

REMEDIATING THE TEMPEST AS A PLAYABLE TTRPG MODULE

by

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Introduction

More than 400 years after it was written, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* continues to be republished, restaged and remediated into different forms, prompting new ways of seeing and analyzing the play. This research paper examines the process of transmedia adaptation through the case study of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* adapted into a tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG) module. *The Tempest* is remediated as an interactive game based on Wizards of the Coast's Dungeons and Dragons fifth edition ruleset, designed to be facilitated by a Dungeon Master and played by a group of three to five players. The process of remediating *The Tempest* takes the play's setting, characters, narrative conflict, and dialogue and translates them into the formal structure of the TTRPG, prompting questions that have long been asked in adaptation studies: how important is fidelity to the source text? What is lost, gained, and changed in transmedia translation? What role does the translator play in the creation of the adaptation?

This adaptation case study is both a process of translation and a dependent text-object. By translating *The Tempest* from the formal medium of a play script to a text-based TTRPG module, I trace the emergent issues in the practical application of transmedia adaptation, including the formal capacities of each media format, the role of fidelity in remediation, and the conflict between structuralist story logic and free interactivity in the TTRPG medium.

Ultimately this paper advocates for wider research into the meaning-making potential of facilitated roleplaying games by integrating and basing this case study in the scholarly research field of Shakespearean adaptation studies and social semiotics.

What is An Adaptation?

Linda Hutcheon begins *A Theory of Adaptation* with a quotation from Alfred Uhry: “Adapting is a bit like redecorating” (Hutcheon). Adaptations “redecorate” a foundational structure into a new format or product that is neither wholly autonomous nor entirely dependent on its source. According to Hutcheon, adaptations are “deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works” (Hutcheon xvi) that rely on the act of adaptation to embody that identity and the announcement of such a relationship.

In this definition, adaptations exist as a relationship between texts, with an anterior “source”, which can be derived from many sources, and the adapted, temporally belated text. The adapted text is both an independent text, which is a work in its own right, but also a dependent intertext that relies, borrows, and reconstitutes its source or sources as adaptation. A Hutcheonian adaptation is therefore double-natured, an independent text built on intertextuality. Hutcheon summarizes this dualism as “adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative-- a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing” (Hutcheon 9), referring to Michael Alexander’s term (Ermarth 47). But in practice, Hutcheon acknowledges that the definition of adaptation is not so neatly divided into binary categories. Instead, she writes that adaptations exist on a continuum from “recreations that put an aesthetic premium on fidelity to the original text... at the other end are spin-offs like *Play it Again, Sam*, reviews and academic criticism that follow the film...” (Hutcheon 171). Works within this continuum are “adaptations proper” (Hutcheon 171), but “expansions”, sequels, prequels, and intertextually-related texts have their similarities and place in adaptations studies.

Similarly, Julie Sanders devotes an entire chapter to defining terms in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, landing on a relationship-to-source definition that is rooted in self-declaration.

She writes, “an adaptation signals a relationship with an informing source text or original”, comparing adaptations to appropriations where the intertextual and adaptive process is more clearly signaled and acknowledged than in an appropriated text (Sanders 26). In both Sanders’ and Hutcheon’s definitions, adaptation exists in the overt acknowledgement of the relationship to a source or original that exceeds intertextual reference. Adaptations are circuitously self-defined; an adaptation is a text that declares itself to be so.

Prior to the postmodern self-declarative mode, adaptation scholars attempted to categorize adaptations into taxonomies or categories. Geoffrey Wagner, for example, divides adaptation into three types: transposition, commentary, and analogy, with the foremost privileging fidelity and the lattermost being considered a substantial departure (Wagner 222). Notably, all three of these typologies categorize literature to screen adaptations and are not overtly inclusive of other genres or media formats. Hester and Whelehan argue that these sorts of taxonomies over-privilege the degree of fidelity as the business of adaptation studies, while also being insufficient in creating definite boundaries (Hester and Whelehan 6). Hester and Whelehan also acknowledge the issue of genrelessness when defining adaptation, writing, “Naturally the further one moves from locating the heart of adaptation studies as residing on the literary/screen nexus, the more boundless and indefinable the area becomes” (Hester and Whelehan 12).

Thomas Leitch examines Hutcheon’s proposed continuum and the declaration-as-definition model of adaptation, summarizing this definition as “invitingly broad” (Leitch 87), but criticizing the declaration of adaptation as insufficient. He argues that Hutcheon and other scholars show an indifference to distinguishing between intertextuality and adaptation, which makes expanding, theorizing, and legitimizing the field of adaptation studies difficult. Yet he acknowledges the difficulties in arriving at a concrete definition of adaptation. In his chapter

Adaptation and Intertextuality, rather than coming to a fixed definition of adaptation, Thomas Leitch instead examines different positions in the field and how they relate to intertextuality. He considers “the implications for adaptation theory of drawing the line in different places: the advantages each line offers; the problems it raises...” (Leitch 89) and then goes on to evaluate different models of adaptation, such as counter-ekphrasis, literature-to-film adaptations, quintessential intertexts, and translations. Leitch ultimately decides that adaptation scholars may fairly “defer the question of what isn’t an adaptation indefinitely” (Leitch 103), leaving scholars to their own disciplinary constraints of source and adaptation.

Other scholars have equally avoided the work of defining adaptation by relying on examining similar narratives that have been translated across media. Bolter and Grusin use the term “remediation” to define a certain kind of adaptation as “the representation of one medium in another” (Bolter and Grusin 45). By narrowing adaptation to the specific translation of elements across formal media, remediative adaptation studies privilege translation across formats as the definition of a sub-type of adaptation. But adaptations are not all remediations, and the role of medium specificity is a longstanding debate in adaptation studies. Remediation is not the only way to fundamentally reframe a source.

Another issue in defining and understanding adaptations is the effect of the adapted work on the source. In Bakhtinian dialogism we understand adaptation as a multi-directional relationship between the source and its belated adapted work, where meaning is negotiated between works rather than unilaterally imposed by one work onto another. We see this in adaptation studies where adapted works rewrite dominant cultural narratives or perspectives of texts. Postcolonial reinterpretations of *The Tempest* have affected our understanding of characters like Caliban when contemporarily reading, analyzing, and teaching Shakespeare’s

text. The transformation of *Hamlet* into the animated film *The Lion King*, which became a massive cross-media franchise with its own sequels, games, and musical adaptations has affected ideas of the adaptability and marketability of Shakespeare. The belated and dependent nature of adaptations does not limit their power in influencing the source text; instead, adaptations interact with their source and can affect perception and reception of their original. As for myself, I have read *The Tempest* both before and after having watched Julie Taymore's 2010 gender-bent film adaptation, and in the aftermath of viewing it I find myself struggling to imagine a Prospero that does not look like Helen Mirren. The film adaptation affects my perception and experience of the original, which