scientist, observing these interactions and making small adjustments to change the outcomes of the experiments. The androgynous-nonhuman Ariels distance themselves from Prospero and use their observations of the human characters to conclude that emotions (good or bad) are what define humanity when Ariel tells Prospero that their “affections / Would become tender . . . were I human” (IV.I.18-20). The 2005 Globe production shows how Ariel can function as this emotionally intelligent (but emotionally distant) outside observer by focusing on how Ariel and Caliban’s nonhuman traits exist in separate spheres by assigning the dancers to Caliban and the chorus to Ariel. The production also gives a clear comparison between the

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<sup>152</sup> Edward Hogg, “EH3-edit,” in *Adopt An Actor: Ariel / Antionio / Trinculo / Miranda played by Edward Hogg*, ed. The Shakespeare Globe Trust (2005), p. 1.

tender relationship between Prospero and Miranda and the contentious relationship between Prospero and Ariel because Hogg plays both Miranda and Ariel and rapidly shifts between the two characters, thus making the audience see how different the interactions between the same two actors are. The androgynous-nonhuman category is ideal for exploring motivation and character relationships without delving into discussions of race or gender.

### 3.6: Ariel as Nonhuman-Androgynous.



**Fig. 3.3:** Danielle de Niese (first three images) as Ariel and Luca Pisaroni (final image) as Caliban in The MET Opera's *The Enchanted Island* (2011).

The nonhuman-androgynous productions, the MET (2011) and the Globe (2013), function in a similar way as the androgynous-nonhuman productions with their focus on character comparisons, but by making Ariel's nonhumanity more distinctive than their gender, the productions are better suited to discuss graver topics such as colonialism and the dehumanisation and mistreatment of slaves than focusing on character relationships and desires. The MET Opera's 2011 production of *The Enchanted Island* is a pastiche opera composed by Jeremy Sams. The opera combines characters and speeches from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, and takes inspiration from *The Enchanted Island* (1674) by Dryden, Davenant, and Shadwell. Sycorax still lives on the island and Ariel shipwrecks the four young Athenian lovers instead of the Italian nobles, thereby introducing more female characters and young lovers like in the Dryden-Davenant-Shadwell parody.

The two nonhuman-androgynous productions emphasise Ariel's nonhumanity more than their androgyny to better compare the treatment of Caliban and Ariel as dehumanised slaves through a colonialist perspective. When Prospero first addresses Ariel, he calls them "My boy. My beauty."<sup>153</sup> These are markers not found in the text and change the distinct

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<sup>153</sup> Jeremy Sams, "The Enchanted Island," ed. Phelim McDermott (New York: Virgin Classics, 2011), DVD. 5:59-6:00.

linguistic gender systems discussed in chapters one and two because Prospero genders Ariel, not only their appearance.<sup>154</sup> The introduction is more centred on the slave/master relationship than on Ariel's mission report, so the power dynamics are established from the start. The conditions of possession discussed in chapter two are apparent from the swift introductions of the "is there more toil" and "ungrateful wretch" discussions.<sup>155</sup> But when Prospero admits that he needs Ariel's help, he says "*I need your magic as a complement to mine,*" thus establishing that Prospero depends on Ariel. In the following song Prospero reminds Ariel that he commands them as Ariel pulls at the bindings around their wings, chest, and wrists as Prospero controls their body.<sup>156</sup> This tells the audience that Prospero and Ariel may possess equal magical prowess, but Prospero is the master and Ariel his slave. Ariel then gets the opportunity to reveal the seemingly unlimited extent of their powers to the tune of Handel's "Un pensiero nemico di pace" bragging and promising Prospero:

I can conjure you fire from the heavens!  
Or whate'er you desire from the heavens.  
Simply say what you wish me to do,  
And my master, I'll do it for you.<sup>157</sup>

This is before the shipwreck, so the following display of Ariel's powers is the audience's first impression of how the production uses digital projections to show Ariel's magic and metatheatrical function. As discussed in chapter two, the focus on Ariel as a being connected to Heaven instructs the audience to interpret their nonhumanity as positive. From Ariel's wings to Ariel exiting the first scene by turning into a sparkle that flies across the back of the stage and otherwise interacting with the stage lights and projections that other characters cannot interact with, Ariel is marked as nonhuman in appearance and ability from the start.

The production uses Ariel's nonhuman androgyny to compare them to Caliban within the framework of race, class, and colonialism. Caliban's performance style from the late 1800s onwards has been preoccupied with Darwinism and colonialism. He has been seen as nonhuman or subhuman despite his human lineage and is often played by BIPOC actors. Though Caliban can be portrayed as sympathetic or monstrous, Ariel typically comes across as the more obedient and moral of the two slaves. Therefore, when Ariel starts rivalling

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<sup>154</sup> See Table A2.2 in Appendix I for an overview of the markers Prospero uses for Ariel in the text.

<sup>155</sup> Sams, "The Enchanted Island." 6:15-6:20.

<sup>156</sup> Sams, "The Enchanted Island." 6:31-11:54 (italics added for emphasis).

<sup>157</sup> Sams, "The Enchanted Island." 13:25-13:50.

Caliban's nonhumanity we see a more complex discussion of class, race, slavery, and colonialism than when explored simply through gender or class. When Ariel exists on the same level of visual nonhumanity as Caliban, while retaining a small amount of human gender, the two figures are compared on equal grounds. Caliban overhears Ariel's song where they tell Prospero all the things they can do and how they'll amaze Prospero with wonders if he keeps his promise and sets the spirit free. Caliban has no such promise of freedom. Though both are enslaved, and both appear as racially Other from Prospero: Ariel through De Niese's skin tone, and Caliban through dreadlocks and face paint.<sup>158</sup> Caliban's mother, Sycorax, also starts the play hunched over in a ragged dress and with black and grey dreadlocks, but her skin is white and she does not wear a gorilla suit like Caliban does. By the end of the play she stands upright in a corseted Venetian gown with golden dreadlocks whereas Caliban remains shackled and physically unchanged. The nonhumanity in the MET 2011 production is contextualised as a voluntary state of being, cast off visually and physically when one chooses to take part in civilisation.

De Niese's costume combines elements from Prospero, Sycorax, and Caliban (but notably not Miranda), and keeps her Ariel from being fully nonhuman. The costume combines Prospero's male formal wear with Sycorax's autumn-coloured feathers and foliage. Ariel is bound like Caliban, but although their fetters are painted like gold accessories, the straps around their wings are more restraining than the shackle around Caliban's neck. The costumes show a comparison between Caliban who has been convinced that he is wild and monstrous but is free to roam the island, and Ariel who is forced to look presentable in human society but who has no freedom to express herself until they are released and put on a gold outfit with brilliant plumage and a tiny suitcase. Significantly, the costume is masculine and the adaptation retains the use of "his" despite changing a majority of the lines from both *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As a coloratura soprano (a type of soprano with frequent vocal runs, leaps, and trills) in male clothing, Ariel falls within the operatic tradition of what Tiina Rosenberg calls "sonic crossdressing" which features castrati in female roles and female actors in breeches roles and which infuses the highly gendered and "potentially erotic" operatic music from the 1600s onwards with queer desire.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> The face paint resembles a combination of the white face paint and dot-art of Australian aboriginal clans and the yellow face paint of the Huli people of Papua New Guinea, or perhaps a BaKongo mask since his lips and the skin around his eyes is painted black.

<sup>159</sup> Translated and paraphrased from: Rosenberg, *Byxbegär*. p. 76.

However, since Ariel's gender plays second fiddle to their nonhumanity, the vocal qualities of the role must also be understood as part of the discussion around colonialism and racial/ethnic power dynamics. Amanda Eubanks Winkler points to the racial tensions between a white Prospero (David Daniels) and his enslaved Ariel (Danielle de Niese) – whose actor has Sri-Lankan heritage – in addition to the expectations that Prospero should have a deep and heroic voice to show how Ariel is presented as nonhuman, but is still entangled in human gender roles and expectations:

Did a Prospero singing in a high range undermine his masculine authority for some modern listeners? Might the sheer difficulty of de Niese's role and her ability to execute it have given her Ariel an otherworldly power, an agency that circumvented Prospero?<sup>160</sup>

Though they are physically set in layers of power dynamic – Prospero a large, white man who is clearly the master, and Ariel a petite woman of colour who is under Prospero's rule – their vocal qualities challenge the power dynamics of sex, race, and social hierarchy. Even in non-operatic adaptations, Ariel sings frequently and their voice is described in various – mostly nonhuman – ways throughout the play. In opera this is used to mark Ariel's nonhumanity, and the other opera adaptation (The MET 2012) takes Ariel's vocal difference to even higher frequencies. The Globe (2013) production uses voice to obscure Ariel's gender by having the backing vocals sung by female spirits. Whereas the actor's voice betrays their sex, the vocal qualities and backing chorus in Ariel's songs typically obscure Ariel's sex.

*The Enchanted Island* (2011) uses Ariel's costume to anchor them to some semblance of humanity and conflicting gender while connecting them to Caliban, and the Globe's 2013 production uses Ariel's costume to distance them from humanity to connect with Caliban. The Globe (2013) covered Caliban (James Garnon) in body paint resembling the red marble pillars and lower sections of the Globe's stage and dressed Ariel (Colin Morgan) in an open skirt painted like the white marble in above the gallery. By focusing on nonhumanity, these productions facilitate discussions about the dehumanising practices of colonialism and the Western damaging desire to civilise people and cultures they deem Other. However, to argue that the Other is equal to the human, the nonhuman-androgynous productions must retain some human qualities. This is reminiscent of how post-war productions made Ariel male so that audiences would recognise Prospero's mistreatment. Both nonhuman-androgynous

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<sup>160</sup> Eubanks Winkler, "A Thousand Voices." p. 521.



productions portray Ariel's gender in opposition to the actor's sex, thus challenging the balance between the redeemable servant who commits to the master's system and the servant who holds fast to their own culture and identity. Though Ariel obeys Prospero's commands and Caliban does not, Ariel's increased nonhumanity exemplify how Caliban's masculinity conforms to Prospero's system of binary gender while Ariel disobeys the binary boundaries.

### 3.7: Ariel as Nonhuman.



**Fig. 3.4:** Mark Quartley (first four images) as Ariel and Joe Dixon (final image) as Caliban in The Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Tempest* (2016).

The 2016 Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) anniversary production of *The Tempest* is a masterclass in how advances in technology can be used to establish Ariel's nonhumanity as a determining factor of the character's gender-nonconformity. Two years before rehearsals began, the RSC joined forces with the computer company Intel and the performance capture studio The Imaginarium to create a digital avatar of Ariel which would be projected onto static and moving screens during the production's live performances. Intel's director of research for this production, Tawny Schlieski, explains that the goal was to "take real-time information from a motion capture suit, map that on to a complex digital avatar, and then project that digital avatar out through twenty-seven projectors."<sup>161</sup> Once they had successfully programmed the basic avatar and mapped it to Mark Quartley's body they were able to design potentially infinite versions of the avatar, meaning that though the avatar was still puppeteered by the actor, its appearance could change faster and more drastically than a

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<sup>161</sup> "400 years in the making | Intel x The RSC | Experience Amazing | London," updated May 24<sup>th</sup> 2017, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfKcucNfN2M> (YouTube video about the creation of Ariel's digital avatars). 1:49-1:59.

human body or quick-change costume. RSC shows this off at every opportunity, revealing five different skins in Ariel's first scene, three of which appear within the first minute and twenty seconds Ariel is on stage, before the audience sees Ariel's human actor far upstage.<sup>162</sup>

These rapid changes showcase how Ariel's avatar can perform nonhuman feats, all while taking on a variety of sexes. Ariel's entrance in act I.II is marked by a change in lighting, ethereal music, and the sudden descent of a cylinder from the rafters, onto which the blue base-avatar is projected.<sup>163</sup> The cylinder moves around the stage, the projection seamlessly keeping pace, making it seem like the avatar is drifting along until they suddenly dissolve and reappear in a different skin – this one reminiscent of lava streaming into water – on the back wall accompanied by the projection of “the king's ship” (I.II.196). A few seconds after proclaiming that they “flamed amazement” (I.II.198) the avatar bursts into flames and multiple avatars set the ship ablaze. Throughout there is calm, ethereal music, causing a feeling of wonder and marvel rather than fear for the spirit who is boasting that they are more powerful than Jove and Neptune. When Prospero reigns Ariel in by asking about the survivors, the base avatar returns, and the back curtain slowly lifts to reveal the human actor in the shadows below the avatar which is floating across stage on their cylinder. The physical Ariel slowly comes further downstage but keeps close to the dim sides of the stage, thus establishing that Ariel is both the avatar and the actor, making the audience aware that Ariel's forms are illusions. As discussed previously, contextualising Ariel's gender-nonconformity as entertaining marvels allows productions to defuse the potential threat from uncontrolled gender-nonconformity.

The magic ends when Ariel challenges Prospero by exclaiming “Is there more toil?” (I.II.242). The avatar dissolves, the physical Ariel runs forwards to face Prospero, the music stops, Ariel's voice is no longer amplified, and the lights change. The actor becomes the vessel for Ariel's emotions, while the projections show off their nonhumanity and power. Mark Quartley comments that “You get to see two fully fledged performances, one of which

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<sup>162</sup> The skins are: base-avatar who is masculine/androgynous; a version of the base-avatar with fiery details; the fiery avatar fully ablaze; two feminine/androgynous wood nymphs; and a very feminine sea nymph with clearly visible breasts and long hair.

<sup>163</sup> The RSC has published Ariel's first three minutes of stage time to their YouTube channel, and it is a recommended watch for this analysis, though for a full understanding of the technology, one should ideally watch the whole DVD. “Act 1, Scene 2 | The Tempest | Royal Shakespeare Company,” updated June 13<sup>th</sup> 2017, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bjrx0xlPMg> (Recording of RSC 2016: *The Tempest* I.II.187-227).

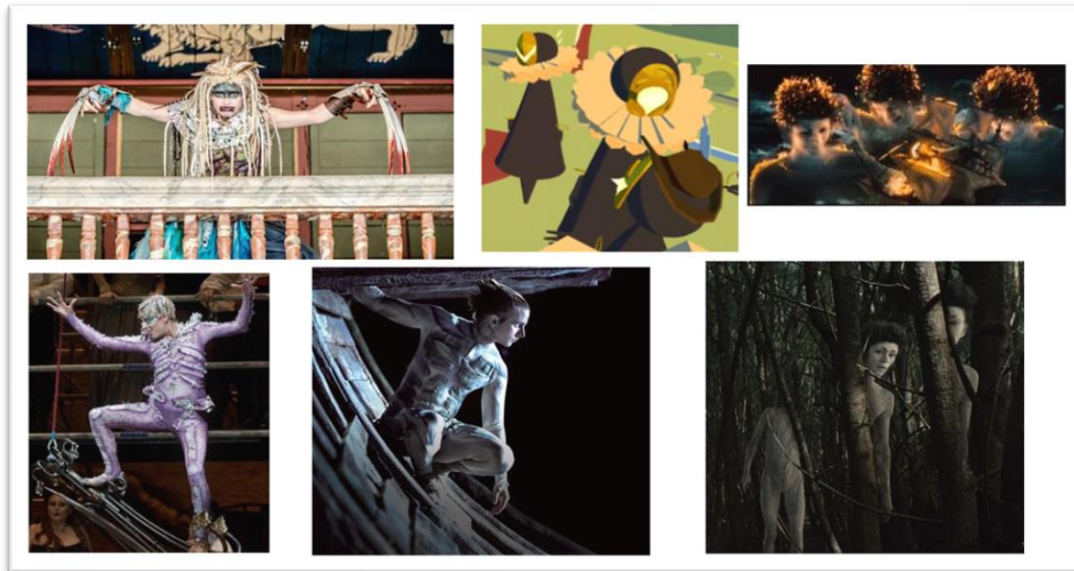
is an actor and another is this apparition that can fly around the space.”<sup>164</sup> The use of digital avatars parallels the use of sprites in VR and CGI in film to establish Ariel as nonhuman in ability and appearance. Since RSC’s avatars had limited facial expressions, the inclusion of the actor on stage meant that Ariel’s emotions could be conveyed more clearly and allowed for realistic physical interaction with other characters. When CGI is applied in post-production it is easier to balance the nonhuman with the human actor’s facial expressions to convey emotion, but RSC could not provide that level of detail in their avatars, focusing instead on mapping the mouth to the actor’s mouth so the avatar appeared to be speaking Ariel’s lines. When subtle emotions that could not be conveyed adequately through body language were called for, the physical Ariel was given more prominence by stepping into the light and standing closer to the audience, or by the dismissal of the avatar.

It will be interesting to follow the development of this category, not only because it has the most examples, but because so far two separate directions have formed. There is a gender divide – by chance or design – where the two nonhuman productions that do not use CGI (the MET 2012 and the Globe 2021) cast female actors, whereas Touchstone Pictures and RSC both used CGI and cast thin, white, male actors. The VR game did not visually separate Ariel from the other roles that the audience participated in with un-gendered sprites. Both non-CGI productions made Ariel visually frightening (see Fig. 3.5 below) and Ariel was performed as wild and untethered, with physical movement reminiscent of a bird of prey. The three CGI productions focused on portraying Ariel’s nonhumanity in an ethereal manner, focusing on the wonderous and generative power of magic. However, both Touchstone and RSC portrayed the harpy as frightening by highlighting Ariel’s monstrous femininity through the addition of wings and breasts to Ariel’s CGI body. If this trend continues to be divided by gender, it may stem from the need to reassure audiences that male-performed gender-nonconformity is non-threatening (in this context) because of how the text establishes that Ariel’s nonhumanity and nonbinarity enforce Prospero’s order, or perhaps because Ariel is aware of their own nonhumanity as seen in V.I.11-32. Perceived male deviance is seen as more of a threat to gender stability than deviance from people perceived as female. This tension is discussed in chapter four where I analyse Edward Hogg’s struggles with compulsory cisnormativity and the fear of drag. It is too early to determine whether the divide

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<sup>164</sup> RSC, “400 years in the making.” 0:58-1:05.

between ethereal and threatening nonhumanity proves to be connected to the use of technology rather than corresponding with the actors' genders, but as more nonhuman productions are performed, we may be able to determine whether the actor's gender causes or merely correlates with the use of CGI.



**Fig. 3.5:** Five nonhuman Ariels: Emma Ernest (top left) for the Globe 2021, Audrey Luna (bottom left) for The MET Opera 2012, audience sprites (top middle) for *Tender Claws* 2020, Mark Quartley (bottom middle) for RSC 2016, Ben Whishaw (top and bottom right) for Touchstone Pictures 2010.

Whether Ariel is portrayed as emotionally volatile and visually intimidating or as a delicate yet powerful otherworldly spirit with insubstantial and multiple forms, the nonhuman productions use Ariel's nonhumanity as a third gender category that enforces the separation between masculine and feminine for the human characters, as discussed in chapter two. RSC's use of digital character creation, live motion capture technology, and projections of characters and scenography proves that CGI and character customisation is no longer contained to film and computer games. Mark Quartley comments that "What the technology affords us is the ability to encapsulate Shakespeare's vision inclusive of all that magic, that wonder."<sup>165</sup> The separation of human actor and limitless spirit allows these productions to explore the emotional extremes present in Ariel, despite Prospero and Ariel's claims that the spirit cannot – or should not – feel emotions as powerfully as a human (V.I.17-24). As discussed in chapter one and two, gender roles and emotional capacity are central to exploring and establishing an understanding of human nature in transitional stages. By connecting Ariel to the visually distinct and memorable aspects of the play, the nonhuman

<sup>165</sup> RSC, "400 years in the making." 2:54-3:01.

productions use Ariel's nonhumanity to explore new methods of expressing emotional complexity in the Other. Though much can be done with great effect through costumes and body language, the technological developments in the twenty-first century create avenues for pushing the limits of what an airy spirit can be. As the RSC's director, Gregory Doran says: "It's for other creative minds to see what we're doing, and take it further."<sup>166</sup>

### 3.8: Conclusion: New Tendencies for Ariel's and the Actors' Genders

These four productions show how Ariel's performance history has changed with the turn of the century. Gendered discussions on and off stage in combination with the rise of queer- and trans studies in the 90s influenced the change in casting practices and focus on providing engaging gender-nonconforming roles and roles for female actors. This allowed directors and actors to explore the new venues of Ariel's character without being bound by the actor's gender. Although all four categories have aspects of this gender-conscious and gender-nonconforming approach, their varying degrees of focus on gender in relation to nonhumanity have distinct functions and serve discussions about different topics.

The androgynous approach sets Ariel apart from the other characters without necessarily questioning their humanity, thus shedding light on gender-specific discussions. The androgynous-nonhuman approach involves an Ariel whose gender and humanity are ambiguous enough to compare with any of the other characters in terms of relationships, desire, and gender roles, though particular focus is paid to Miranda, Caliban, and Prospero. The nonhuman-androgynous approach contrasts this by making nonhumanity more defined by highlighting race/humanity rather than gender in characters, making this an apt style for discussions of a more serious nature such as the dehumanisation and Othering of indigenous people. Finally, the nonhuman approach separates Ariel from other characters visually by presenting nonhuman as a separate sex/gender in *The Tempest*. The nonhuman approach is beneficial for productions that want to show off technology or costumes that would be unsuitable for human characters, or who want to explore Ariel as a moral genderqueer character and push the limits of what personhood means. The growing visibility of trans topics and experiences at the turn of the century and in the past decade have influenced interpretations of Ariel's gender in modern performances. This thesis hopes to assist future developments by explaining the history and current use of Ariel as a nonbinary spirit.

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<sup>166</sup> RSC, "400 years in the making." 3:25-3:20.

Ariel has been used to discuss and define what should constitute the updated ideas of what it means to be human through many turbulent periods. Like how Prospero is reminded that if he is to retain his own humanity, he cannot give his wrath more power than his reason in response to Ariel's unfelt affections in V.I.17-32, Ariel's nonhumanity exposes when others stray from their own humanity. Ariel is one of many characters that Shakespeare used to instruct his audience on the virtues of balancing emotion and reason. The Restoration used Ariel to examine different girlhoods in comparison to Miranda, whereas the post-war era sought to compare the colonialist and Darwinian themes that Caliban embodied by framing Ariel's imprisonment as wrongful by making the role male and thus deserving of the agency not afforded to a girlish spirit.<sup>167</sup>

Dymkowski concludes her introduction of Ariel by writing: "Although in staging *The Tempest* the English theatre has often used Ariel's gender as an instrument of ideological struggle, it has rarely used Ariel to contest the dominant cultural view of gender itself."<sup>168</sup> My analysis of modern productions and the upcoming chapter show that this is changing slightly with the new performance style. Because queer theory, feminism, and trans visibility initiated the dominant debates about gender in power structures, Ariel's gender is intentionally represented outside the dominant (binary) view of gender. However, Ariel's nonconformity is not necessarily a call to dismantle the dominant systems. Rather the spirit's gender is used to customise the debates about the other characters' genders by problematising the strict division between male and female, and masculine and feminine. While the positive representation of trans and/or nonbinary sex and gender are important, the current use of Ariel's nonhuman gender-nonconformity places the spirit outside "the dominant cultural view of gender itself" and challenges the audience to reconsider gender in terms of Miranda, Caliban, and Prospero, but it does not necessarily contest the established binary system. As this new performance trend develops it will be interesting to see how Ariel's nonhuman and nonbinary gender expression continues to shape discussions about gender, and perhaps in future to openly challenge the naturalisation of a binary gender system. Ariel's role in facilitating current discussion topics and bringing technological advances into stage productions, illustrates that Ariel is not only a spirit of the air but represents the spirit of the era.

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<sup>167</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." pp. 41-44.

<sup>168</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 48.

## Chapter Four:

### How Three Actors at the Globe have Approached Ariel's Gender.

The previous chapters have examined Ariel's gender in Shakespeare's time, in text, and in modern performances from an audience perspective, therefore it now makes sense to look at Ariel's gender from the inside. How can we be certain that the new androgynous and/or nonhuman trend is intentional? How can we know that the increased visibility of trans people in society, academia, and politics translated to the theatre stage and that these parallel developments are more than simple coincidence? This chapter delves into production notes from three actors at the Globe at different points in the development of the trend to answer these questions. The first production is from 2000 and shows that productions intentionally had gender-conscious casting and that directors, actors, and costume designers had discussions about how to present Ariel's gender. The second, from 2005, introduces a male actor's fears of performing femininity in a threatening manner because of his own physicality as well as showcasing his failed attempts at un-gendering Ariel. The final notes from 2016 show how language is central to discussions and interpretations of gender at the height of the "transgender tipping point" in media and politics and at the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

A production's performance period is the culmination of a multitude of discussions and choices relating to gender, costumes, and character relationships and motivations. The Adopt/Ask an Actor (AaA) program was a collaboration between the Globe and British schools for all ages and abilities, providing rehearsal and performance notes and interviews from actors throughout the production and performance period and in many cases allowing students to respond with their own ideas about the play. The project ran from 1998 to 2018 and aimed "to share the collaborative, practical and creative process of bringing a role in Shakespeare from the page to the stage - from the first rehearsal to the final performance."<sup>169</sup> Although the AaA program is no longer active today, most of the documents sent to the schools are available online through the Globe's archives. In this chapter I compare the notes provided by three actors who played Ariel. Geraldine Alexander played Ariel in Lenka Udovicki's 2000 production which featured a female Prospero (played by Vanessa

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<sup>169</sup> "Adopt an Actor," Shakespeare's Globe, 2019, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022, <https://archive.shakespearesglobe.com/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=GB+3316+SGT%2fED%2fLRN%2f2>.

Redgrave). In 2005 Edward Hogg played Ariel, Miranda, Trinculo, and Antonio in Tim Carroll's three-man *The Tempest* production. The central idea for this production was that the entire play took place in Prospero's mind and that Ariel and Caliban were two sides of Prospero's nature. The Globe Archive also has audio recordings of interviews with Pippa Nixon who played Ariel in Dominic Dromgoole's 2016 production of *The Tempest* which replaced written AaA notes from that production. Dromgoole's production centres around Shakespeare's use of language and the emotional journey Prospero goes on when he faces his internal turmoil.

For the sake of availability and scope I decided to seek out actor's notes and interviews exclusively from productions at the Globe. Although the Globe Archives have digitised many of their documents and have been wonderfully helpful in providing recordings and documents for my research, they do not have AaA notes by all actors from all productions, nor do they have the relevant prompt books, notes by costume designers, or director notes and interviews. This section therefore focuses on the AaA notes from Alexander (2000) and Hogg (2005) as well as interviews with Nixon (2016). At the time of writing there are no available notes or interviews from Morgan (2013) or Ernest (2021). Although the actor is integral to bringing the character to life on stage, the director has the final say and is responsible for the creative vision. Due to the lack of documentation from directors, we must rely on the information available through the actors. The AaA notes do not provide detailed information about costume design, though they all note the importance of costumes – an element of gendering that is integral to the audience's interpretation of a character. Alexander comments that the costumes are designed and made before rehearsals start due to the short production period, so the actors have minimal influence over the basic design but can change details and impact the makeup design to better suit their characters.<sup>170</sup>

My analysis of the AaA notes shows that the actors' approaches to performing Ariel and their discussions of the figure's gender presentation reveal that all three actors expected Ariel to be a male role and/or character but were faced with a more complex gendering process by considering Ariel's relation to their own and other characters' genders. I argue that despite none of the actors setting out with the intention of performing Ariel as nonbinary, their (and their directors') awareness of trans and gender-nonconforming concepts influenced

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<sup>170</sup> Geraldine Alexander, "Ariel," in *Adopt an Actor: Ariel played by Geraldine Alexander*, ed. The Shakespeare Globe Trust (2000). p. 6.



their interpretations of Ariel's gender. Each production approached the discussion in their own way, and based on the AaA notes, the actors became more aware of their own gender in connection to and opposition to Ariel's, though their notes and performances show that the actors varied in whether they were able to separate their own gender from Ariel's in performance and rehearsal.

By focusing on what drives the character regardless of gender, modern performances are less reliant on gendered stereotypes than previous eras of Ariel's performance history. All three actors agree that Ariel can be performed by anyone regardless of gender. Nixon comments that Ariel "is a part that lends itself to both male and female with absolute natural ease."<sup>171</sup> Hogg, however, notes his struggles with Miranda's femininity and Trinculo's voice but writes "I think Ariel is the trickiest character I play. It's difficult to get the essence of him; you can play him a million different ways."<sup>172</sup> Each of them finds that the key to Ariel lies in finding the character's motivation and their relationship to Prospero. Ariel's motivation is freedom, and as Alexander writes: "the behaviour of someone who wants to be free is the same for anything, be it man, woman, animal or spirit."<sup>173</sup> These comments reflect that a modern Ariel is neither performed as a feminine sprite nor an acrobatic male servant. The longing for freedom is what defines the character, not the actor's sex. However, most actors on stage are not able to dissolve their form at will and must perform Ariel with the help of their bodies, which influences the audience's interpretation of Ariel's "real" sex and gender, as discussed in relation to Judith Butler's theories. Therefore, it is important to examine how the actors approach Ariel's gender in relation to their own.

This chapter examines how the actors' preconceptions affect the performance of Ariel's gender. I question whether Ariel's androgynous-nonhuman gender presentation in each of the three productions is a conscious decision or the by-product of other discussions in the rehearsal period. I have examined how much the three actors focus on gender in comparison to nonhumanity and how this balance comes across on stage. My analysis reveals that Edward Hogg, the only male actor out of the three, struggled more than the female actors

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<sup>171</sup> Pippa Nixon, "Adopt an Actor 2016: Ariel played by Pippa Nixon," interview by Rona Kelly, Transcribed and MP3, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/pzba52as> (MP3) and <https://archive.shakespearesglobe.com/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=GB+3316+SGT%2fED%2fLRN%2f2%2f91%2f2> (Globe Archive). p. 8.

<sup>172</sup> Edward Hogg, "Ed AYA," in *Adopt An Actor: Ariel / Antonio / Trinculo / Miranda played by Edward Hogg*, ed. The Shakespeare Globe Trust (2005). p. 3.

<sup>173</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 4.

to distinguish his own sex from his interpretation of Ariel's sex and gender presentation as an agender entity. In this chapter I prove that the new trends in Ariel's performance history that I identified in the previous chapter are conscious decisions and that the actors, directors, and costume designers intentionally present Ariel outside the human gender binary. Since the new androgynous to nonhuman trend has not yet been discussed by scholars and directors/actors, the AaA notes are valuable sources that show different approaches and discussions within the androgynous-nonhuman category.

As established in chapter three, the androgynous-nonhuman approach uses movement to distinguish Ariel from human characters and focus on Ariel's motivation (their freedom) as a way of exploring inter-character relationships. The AaA notes show that Ariel's gender is intentionally performed as a mix of gender-nonconformity and nonhumanity, showing that Ariel's new androgynous to nonhuman performance style is a deliberate choice by the actors and directors. My analysis shows that the female actors are conscious about the relationship between their and Ariel's gender from the start, whereas the male actor discovers the incongruence later in the rehearsal period. This could reflect their varying awareness of the impulses that shaped the new trend, with the female actors being more aware of feminist casting in 2000 and gender-critical casting in 2016, whereas Hogg's awareness of trans concepts in 2005 was limited to a rudimentary misunderstanding of cross-dressing.

#### 4.1: Geraldine Alexander's Genderfluid Approach.



**Fig. 4.1:** Geraldine Alexander Ariel (left), Ariel-as-a-nymph (middle), and Ariel-as-a-harpy (right) in the Globe's *The Tempest* (2000).

Gender and labels are one of the first challenges for female actors performing Ariel because of the pronouns in the text, whereas male actors discover the lack of masculinity later when deciding how to stage Ariel's shapeshifting and interpret Prospero's descriptions. Alexander comments: "It is unusual to cast a woman as Ariel - all the references in the text are to 'he', 'him' etc. I think s/he is a spirit, she is part of Prospero and can easily be played by a man or a woman."<sup>174</sup> The performance history from the post-war era also implies that Ariel should be male, a trend which had started to shift in the 90s as feminist theatre introduced more female and genderbent roles, as explained in chapter three. Alexander's production cast a female actor, Vanessa Redgrave, as (a male) Prospero, so Alexander was primed to be conscious about gender and analysed Ariel's gender in relation to her own at the onset of the production period. In her second AaA note Alexander writes:

When I came to the part I had no sense of he/she /it. I just had a few thoughts with no idea of how to make them into a character that an audience would like. But now the choices I am faced with about her (let's call 'it' her, as I am female) are becoming simpler.<sup>175</sup>

Alexander uses a range of pronouns for Ariel and decides that the easiest solution is to interpret Ariel's gender in accordance with her own. Up until this point she has been using a mix of "he"/"him," "she"/"her," and "s/he" or "his/her" when discussing Ariel.<sup>176</sup> Alexander does not comment on the fact that Redgrave was cast as Prospero in this production, which is more unusual than casting a female Ariel, but aligns with the developments of feminist theatre that were outlined in chapter three. Redgrave did not partake in the AaA program, so I do not have her notes to compare with. By casting a female actor as Prospero and not altering the role to appear more feminine, and by casting a female actor as Ariel and allowing her to explore Ariel's gender in relation to her own, the director, Lenka Udovicki, follows the trends in feminist theatre, gender-critical casting, and trans-studies' focus on trans concepts as deconstructive around the turn of the millennium.

By focusing on Ariel's physical qualities rather than their perceived sex Alexander found that Ariel's character development was best understood and performed through a genderfluid progression. After experimenting with acrobatics, aerial and birdlike qualities through using method acting (calling on the actor's memories and psychologically analysing

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<sup>174</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 2.

<sup>175</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 4 (grammar unchanged).

<sup>176</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." pp. 1-4.

the character's motivations to elicit real/natural emotion on stage) and Laban (an acting technique that focuses on breaking down and categorising movement, based on theory from dance and choreography), Alexander landed on a gendered character development:

Ariel begins as a servant to Prospero and nothing more. She's almost androgynous. But as the play progresses and she begins to think about being free more and more, she starts to turn into a young woman. In terms of playing the part, at the start I feel like a young boy and by then end I feel very feminine. That is what my journey as an actor feels like. It's not necessarily the same as Ariel's journey... I think that the movements of young people, with their energy, imagination, and the way they are puzzled by things because they are learning all the time, are inextricably linked with Ariel. You can see this when she watches Miranda and Ferdinand. Their relationship and interaction fascinate her, and I think she learns human qualities from them.<sup>177</sup>

Alexander's approach shows how breaking down Ariel's movement allowed her to examine the impulses and inspirations behind those types of movements. Because Alexander had already situated Ariel as physically Other through her intention to use acrobatics to distinguish their airy quality and speed from other characters, she sees how Ariel's androgyny affects their relationships. By interpreting Ariel as undergoing a physical transformation between genders, Alexander connects her own exploration of gender with Ariel's exploration of what it means (for Miranda) to be human.

Although the transition from boy to woman could be interpreted as her performing Ariel as a trans woman, Alexander makes sure to explain that the transition between genders that she performs as an actor is "not necessarily the same as Ariel's journey." As discussed in chapter two, the transition from youth to maturity in Shakespeare involves gender and sexuality. Alexander's interpretation that Ariel "starts to turn into a young woman" as they find their individuality matches the maturation process Garber discusses.<sup>178</sup> Alexander portrays the maturation process as essential to Ariel's development as a character, and her own experience of starting "like a young boy" and becoming "very feminine," but separates Ariel's gender from this development. This hesitation to claim that Ariel herself is trans or gender-nonconforming fits with Dymkowski's assertion that although productions use Ariel's gender as a way of exploring power dynamics and discussions about humanity, the productions do not attempt to challenge the dominant gender ideologies.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 4 (grammar unchanged).

<sup>178</sup> Garber, *Coming of Age*. pp. 30-31.

<sup>179</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 48.

By interpreting boy-hood, androgyny, and womanhood as a chronological progression of character growth, but not gender presentation, Alexander's performance suggests that as Ariel develops a deeper understanding of human relationships, they also become more entangled in human gender roles. This relies on a reading of childhood as separate from gender and as the starting point from which gendered potential is realised through socialisation and puberty. As discussed previously, Ezra Horbury outlines how Ariel's youth can be interpreted as an example of genderless childhood and acceptable transness.<sup>180</sup> Alexander's interpretation aligns with Horbury and Garber's views on youth as genderless and my interpretation of how Ariel's nonhuman femininity is weaponised to enforce gender roles and social hierarchy. When Ariel performs Ceres, Alexander performs a spirit who seems a bit uncomfortable despite being decked out in gold and for once using their nonhuman abilities for a seemingly joyous occasion. Throughout the AaA notes Alexander states how important freedom and liberty are to Ariel. Perhaps the spirit's wedding play is the point where Ariel discovers the confinements that come with femininity and realises that Prospero sees his daughter as even more of a possession than either of his servants, as discussed in chapter two, and that femininity in this society implies ownership either through paternal and matrimonial systems or through servitude. By using a genderfluid framework for how Ariel interacts with the human characters, Alexander presents gender as something foreign to Ariel's nonhumanity. Alexander's approach indicates how the new performance style took shape through analysing Ariel's development separately from the actor's performance of gender by applying trans concepts to deconstruct binary gender without discussing lived trans experience, as was also common in trans studies in the early 2000s.

One of the distinguishing factors between the androgynous-nonhuman productions and the nonhuman-androgynous productions is that the androgynous-nonhuman productions use human clothes in Ariel's costumes despite both categories focusing on nonhuman inspirations for the inner life of the character. Ariel is, of course, always nonhuman by nature and description: they are "an airy spirit."<sup>181</sup> However, the costuming and make-up ranges from human to nonhuman between productions, and the closer to human Ariel is, the more likely it is that they will be perceived as enacting human gender roles. Alexander describes her costume as a sort of uniform that helps her get into character, and comments that "It is

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<sup>180</sup> Horbury, "Early Modern Transgender Fairies." pp. 78-81.

<sup>181</sup> Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. p. 2.

also androgynous so I can go through my journey from male to female without feeling restricted in any way.”<sup>182</sup> This neutral illusory appearance obscures Ariel’s inner gender identity. Alexander’s make-up is more nonhuman than the two other actors in the androgynous-nonhuman category, and she explains that this was both natural and intentional:

I didn’t have to experiment with make up. I knew exactly what she should look like. I whiten my face, but rather than rubbing the powder in, I leave it in blotches on my face. She almost looks like she’s just bumped into a cloud. I feel like a spirit that is part of the air when I am in her costume.<sup>183</sup>

Although the blotchy effect can be difficult to see from a distance, Ariel’s pale face does set the spirit visually apart from all other characters than Caliban, who is covered in blotchy red body paint. This is a costuming choice that the Globe repeated in 2013, contrasting Ariel’s white costume with Caliban’s red, stony body paint, thus alluding to the red and white marble columns and inlays on stage. By combining the androgyny of human clothes and the nonhuman make-up, Alexander reminds the audience that although Ariel appears more human than Caliban, that does not make them human. When Ariel is set free Prospero removes their jacket to reveal a long white dress. Ariel then walks sombrely through the audience. This is the only time Alexander interacts with the audience, but even as she walks through them she is set apart by the white make up and the unease that audience interaction elicits from British audiences. Alexander balances human and nonhuman in the make-up and the final removal of (some of) the human layers to portray Ariel as a servant who is willing to integrate with their master’s systems but who, at their core, is still true to their nonhumanity.

Alexander notes that the Globe cannot use technology to create magic, which explains why the early Globe productions are all androgynous-nonhuman or nonhuman-androgynous, since the nonhuman productions require elaborate technology and/or costumes. The 2013 and 2021 productions use much more nonhuman costumes, indicating that the Globe is adapting to the new trend despite the technical limitations that Alexander points out:

You can’t just come on stage and ‘be’ a spirit, especially not in the Globe because there is no hope of lighting or special effects that are going to magic you and the audience somewhere - that will create the magic of the play for you.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Alexander, “Ariel.” p. 4.

<sup>183</sup> Alexander, “Ariel.” p. 4.

<sup>184</sup> Alexander, “Ariel.” p. 2.

Perhaps this is why actors at the Globe tend to focus on Ariel's movement and motivation as a means of distinguishing them from other characters. As stated in chapter three, the androgynous-nonhuman productions use Ariel to explore character relationships by presenting Ariel as an outsider both in terms of gender and human personhood. Alexander frequently comments how Ariel is an observer and is distanced from the other characters and the audience because Ariel is not permitted to interact with them. Because of the technological limitations, Ariel cannot affect the scenery and thus be established as a metatheatrical element. Therefore, I propose that the Globe aligns Ariel's metatheatricality with the audience's perspective more than as the originator of special effects in *The Tempest* as a play about performance. By positioning Ariel as an observer, Alexander presents Ariel as a viewpoint. Alexander writes: "the play also deals with perception - how different people see the same event... This is another interesting area to explore as Ariel."<sup>185</sup> This is also reflected in the audience response to Ariel. Alexander says that she received many letters from the public, each with a different interpretation of Ariel.<sup>186</sup> She says that because Ariel is a spirit, they have endless potential, and they are a role that audience members of all sorts can relate to. When Ariel is performed more nonhuman, they may become less relatable, so the themes they address need to be more specific, whereas the androgynous-nonhuman approach makes Ariel relatable and can therefore use them to explore character relationships through a neutral perspective, unclouded by gender or preconceptions about what it means to be human.

Because this is the earliest production in my corpus it is instructive in terms of analysing why and how the new trend was established. Through Alexander's interpretation of her genderfluid journey as an actor and the way she separated her journey from Ariel's character development we see that discussions about gender were a prominent part of developing an interpretation of Ariel in performance. We also see that the combination of Ariel's androgyny and nonhumanity were used to examine inter-character relationships, with particular focus on how Miranda and Ferdinand could instruct Ariel's understanding of what it means to be or become human. Alexander comments that Ariel "doesn't have a scene with Caliban, which I think is a shame, as I'd like to be able to see the contrast between them on stage and to discover how they behave towards each other."<sup>187</sup> This suggests again that Ariel

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<sup>185</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 3.

<sup>186</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 6.

<sup>187</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 4.

is a useful figure to use for comparison to both Miranda and Caliban despite this production only focusing on Miranda. Alexander's comment about technical limitations at the Globe explain why the Globe tended towards an androgynous-nonhuman Ariel at the start of the 2000s. As the androgynous to nonhuman trend developed into favouring nonhumanity, the Globe followed by making Ariel's costumes more nonhuman. Alexander's notes show that productions were intentionally breaking with Ariel's previous performance history by casting female actors and encouraging them to explore gender and nonhumanity in new ways. This aligns with the way trans topics were discussed in academia and in trans communities in the early 2000s, with a focus on breaking with binary gender expectations and working on establishing a shared vocabulary which had not yet reached ciscentric spaces.<sup>188</sup>

#### 4.2: Edward Hogg's Compulsory Cisnormative Approach.



**Fig. 4.2:** Edward Hogg as Ariel-as-a-harpy (top left) condemning Mark Rylance's Alonso (bottom left), and as Ariel (right) in the Globe's *The Tempest* (2005).

The AaA notes present a division between an androgynous yet gender-conscious Ariel who attempts to learn humanity performed by Alexander and Nixon and a distinctly nonhuman and ungendered Ariel performed by Hogg. However, on stage all three performances fall within the androgynous-nonhuman category largely due to the androgynous humanity of Ariel's costume. My analysis of Hogg's AaA notes reveals that the inconsistency between Hogg's interpretation of Ariel as a genderless Big-Brother-esque AI and the way he

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<sup>188</sup> McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*. pp. 168-172.



writes about and performs Ariel as an androgynous or feminine spirit stems from his unfamiliarity with genderqueerness and trans concepts. His notes show that he is unable to separate his own gender from Ariel's despite repeating that Ariel cannot be understood as a human and is physically disconnected from human concepts, and that his performance of Miranda was marked by a fear of being interpreted as a predatory transvestite.

Male actors often come across as androgynous rather than feminine or gender-nonconforming when performing Ariel without emphasising masculinity like the post-war Ariels or specifying that they are performing a non-male character. This could be related to the fact that humans tend to perceive illusory faces – inanimate objects with features that people perceive as faces – as male despite there being no biological sex to instruct the categorisation of gender.<sup>189</sup> A recent study shows that across multiple tests over 80% of illusory faces are perceived as male, and they propose that this could be explained by a perception of the male/masculine as neutral.<sup>190</sup> Therefore some addition, such as eyelashes or more prominent lips, is required for nonhuman creatures or inanimate objects to be perceived as female/feminine. Combining this information with Butler's theories of seeking the "reality" of a gender-nonconforming person's sex could explain why male performances can lean into femininity without being interpreted as female, because audiences attempt to categorise them within the actor's perceived "real" sex. Additionally, nonhuman appearances do not give any indication of gender, so they may be more likely to be interpreted as masculine across the board. However, because we still see the actor's body, female actors are not easily interpreted as men, and male actors tend to use prosthetics or CGI to give their Ariels breasts and feminine curves. As discussed in chapter three, female actors perform nonhuman Ariels as monstrous in comparison with the male-performed ethereal nonhumanity, perhaps because of transmisogynistic notions of the destabilising and threatening potential of monstrous femininity in the process of demarcation.

Compulsory cisnormativity and the fear of unintentional parody can explain why female actors are free to portray androgynous, genderfluid, and masculine Ariels but male actors tend to rely on a protective layer of nonhumanity to perform femininity. I borrow Adrienne Rich's term *compulsory heterosexuality* here and apply it to gender rather than

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<sup>189</sup> Susan G. Wardle et al., "Illusory Faces are More Likely to be Perceived as Male than Female," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119, no. 5 (24<sup>th</sup> January 2022), <https://doi.org/doi:10.1073/pnas.2117413119>. p. 1.

<sup>190</sup> Wardle et al., "Illusory Faces." pp. 4-7, 9.

sexuality. My use of compulsory cisnormativity refers to the enforcement of cisnormative behaviour and the patriarchal idealisation of masculine traits which make it more acceptable for women to perform (cishet) masculinity than for men to perform any femininity. This concept is clear, for example, in the difference in reactions to a woman in a suit (empowering) and a man in a dress (degrading and a potential war on all western masculinity). When masculinity is valued above femininity a woman striving for masculinity (without posing a threat to cis men's ability to work or find a romantic partner) is seen as respectable, whereas a man striving for femininity is seen as degenerative and insidious.

Although Ariel has had many gender presentations throughout their performance history, productions have not used Ariel's gender-nonconformity to dismantle the dominant gender roles.<sup>191</sup> When Ariel became a male role in the early-mid 1900s, the spirit's masculinity was highlighted through more intense focus on the male actor's nude or near-nude body and their powerful athleticism as opposed to the feminine Ariel's delicate acrobatic style. From a trans perspective, this aversion to perceived male gender-nonconformity reflects the transphobic bathroom debates that incorrectly frame trans women as predatory cis men but forget about the existence of trans men because they are perceived as misguided cis women. Ariel's gender-nonconformity was acceptable when it served Prospero and did not threaten the patriarchy because it was performed by boy actors and female actors. But when adult men began performing Ariel, the potential gender-nonconformity no longer followed normative notions of female subjugation, so productions made Ariel as masculine as possible. In the new trend, however, Ariel's gender-nonconformity is seen as a natural part of Ariel's nonhumanity as a spirit. The more visibly nonhuman a male-performed Ariel is, the more sensationalised and entertaining their gender-nonconformity is, thereby alleviating the potential threat it poses to human gender systems.

Because actors and audiences often have preconceptions that Ariel should be male, the process of addressing one's own gender in relation to Ariel's is slightly postponed for male actors. When writing about why performing Miranda's femininity is difficult, Hogg brings up similar associations as described in the unacceptable mature trans fairies that Horbury describes in their article, as discussed in chapter one and two. Hogg writes:

I'm still struggling with Miranda; I keep worrying that I'm not acting anything like a girl! I'm either like a boy or a drag-queen. At the moment, when I try to do

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<sup>191</sup> Dymkowski, "Introduction." p. 48.

‘feminine’, I feel [I] go to crazy extremes... all of a sudden I’m some sexual predator fluttering her eyelids – not very Miranda really!<sup>192</sup>

Hogg’s struggles with performing femininity in a natural way were alleviated by realising that the perceived femininity of his Jacobean undershirt costume meant that he did not have to perform femininity, rather he could focus on language and intent.<sup>193</sup> Although he mostly focuses on Ariel as nonhuman, he does note the similarities between Caliban, Miranda and Ariel’s gender expectations that I analysed in chapter two: “I want [Miranda] to be perfect and she can’t be male in any way, that’s the problem; she’s so feminine and so pure, the exact opposite of Caliban. Ariel’s doesn’t have that many male qualities either... so those are my problems to work on.”<sup>194</sup> I interpret Hogg’s worries about “turning her [Miranda] into a drag-queen” as stemming from being overly conscious of her gender as different to his own.<sup>195</sup> I propose that this fear of unintentional parody and negative associations to transness is part of why male actors elect to focus on the nonhumanity of the femininity they embody as Ariel. This avoids the issue of “unacceptable” gender by hiding Otherness behind Ariel’s nonhuman nature rather than the actor’s gender-nonconformity.

This nonhuman loophole to compulsory cisnormativity is clear when comparing how Hogg and the female actors approach Ariel’s nonhumanity through a gendered perspective. Hogg repeatedly focuses on the fact that Ariel is “not bound by the limitations of a human body. After all, he’s not a human being.”<sup>196</sup> And yet Hogg is unable to discuss Ariel without assigning male pronouns to the spirit and thinking of them as physically humanoid. When discussing his choice of using George Orwell’s *Big Brother* as an inspiration Hogg repeats:

I didn’t want to make Ariel a real person ... because *he*’s all-seeing and has a sort of limitless influence ... But even so, it’s difficult to pin Ariel down because *he*’s not like any human, is *he*? Unless you make *him* like a superhero or a fairy.<sup>197</sup>

Here Hogg shares an idea with sci-fi adaptations in suggesting that Ariel is like an AI made corporeal. Both *Forbidden Planet* (1956) and *Star Trek S3E19* “Requiem for Methuselah”

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<sup>192</sup> Edward Hogg, “EH4-edit,” in *Adopt An Actor: Ariel / Antionio / Trinculo / Miranda played by Edward Hogg*, ed. The Shakespeare Globe Trust (2005). p. 2.

<sup>193</sup> Edward Hogg, “EH5-edit,” in *Adopt An Actor: Ariel / Antionio / Trinculo / Miranda played by Edward Hogg*, ed. The Shakespeare Globe Trust (2005). p. 1.

<sup>194</sup> Hogg, “EH3-edit.” p. 2 (grammar unchanged).

<sup>195</sup> Hogg, “EH3-edit.” p. 1.

<sup>196</sup> Edward Hogg, “EH2-edit,” in *Adopt An Actor: Ariel / Antionio / Trinculo / Miranda played by Edward Hogg*, ed. The Shakespeare Globe Trust (2005). p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> Hogg, “EH4-edit.” pp. 1-2 (italics added for emphasis).

(1969) portray Ariel as a robot devoid of autonomy or emotion. In *Hag-seed: The Tempest Retold* (2016), Margaret Atwood's adaptation of *The Tempest* where the events of the play occur in real life as Felix (Prospero) directs the play in Fletcher Correctional, the inmate-actors are opposed to playing a fairy or a girl. They find both Ariel and Miranda emasculating, with Ariel being particularly gay (in the sexual *and* derogatory sense). Felix reframes Ariel's abilities and songs, and the actors conclude that Ariel is an alien or a superhero, though Fletcher-Ariel ends up being performed as a holographic projection.<sup>198</sup> Hogg's Ariel differs from these superhuman robots and aliens not in ability, but because Hogg performs an Ariel who, despite lacking autonomy, clearly has opinions about the actions they are ordered to perform and whose longing is not to serve Prospero, but to be free. He also cannot physically perform Ariel without relying on Hogg's own human body and struggles to ignore his binary thought patterns about his Miranda's transgressive femininity and Ariel's lack of masculinity. Therefore, Hogg focuses on Ariel's nonhumanity rather than their gender-nonconformity so that he will not perform another unintentional parody of femininity or drag, as he was overly conscious of when finding Miranda's characterisation.

Hogg's intention of portraying nonhumanity without gender does not come across in performance, however. As Alexander noted, the Globe does not have access to the technology required for portraying Ariel as a robot or a holographic projection, and Hogg's costume is the same for all his characters. Therefore, his Ariel is not sufficiently visually nonhuman to be placed in the nonhuman-androgynous or nonhuman categories. The production does attempt to mark Ariel as different from the human characters by assigning the Greek chorus to Ariel, and although the modern dancers were originally intended for Caliban, they also assist Ariel. This mixing of grounded modern dancers and lofty ancient Greek chorus further obfuscates the distinctions between roles which is already complicated due to there only being three actors who are additionally attempting to portray the entire play as merely figments of Prospero's imagination. However, when analysing the intent of the production rather than measuring whether it succeeded, we see that Hogg's Ariel is more powerful and threatening than most of the male-performed Ariels. Since the production's interpretation is that Ariel and Caliban are aspects of Prospero, it is Prospero, not Ariel, who

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<sup>198</sup> Margaret Atwood, *Hag-Seed: The Tempest Retold*, Hogarth Shakespeare, (Random House, 2016). Discussions of Fletcher-Ariel's character can be found on pages 83, 87, and 101-105; costume descriptions on pages 164-165, and 189; Ariel as a nymph on page 214; Ariel as a harpy on page 225; and Ariel as a holographic projection on pages 247-249.

is constrained by dancers who recreate the knotty pine while Ariel roams free on stage as Prospero threatens to imprison them in I.II.245-298. Hogg's Ariel holds a noose as Prospero struggles against the dancers' bondage, and as Ariel angrily promises Prospero that "I will be correspondent to command / And do my spriting gently" (I.II.297-298) they let go of the noose and Prospero stumbles from the dancers' grasps to catch it. In this production Caliban is Prospero's emotional side and Ariel is his executive side. Therefore, when Prospero threatens to restrict Ariel, Prospero himself is the one who suffers confinement. This reveals why Ariel's freedom and stubborn powers are not a direct threat to the stability of Prospero's rule, because Ariel is not an individual, but part of Prospero. Hogg's attempted nonhumanity and the portrayal of Ariel as an aspect of Prospero shows that despite the production not consciously discussing Ariel's gender, it still took steps to attempt to make Ariel's lack of masculinity fit into systems that would not contend with the dominant gender ideology.

As another early example of how a production approaches the new androgynous to nonhuman trend in Ariel's performance style, the 2005 production at the Globe highlights how male-performed Ariels face different prejudices when performing Ariel's gender-nonconformity. Whereas Geraldine Alexander was anxious about the responsibility of performing Ariel as a female actor after a long period of Ariel being mostly performed by male actors, Hogg's anxieties about performing femininity for both Ariel and Miranda appear to be based in a fear of unintentionally feeding transphobic stereotypes about predatory cross-dressers and trans-feminine lust. This explains why the male-performed Ariels tend to focus on nonhumanity as a framework for exploring non-threatening femininity as entertaining aspect of Ariel's magic, rather than as an expression of Ariel's character and power. As Kemp argues, there is a lack of critical introspection and public discussion about the trans, cross-dressing, and gender-nonconforming narratives that the Globe has been staging in an attempt at being relatable to young and queer audiences. The Globe 2005 production exemplifies how modern productions could benefit from actively engaging in discussions about gender presentation and the differences between transness, drag, and gender-nonconformity or androgyny. If the people involved with the production had a better understanding of trans experiences, Hogg could have discussed his fears of performing Miranda as predatory and, like Alexander and Nixon, used Ariel's nonbinarity intentionally in his interpretation rather than unsuccessfully attempting to un-gender Ariel without the proper contextual and linguistic framework for understanding nonhumanity and genderqueerness.

### 4.3: Pippa Nixon's Linguistic Approach.



**Fig. 4.3:** Pippa Nixon as Ariel (right, middle), and as Ariel-as-a-harpy (left) in the Globe's *The Tempest* (2016).

Pippa Nixon had a slightly more nuanced perspective of Ariel's gendered performance history when she first approached the role. Nixon and her director, Dominic Dromgoole, who was known for his handling of text and language during his tenure as Artistic Director of the Globe, worked on interpreting Prospero's description of a "delicate Ariel" in contrast to the emotionally evocative and superhuman abilities that Ariel reports about to Prospero. She says:

it felt like a fantastic opportunity to be playing Ariel, because other productions I'd seen, I've always seen a boy or a man playing Ariel. I know that obviously in the past actresses have played her, but that was interesting and just thinking, 'Oh, okay, this creates a slightly different dynamic between Prospero and a slightly different relationship with the language, playing it as a female.'<sup>199</sup>

The focus on establishing womanhood through language reflects the push for more gender diversity from feminist theatre in the 90s.<sup>200</sup> Nixon used the descriptions "graceful" and "delicate" as a way of forming emotional distance from Ariel's actions, thus creating a calmer and more curious spirit than, for example, Puck from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* who is also capable of extraordinary feats and who is "here, there and everywhere... in a flick of a switch or a blink of an eye."<sup>201</sup> Despite retaining the use of masculine pronouns in

<sup>199</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 1.

<sup>200</sup> Rosenberg, *Byxbegär*. p. 115.

<sup>201</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 3. As Table A2.2 shows, Ariel is never called "graceful," so this is Nixon's reading.

performance, Nixon uses feminine pronouns when discussing the character in her AaA interviews. Ariel's performance history affects Nixon's approach by making her aware of her own gender as an aspect that affects how the audience interprets the spirit and their relationship to other characters. However, she does not convey any anxiety related to portraying Ariel's gender as something different from her own like Hogg did, only some anxiety related to how a female-performed Ariel would be received. Like Alexander, Nixon's preconceptions of Ariel as a male role meant that her approach to finding the character also required an examination of her gender in relation to Ariel's and an interpretation of how to portray Ariel's gender.

Nixon uses her interpretation of Ariel as an emotional creature as a basis for how to interact with other characters, and her Ariel provides a perspective through which the audience can learn what it means to be human. As an invisible puppeteer Ariel gets insight into the effects their involvement has on Prospero's enemies. Nixon muses that "even though Ariel is described as emotionless, I feel like as the play develops, she learns about feelings and emotions like one would learn another language."<sup>202</sup> This evolution is evident in her performance, as Ariel's body language seems more cautious and withdrawn in the beginning, but as the play progresses the figure seeks other characters and confidently interacts with them without their knowledge. When asked about Ariel's relationship with other characters Nixon replies that the spirit does not talk to anyone other than Prospero, but forms connections through their involvement with the journeys of other characters. She says: "I think there's something interesting of Prospero with his daughter and then Prospero with his female spirit and in a sense his journey of letting go of both Ariel and Miranda."<sup>203</sup> During the period of their performance history where Ariel was performed by girls and women the increased interest in girlhood was highlighted by the dichotomy of feminine ideals represented by Miranda and Ariel.<sup>204</sup> Shakespearean scholar, Deanne Williams, writes:

With Miranda representing domestic expectations and Ariel embodying the dream of liberation, Prospero's girls and their history reflect the conflicting and competing expectations placed upon girls and the dream of a patriarchal power that, rather than stifling girls, sets them free.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 6.

<sup>203</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 2 (grammar unchanged).

<sup>204</sup> For more discussion see Dymkowski, "Introduction." pp. 1-13; and Williams, "Prospero's Girls." Williams goes into detail about the discussion of girlhood and references multiple primary accounts and academic works.

<sup>205</sup> Williams, "Prospero's Girls." p. 1.

This approach contrasts the restrictive outcomes of femininity as seen by Geraldine Alexander's Ariel-as-Ceres. As discussed in chapter two, Prospero's enforcement of femininity on Ariel situates their gender presentation as dependent on or in service to other characters, rather than as an autonomous expression of identity. We see this in scene I.II when Prospero admonishes Ariel in a rather paternal manner. Nixon focuses on embodying the traits Prospero describes rather than the abilities that Ariel reports, thereby performing a delicate and slightly more feminine Ariel than is common in modern productions. Nixon uses femininity as an entry point to exploring Ariel's relationship to Prospero from a new angle, but her character building comes from exploring how Ariel is intrigued by the relationships between the other characters. She says: "I think Ariel is sort of curious by these other people that are starting to come onto the island, but is very much under the workings of Prospero. But that's not to say she doesn't have her own thoughts and connections with people."<sup>206</sup> This is a reversal of Shakespeare's use of Ariel as Other, because as Nixon points out, if Ariel were real, they would see themselves and the other spirits as normal and interpret the humans as Other. Nixon says that although Ariel is described as emotionless, she used Ariel's natural empathy as a way of emotionally connecting to characters like Ferdinand and Alonso.<sup>207</sup> By focusing on emotion when interpreting Ariel's gender and nonhumanity, Nixon presents curiosity as an aspect of how Ariel interacts with other characters.

All three actors comment on how "seeking freedom" is Ariel's motivation and that how they interpret Ariel's emotional disconnection from humanity translates into the relationship to Prospero.<sup>208</sup> But whereas Hogg performs a dispassionate AI, both women draw attention to the pain Ariel experiences while trapped in the cloven pine. Alexander's description links the confinement directly to Ariel's potential for emotion and sympathy: "we know that she cried out in pain for twelve years. At this stage I don't think it would work to play Ariel simply as someone who observes rather than participates."<sup>209</sup> Whereas she uses Prospero's threats of captivity as motivation for exploring Ariel's (mis)trust of Prospero and his promises of freedom, Nixon describes it in terms reminiscent of closeted trans existences:

I think if someone, even if they're not human, has been trapped or imprisoned for 12 years and cannot move and cannot be [who/what] they want to be or who they're

<sup>206</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 2 (grammar unchanged).

<sup>207</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 6.

<sup>208</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." pp. 2, 4, 6, 8; Hogg, "EH4-edit." pp. 1-2; Hogg, "EH5-edit." p. 1; Hogg, "Ed AYA." p. 1; Nixon, interview. p. 3.

<sup>209</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 2.



created to be, then that will create some sort of trauma and I think that that has stayed with Ariel.<sup>210</sup>

Prospero's threats and Ariel's subsequent apology and promise of obedience are immediately followed by Prospero ordering Ariel to take on a feminine shape but remain invisible to anyone other than himself (and the audience). Prospero is the gatekeeper who is keeping Ariel from expressing their identity freely, threatening imprisonment if they do not comply. When analysed in a trans and nonhuman framework the admonition scene in I.II is the first instance of Prospero's attempts at imposing human gender roles on Ariel, thus forming Ariel's attitude towards freedom and the nature of their relationship with humanity. Prospero points to Ariel being "a spirit too delicate" to obey Sycorax's "earthy and abhorred commands" (I.II.272-273). Since Nixon equates descriptions of Ariel as "delicate" with femininity, one could say that Ariel was imprisoned for being too feminine, and when Prospero releases them, he forces Ariel to perform femininity to enforce his hierarchy, thereby forcing Ariel back in the metaphoric closet without confining them in another tree.

Although Nixon takes a predominantly gender-neutral approach to Ariel's gender presentation, performing the spirit in accordance with her own gender but without focusing on making Ariel look feminine, Nixon also includes a similar touch of transitioning from a youth to an adult as Alexander described. Nixon notes this transition when describing her character work with the harpy. Nixon and Dromgoole worked on making the harpy vocally "strange and curious" with a "nightmarish quality" by starting out as a child to lure the nobles into a false sense of security before turning to a voice of rage as they attempt to attack the harpy.<sup>211</sup> Nixon's harpy descends from the rafters and has massive black wings which are controlled by two stagehands. Although the costume is visually nonhuman, Nixon focuses on the presentation of the text in her AaA notes, highlighting that most of the characterisation of Ariel was approached linguistically rather than through finding external sources of inspiration like Alexander and Hogg, basing her delicate movement on textual descriptions rather than embodying an AI or using Laban to break down the movements. She further explains that the visual and physical portrayal of the spirit arose from the vocal and textual experimentation Nixon and Dromgoole worked on. Despite the wings, the most striking aspect of Nixon's harpy is the sharp transition from a quiet childlike voice to a raging adult with thunder and

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<sup>210</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 3.

<sup>211</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 7.

music in the background. Due to the textual focus of this production, Nixon's voice is an important marker of nonhumanity, similarly to how Ariel's voice is described as nonhuman and variously gendered throughout the text.

In addition to her vocal Otherness as a harpy, Nixon's costume makes her "delicate" feminine movement more androgynous and marks the spirit as nonhuman and metatheatrical. Nixon focused on experimenting with the description "delicate Ariel" to develop a movement style that created auditory invisibility, working to make Ariel's walk light and soundless so they could weave through the other characters and practically touch them without being noticed.<sup>212</sup> This movement style progresses as Ariel observes and understands the other characters, going from relatively feminine and withdrawn in the beginning, and ending with a more confident Ariel who has agency and seeks out the other characters, thus making Ariel more nonhuman through their discovery of how humans act and feel. The costume also opposes Nixon's own gender as it is a gold-painted male tunic paired with tight trousers. This contrasts the traditional femininity of Miranda's dress, but also implies that Ariel is more vulnerable or bare than the other characters since Ariel's costume is made up of undergarments, which Nixon notes would typically be worn under armour or other protective layers.<sup>213</sup> This parallels the evolution of the nude or near-nude male Ariel from the post-war period. The gold on the tunic and in Nixon's slicked-back hair and make-up references the metallic trend during Ariel's masculine performance history, but it also connects Ariel to the stage on a metatheatrical level.

As discussed previously, the Globe has costumed and painted Ariel and Caliban to reflect the marble in the stage, but since this production was performed at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (SWP), there is no marble. There is, however, abundant gilding for candlelight to reflect off of that contrasts the dark wood walls. Since neither the main stage at the Globe, nor the stage at SWP uses additional digital lighting or technological visual effects, they cannot connect Ariel to the stage elements in the same way other productions do through visual effects. Therefore, it is relevant to note when the costume reflects stage elements such as the gold and dark wood. The gold simultaneously marks Ariel as nonhuman and implies that they are made of the same material as the stage, thus implying that they are intertwined with the fabric of the story just like the spirit actors who melt as "the baseless

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<sup>212</sup> Nixon, interview. pp. 5-6.

<sup>213</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 4.

fabric of this vision” (IV.I.151) and “the great globe itself” (IV.I.153) dissolves when the performance and story ends.

The Globe has established itself as a theatre that values historical accuracy in communication with contemporary discussions, and this is most obvious in how Ariel and the spirits are the locus of cross-gender casting. In all the Globe’s productions so far in the twenty-first century Ceres and/or Juno have been performed or sung by a male actor/singer and, excepting the 2005 production, Ariel has performed as either Ceres or Juno.<sup>214</sup> The masculine costume that Nixon describes as “almost like a second skin” shows the production’s intent to connect Ariel to past costuming trends for male-performed Ariels and highlight the spirit’s metatheatrical purpose.<sup>215</sup> Despite the gold details in Ariel’s hair and costume marking the spirit as nonhuman and following the Globe’s push towards more nonhuman costumes in the 2013 and 2021 productions, the clothes themselves are masculine and human which results in Nixon’s Ariel fitting into the androgynous-nonhuman category. This is also due to the central discussion of the production, which focuses on exploring ways of performing the text to explore character relationships from a new angle. If Ariel’s costume were more nonhuman the discussions would not have the same perspective. Ariel needs to retain some appearance of humanity so that the audience can associate with Ariel’s interest in how the other characters present different versions of personhood and humanity.

Nixon’s AaA notes show how she initially used her own gender as a way of finding a new interpretation of Ariel and Prospero’s relationship, but eventually focused on interpreting descriptions in the text to perform Ariel without focusing on gendered expectations. Although her performance ultimately turned out gender-neutral, her costume and the harpy scene shows how the Globe intentionally mixes elements from previous eras with current performance styles. Nixon and Alexander approached Ariel’s gender and motivation in a similar way, both aware of how their own gender would defy the audience’s expectations of a masculine Ariel. Both female actors also drew on the pain of imprisonment and being held back from one’s true power as a way of connecting to Ariel’s emotions and thereby using Ariel’s empathetic

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<sup>214</sup> Geraldine Alexander performed Ceres in 2000, and a male actor performed Juno. Edward Hogg was performing Miranda as she watched the dancers perform the physical part of Juno, Ceres, and Iris in 2005, but male members of the choir (which had been established as representative of Ariel and the spirit’s music) sang Juno and Ceres. Colin Morgan performed Juno as Ariel in 2013. Geraldine Alexander performed Juno and a male actor performed Ceres in 2016. A male actor performed Ceres in 2021, and Emma Ernest’s Ariel performed Juno.

<sup>215</sup> Nixon, interview. p. 4.

and inquisitive side as a way of connecting to and understanding other characters. By basing her performance of Ariel on the language of the text, Nixon interpreted Ariel as agender in a similar way as Hogg, but her interpretation came from curiosity rather than fear of femininity.

#### 4.4: Conclusion: The Stuff that Dreams are Made on.

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air;  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capped tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. (IV.I.148-158)

Through Prospero's words, Shakespeare was correct in his prediction that actors would be intertwined with spirits and the metatheatricity of *The Tempest*. For although the AaA notes present three unique approaches to performing Ariel, the actors all agree that they are performing, above all, a spirit. Whereas previous eras of Ariel's performance history have attempted to interpret the mantle of "spirit" through gendered stereotypes, modern productions explore the limitless potential of gender-neutral casting and proper engagement with nonhumanity, as Alexander comments:

I get lots of letters from the public, from all sorts of different types of people who all seemed to relate to Ariel. I used to get very bogged down thinking about all their different theories before I realised that people were reacting to her like that because she is a spirit and could therefore can be defined by the individuals own wants or needs. I had to learn to play Ariel as a spirit rather than trying to portray the many different characters that people see in her.<sup>216</sup>

As audience members we are not witness to the process actors go through to discover the characters they perform on stage even though each decision they make affects our interpretation. Everyone who watches or creates a production enters the experience with preconceptions. Alexander, Hogg, and Nixon were influenced by Ariel's post-war performance history and expected a masculine role, but by questioning the role of their own gender in performance, they became part of Ariel's new androgynous and nonhuman

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<sup>216</sup> Alexander, "Ariel." p. 6 (grammar unchanged).

performance history. The AaA notes prove that the shift towards performing Ariel as androgynous to nonhuman is the intentional result of discussing gender in relation to the actor and by looking to other areas than binary gender to find the inspiration for how to embody the spirit. Male and female actors approached Ariel's gender differently because of the preconceptions they had about the role being male, but perhaps the continuation of this most recent performance style will alter expectations and allow for clearer discussions on-, off-, and backstage about Ariel as a nonbinary nonhuman character.

Androgynous-nonhuman productions are identifiable by how they balance human costumes and nonhuman movement. Characters' inner lives are in focus, and Ariel's motivation – obtaining freedom – is central to how the actors interpret Ariel's interactions with other characters. Ariel is used as a neutral observer through which the audience can also observe different character relationships and contextualise the exploration of different approaches to what it means to be human, particularly in relation to Miranda and Caliban. The AaA notes show that Ariel's gender presentation is intentional, and that the female actors approached the role with incongruent gender at the forefront of their minds, whereas Hogg attempted to make Ariel nonhuman and genderless. However, due to Hogg's costume, his fears of unintentional drag or parody of femininity, and the confusion about three actors performing all the roles, his Ariel came across as more human and androgynous than intended. The notes also reveal that there is a gendered difference between how the actors interpret Ariel's previous suffering in relation to Ariel's assertion that they cannot feel human emotion. The female actors use Ariel's suffering as proof of the spirit's emotional capacity, which is turned into curiosity about humans, whereas Hogg performs a dispassionate AI so that Ariel is distinct from the humans and so that the gender-nonconformity cannot be connected to a temperamental autonomous being as a way of pre-emptively defusing the transgressive potential of male-performed gender-nonconformity. Despite the interpretations differing, the AaA notes all show that productions consciously departed from Ariel's previous performance history as a male spirit, and their unique ways of approaching gender reflect different influential elements in queer- and trans theory and in the evolving discourse around trans concepts and trans people in society, politics, and cultural and artistic spaces.

### Concluding thoughts.

As my thesis has shown, Ariel's gender has long been subject to uncertainty and various interpretations. The masculine pronouns found in the play are negated by the feminine descriptions of Ariel's appearance, but Ariel's feminine appearance is negated by Prospero's constant reminders that the spirit's form is an illusion. Ariel's nonbinary gender is contextualised by the undefinable gender of the other spirits who function as moral nonhuman oppositions to the human characters who need to repent for their own inhumane actions. Modern productions have picked up on the connection between Ariel's gender-nonconformity and nonhumanity. Though the Globe frames productions with cross-dressing as comparable to lived trans experience to stay relevant with queer and younger audiences, neither the Globe nor other modern theatre companies openly discuss the connection between Ariel's nonbinarity and nonhumanity, nor do they examine the trans themes and concepts they stage in productions of *The Tempest*. Once one recognises Ariel's gender incongruence it seems incredible that four hundred years have gone by with only discussions about whether Ariel should be male or female. Though Shakespeare would not have understood what a bathroom bill is, his depiction of Ariel as a nonbinary and nonhuman spirit shows awareness about the concept of nonbinary sex and gender, and an acceptance of gender-nonconformity and Otherness. Combining my findings from text and performance shows that Ariel has always been and continues to be nonbinary regardless of the opinions about trans people and gender-nonconformity at the time.

If not for the scope of a master's thesis this text could have been much longer. A trans reading of Ariel can be useful in many contexts that I did not have space to adequately cover in this thesis. For instance, I was originally going to include a chapter on the contradicting depictions of Ariel's near-nude body in Victorian illustrations and discuss the use of he/him pronouns in texts referring to Ariel as a female role from the 1800s. One could also analyse literary adaptations of *The Tempest* like Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* and Erin Morgenstern's *The Night Circus*, or one could focus on comic-book/manga adaptations like Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* Vol. 10: "The Wake" and Richard Appignanesi's *Manga Shakespeare: The Tempest*. Much still remains to be said about stage and screen adaptations and how to best combine discussions about gender with performances and art.

More theory-focused venues for further research include a further analysis of the intersections of trans theory with monstrosity and nonhumanity that I started in chapter two. In this vein, I had limited space to compare Ariel to other Shakespearean and early modern

depictions of fairies, but as Ezra Horbury also noted, this field holds a lot of potential for a trans reading. By acknowledging that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were capable of imagining a helpful character who defied binary gender roles, we may also re-examine how gender was understood in the early modern era and acknowledge that trans identities and the concept of nonbinary gender have existed for as long as gender roles have. In hopes of continuing the conversation about Ariel as a nonbinary character, I will take a note from Prospero's drowned book and say [aside] to this thesis: "Then to the elements / Be free, and fare thou well!" (V.I.318-319).

## Appendix I: Explanatory Tables.

The first digit in a table's number identifies the chapter they belong to, whereas the second digit differentiates the tables from other tables in the chapter. Tables A2.2-A2.5 are divided by bold lines into three sections for better overview: act one; acts two, three, and four; and act five.

He/him	She/her	They/them	Discussion/mix	None specified
Blystone (2012)	Nixon (2016)	Horbury (2021)	Alexander (2000)	Garber (1981)
Brokaw (2008)			Dymkowski (2000)	Kemp (2019)
Eubanks Winkler (2016)			Williams (2014)	Leigh (2014)
Gibbons (2017)				Ohi (2011)
Giorno (2005)				
Gray (1920)				
Hogg (2005)				
Holland (2016)				
Johnson (1951)				
Jowett (1983)				
McAlindon (2001)				

**Table A1.1:** Overview over which texts use which pronouns. This is not a complete overview of all texts referring to Ariel and is limited to texts used in this thesis.

Author:	Pronouns used in text for Ariel:
Alexander (2000)	Alexander uses <i>s/he</i> , <i>she</i> , <i>she/he/it</i> , <i>them</i> , and <i>it</i> and concludes her discussion of pronouns and characterisation with: “(let’s call ‘it’ her, as I am female)” and uses <i>she/her</i> pronouns for the remainder of the AaA notes.
Dymkowski (2000)	Dymkowski mainly uses <i>he/him</i> pronouns when referring to the character but uses the actor’s pronouns when referring to the role in specific productions. She also discusses Ariel’s sex and whether <i>he</i> , <i>she</i> , or <i>it</i> is the most suitable pronoun.
Williams (2014)	Williams uses mostly <i>she/her</i> pronouns, but when discussing the history of Ariel as a male and the use of masculine pronouns in the play’s text she uses <i>he/him</i> pronouns.

**Table A1.2:** Overview over what pronouns each of the texts in the Discussion/mix category from Table A1.1 use.

Character:	Most Used Marker (besides name):	Second Most Used Marker (besides name):
Ariel: 7 (+9)	Spirit: 8 (+4)	Servant/slave: 2 (+2)
Miranda: 2 (+0)	My daughter: 5 (+4)	Dear/dear one: 3 (+2)
Caliban: 4 (+2)	Slave 3 (+4)	Devil (hell-spawn): 3 (+4)
Ferdinand: 0 (+2)	Sir: 3 (+1)	Good person: 2 (+1)

**Table A2.1:** As in chapter two: clarification of most used markers. As in Chart 2.2 base markers, combination uses, and variations that are close enough to be considered interchangeable. The numbers in the table indicate uses of the base marker on its own with combination uses counted in parentheses. All additions to names are counted as variation/comboination uses. Clarification below:



**Ariel:** Ariel’s most used marker is the name Ariel with the variations “my Ariel” (I.II.188, III.III.84, IV.I.57, V.I.317), “My quaint Ariel” (I.II.317), “(my) Delicate Ariel” (I.II.442, IV.I.49), “fine Ariel!” (I.II.496), and “my dainty Ariel!” (V.I.95). Ariel’s most used marker (that is not Ariel’s name) “spirit” consists of eight base forms: “spirit” (I.II.193, V.I.19, 86, 251), “Spirit” (I.II.421, IV.I.165), and “my spirit” (I.II.215, V.I.6). The four combination/variations are “my brave spirit” (I.II.206), “A spirit too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorred commands” (I.II.272-273), “fine spirit” (I.II.442), and “My tricky spirit!” (V.I.226). Ariel’s second most used marker (that is not their name) “servant” or “slave” consists of two base forms: “servant” (I.II.187) and “her servant” (I.II.271). The two combination/variations are: “my slave, / As thou report’st thyself” (I.II.270-271) and “My industrious servant” (IV.I.33).

**Miranda:** Miranda’s most common marker “my daughter” consists of five base forms “my daughter” (I.II.17, 57, IV.I.14, V.I.72, 148) and the four combination/variation forms “his only heir / And princess” (I.II.58-59), “my girl” (I.II.61), “my child” (I.II.348), and “his more braver daughter” (I.II.440). Miranda’s second most common marker “Dear/dear one” consists of the three base forms “my dear one” (I.II.17), “Dear” (I.II.140), and “dear heart” (I.II.305). The two combination/variation markers are “his and mine loved darling” (III.III.93) and “these our dear-beloved” (V.I.310).

**Caliban:** Caliban’s most used marker “slave” consists of the three base forms “my slave” (I.II.308), “slave!” (I.II.313), and “slave” (I.II.374). The four combination/variations are: “that Caliban / Whom now I keep in service” (I.II.285), “Thou poisonous slave” (I.II.319), “Thou most lying slave” (I.II.344), and “Abhorred slave” (I.II.351). Caliban’s second most used marker “Devil” is equivalent to “hell-spawn” since the intention is that he is a creature of Hell. Therefore “A devil” (IV.I.188), “a born devil” (IV.I.188), and “this demidevil” (V.I.272) count as the three main uses, whereas “hag-born” (I.II.283), “got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam” (I.II.319-320), “Hagseed” (I.II.365), and “the beast Caliban” (IV.I.140) count as combination uses and variations. I have not included Prospero’s use of “a Caliban” (I.II.481) in contrast to angels to describe Ferdinand in my count of Caliban’s markers, though a case could be made that this should count as a “devil/hell-spawn” marker for Caliban despite it not being used about him directly.

**Ferdinand:** Ferdinand’s most used marker “Sir” consists of the three base forms “sir” (I.II.450, IV.I.147) and “Sir” (IV.I.310) and the combination form “good sir” (I.II.431). Ferdinand’s second most used marker “good person” consists of the two base forms “This gallant” (I.II.414) and “A goodly person” (I.II.417). The variation form “the best?” is included because, as discussed in chapter two, Prospero does not cast doubt about Ferdinand’s social rank or humanity to the audience, only to Miranda, and though this marker is initially presented as a challenge, it functions as a way for Ferdinand to establish himself as the rightful heir to the throne, thereby indicating skill, power, and belonging in human society.

<b>Ariel</b>								
Name/marker:	Scene	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Possessive	Masculine	Feminine	Nonhuman
servant	I.II.187			x	x			
my Ariel	I.II.188		x		x			
spirit	I.II.193		x					x
my brave spirit	I.II.206	x			x			x
my spirit	I.II.215	x			x			x
Ariel	I.II.217		x					
Ariel	I.II.237		x					
moody?	I.II.244			x				
malignant thing!	I.II.257			x				x
my slave, / As thou report’st thyself	I.II.270-271			x	x			
her servant	I.II.271			x	x			

a spirit too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorred commands	I.II.272-273		x*					x
Dull thing	I.II.285			x				x
like a nymph o' th' sea	I.II.301		x				x	x
invisible / To every eyeball else	I.II.302-303		x					x
Fine apparition!	I.II.317	x					x*	x
My quaint Ariel	I.II.317	x			x			
Spirit	I.II.421	x						x
fine spirit	I.II.421	x						x
Delicate Ariel	I.II.442	x			x*		x*	
fine Ariel!	I.II.495	x						
as free / As mountain winds	I.II.499-500	x			x			x
my Ariel	III.III.84	x			x			x*
Ariel!	IV.I.33		x					
My industrious servant	IV.I.33	x			x			
Ariel!	IV.I.33		x					
my delicate Ariel	IV.I.49	x			x			
my Ariel	IV.I.57		x		x			
Ariel	IV.I.164	x						
Spirit	IV.I.165		x					x
my bird	IV.I.184	x			x			x
Thy shape invisible	IV.I.185		x					x
my spirit	V.I.6		x		x			x
spirit	V.I.19		x					x
thou, which art but air	V.I.21		x					x
Ariel	V.I.30		x					x*
Ariel	V.I.83		x					
spirit	V.I.86		x		x*			x
my dainty Ariel!	V.I.95	x			x		x*	
invisible as thou art!	V.I.97		x					x
My tricky spirit!	V.I.226	x			x			x
my diligence	V.I.241	x			x			
spirit	V.I.251		x		x			x
My Ariel	V.I.317		x		x			
chick	V.I.317		x					x

**Table A2.2:** The markers Prospero uses for Ariel. The x's marked with a \* are not clearly categorised on their own, but I have judged them to be sufficiently valued, possessive, or gendered in the context in which they appear. I have not assigned a gender to Ariel's name, but it may be labelled as feminine or nonhuman if the surrounding context implied/assigned a gender.

<b>Miranda</b>								
Name/marker:	Scene	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Possessive	Masculine	Feminine	Nonhuman
your piteous heart	I.II.14	x					x*	
my dear one	I.II.17	x			x			
my daughter	I.II.17		x		x		x	
the very virtue of compassion in thee	I.II.27	x					x*	
Miranda	I.II.48		x				x	
Miranda	I.II.53		x				x	
my daughter	I.II.57		x		x		x	
his only heir / And princess	I.II.58-59	x			x		x	
my girl	I.II.61		x		x		x	
thy crying self	I.II.132		x					
wench	I.II.139		x				x	
Dear	I.II.140	x			x*			
a cherubin / Thou wast that did preserve me!	I.II.152-153	x			x*			x
Infusèd with a fortitude from heaven	I.II.154	x						x
dear heart	I.II.305	x					x	
my child	I.II.348		x		x			
wench	I.II.413			x			x	
his more braver daughter	I.II.440		x		x		x	
the prize	I.II.453		x		x		x	x
An advocate for an impostor	I.II.478			x				
Foolish wench!	I.II.480			x			x	
Poor worm	III.I.31			x				x
infected	III.I.31			x				
nonpareil	III.II.99	x					x*	
his and mine loved darling	III.III.93	x			xx			
a third of mine own life, / Or that for which I live	IV.I.3-4	x			x			x*
this my rich gift	IV.I.8	x			x			x*
my gift, and thine own acquisition	IV.I.13	x			xx			x*
my daughter	IV.I.14		x		x		x	
my daughter	V.I.72		x		x		x	
my daughter	V.I.148	x			x		x	
these our dear-beloved	V.I.310	x			x			

Light grey: Caliban tells Stephano what Prospero says about Miranda (III.II.99).

Dark grey: Used for Miranda and Ferdinand as a pair (V.I.310).

**Table A2.3:** The markers Prospero uses for Miranda. The x's marked with a \* are not clearly categorised on their own, but I have judged them to be sufficiently valued, possessive, or gendered in the context in which they appear. There are two cases of double possession marked with xx where Prospero claims his own and Ferdinand's possession of Miranda. I have counted the use of Miranda's name as feminine regardless of context because it is an established feminine name.

<b>Caliban</b>								
Name/marker:	Scene	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Possessive	Masculine	Feminine	Nonhuman
the son that she did litter here	I.II.282			x	x	x		
freckled whelp	I.II.283			x		x		x
hag-born	I.II.283			x				x
that Caliban / Whom now I keep in service	I.II.285		x		x	x		
Caliban	I.II.308		x					
my slave	I.II.308			x	x			
slave!	I.II.313			x	x			
Caliban!	I.II.313		x					
Thou earth, thou!	I.II.314			x				x
thou tortoise!	I.II.316			x				x
Thou poisonous slave	I.II.319			x	x			x*
got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam	I.II.319-320			x				x
Thou most lying slave	I.II.344			x	x			
Filth as thou art	I.II.346			x				x
Abhorred slave	I.II.351			x	x			
savage	I.II.355			x				x*
A thing most brutish	I.II.357			x				x
Hagseed	I.II.365			x	x			x
malice	I.II.367			x				x
slave	I.II.374			x	x			
the beast Caliban	IV.I.140			x				x
Caliban	IV.I.166		x					
these varlets	IV.I.170			x				
these thieves	IV.I.187			x				
A devil	IV.I.188			x				x
a born devil	IV.I.188			x				x
on whose nature / Nurture can never stick	IV.I.188-189			x				x*
on whom my pains, / Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost!	IV.I.189-190			x				x

as with age is body uglier grows, / So his mind cankers	IV.I.191-192			x		x		x*
Caliban	V.I.252		x		x*	x		
This misshapen knave	V.I.268			x		x		x
this demidevil	V.I.272			x				x
he's a bastard one	V.I.273			x		x		
this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine.	V.I.275-276			x	x			x
He is as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape	V.I.291-292			x		x		x
sirrah	V.I.292		x			x		

Light grey: Sometimes spoken by Prospero, originally assigned to Miranda (I.II.351, 355, 357).

Dark grey: Used for Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo as a group. (IV.I.170, 187).

**Table A2.4:** The markers Prospero uses for Caliban. The x's marked with a \* are not clearly categorised on their own, but I have judged them to be sufficiently valued, possessive, or gendered in the context in which they appear. I have not assigned a gender to Caliban's name, but it may be labelled as masculine or nonhuman if the surrounding context implied/assigned a gender.

<b>Ferdinand</b>								
Name/marker:	Scene	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Possessive	Masculine	Feminine	Nonhuman
This gallant	I.II.414	x						
he's something stained / With grief	I.II.415-416			x		x		
A goodly person	I.II.417	x						
the best?	I.II.431			x				
good sir	I.II.443			x*		x		
sir	I.II.450		x			x		
a spy	I.II.456			x				
a traitor	I.II.461			x				
traitor	I.II.470			x				
a Caliban	I.II.481			x		x		x
Young Ferdinand	III.III.92		x			x		
O Ferdinand	IV.I.8		x			x		
my son	IV.I.146	x			x	x		
sir	IV.I.147	x				x		
Sir	IV.I.158		x			x		
these our dear-beloved	V.I.310	x			x			

Light grey: Used for Miranda and Ferdinand as a pair (V.I.310).

**Table A2.5:** The markers Prospero uses for Ferdinand. The x's marked with a \* are not clearly categorised on their own, but I have judged them to be sufficiently valued, possessive, or gendered in the context in which they appear. I have counted the use of Ferdinand's name as masculine regardless of context because it is an established masculine name.

## Appendix II: Productions and Adaptations.

Because most of these productions and adaptations share the same name I organise them all chronologically in each section rather than following the standard format of organising them alphabetically by title. I also include the name of Ariel's actor (where applicable) and note whether it is a production or adaptation. For the performances in my corpus I also note which of the four androgynous to nonhuman categories they belong to.

Productions are performances (on stage or screen) of *The Tempest* with few or no changes to the original text and story in the play. Adaptations are performances, literary works, or other re-imaginings of the themes and/or characters in *The Tempest* with significant changes to the text, story, or performance method.

### Modern Productions Included in my Corpus:

*The Tempest* (2000) Directed by Lenka Udovicki [Archive footage of stage performance].

London: The Globe. Ariel performed by Geraldine Alexander. Production.

Androgynous-Nonhuman.

*The Tempest* (2005) Directed by Tim Carroll [Archive footage of stage performance]. London:

The Globe. Ariel performed by Edward Hogg. Production. Androgynous-Nonhuman.

*The Tempest* (2010) Directed by Julie Taymor [Motion picture]. Touchstone Pictures. Ariel performed by Ben Wishaw. Production. Nonhuman.

*The Enchanted Island* (2011) Written by Jeremy Sams and devised by Julian Crouch and Phelim McDermott [Professional recording of stage performance]. New York: The Metropolitan Opera Live in HD, Distributed by Virgin Classics. Ariel performed by Danielle De Niese. Adaptation – Opera combining *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with inspiration from Davenant, Dryden, and Shadwell's *The Enchanted Island*. Nonhuman-Androgynous.

*The Tempest* (2012) Composed by Thomas Adès [Professional recording of stage performance]. New York: The Metropolitan Opera Live in HD, Distributed by Deutsche Grammophon. Ariel performed by Audrey Luna. Adaptation – Opera with some additions to Caliban's story. Nonhuman.

*The Tempest* (2013) Directed by Jeremy Herrin [Professional recording of stage performance]. London: The Globe, DVD distributed by Opus Arte. Ariel performed by Colin Morgan. Production. Nonhuman-Androgynous.

*The Tempest* (2016) Directed by Dominic Dromgoole [Archive footage of stage performance]. London: The Globe. Ariel performed by Pippa Nixon. Production. Androgynous-Nonhuman.

*The Tempest* (2016) Directed by Gregory Doran [Professional recording of stage performance]. Stratford-upon-Avon: The Royal Shakespeare Company in collaboration with Intel and Imaginarium Studios, DVD distributed by Opus Arte. Ariel performed by Mark Quartley. Production. Nonhuman.

*The Tempest* (2016) Directed by Phyllida Lloyd [Professional recording of stage performance]. London: Donmar Warehouse, DVD distributed by Opus Arte. Ariel performed by Jade Anouka. Production with frame narrative. Androgynous.

*The Under Presents: Tempest* (2020) Created by Tender Claws [Live VR performance] Ariel performed by audience participants. Adaptation – Frame narrative: performance at a theatre in the VR game, one actor narrates the story and performs as Prospero while the audience are similar to the spirits on the island and help perform the story by filling roles as needed and doing tasks to move the setting and story along. Nonhuman.

*The Tempest* (2021) Directed by Brendan O’Hea [Archive footage of stage performance]. London: The Globe. Ariel performed by Emma Ernest. Production. Nonhuman.

#### Other Productions and Adaptations Discussed in the Thesis:

*The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island* (1667/1674) Written by John Dryden and William Davenant, opera music composed by Thomas Shadwell [Stage performance].  
Adaptation – parody of *The Tempest* with additional characters and musical numbers.

*The Mock Tempest, or the Enchanted Castle* (1674) Written by Thomas Duffett [Stage performance]. Adaptation – parody of the Dryden-Davenant-Shadwell adaptation, set in the city.

*Forbidden Planet* (1956) Directed by Fred M. Wilcox [Motion picture]. Metro Goldwyn Meyer. Ariel performed by Frankie Darro (body) and Marvin Miller (voice).  
Adaptation – *The Tempest* set in space with Ariel as a robot.

*Star Trek* Season 3 Episode 19 “Requiem for Methuselah” (1969) Directed by Murray Golden [TV episode]. Paramount Television. Adaptation – *The Tempest* set in space with Ariel as a robot (performed by a prop).

*The Tempest* (2006) Directed by Rupert Goold [Stage performance]. Stratford-upon-Avon: The Royal Shakespeare Company. Ariel performed by Julian Bleach. Production, but setting changed from a tropical island to the Arctic.

*Hag-Seed: The Tempest Retold* (2016) Written by Margaret Atwood [Novel]. United Kingdom: Random House. Adaptation – the plot of *The Tempest* plays out in the frame story about theatre director Felix as he directs a performance of *The Tempest* in a correctional facility in Canada.

*The Tempest* (2019) Directed by Marya Sea Kaminski [Stage performance]. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Public Theatre. Ariel performed by Janelle Velasquez. Production, with almost all roles performed as women.

#### Other Productions and Adaptations Watched or Read for the Thesis:

*The Tempest* (1980) Directed by John Gorrie [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: BBC. Ariel performed by David Dixon. Production.

*Tempest* (1982) Directed by Paul Mazursky [Motion picture]. Columbia Pictures. Ariel performed by Susan Sarandon. Adaptation – the plot of *The Tempest* translated into a rom-com in Chicago and Greece in the 1980s.

*Prospero's Books* (1991) Directed by Peter Greenaway [Motion picture]. Allarts. Ariel performed by Orpheo, Paul Russel, and James Thierrée. Adaptation – performance art style film with a focus on Prospero's books.

*The Sandman* vol. 10 "The Wake" (1996) Written by Neil Gaiman, Illustrated by John Ridgway, Bryan Talbot, and Charles Vess [Comic book]. DC Comics. Adaptation – set in the *Sandman* universe, Shakespeare fulfils his bargain with Dream by writing *The Tempest*.

*Manga Shakespeare: The Tempest* (2007) Adapted by Richard Appignanesi, Illustrated by Paul Duffield [Comic book/manga]. United Kingdom: Barker & Taylor. Adaptation – a simplified version of *The Tempest*.

*The Night Circus* (2011) Written by Erin Morgenstern [Novel]. London: Vintage Books. Adaptation – story containing many elements from and references to plot and characters from *The Tempest*.



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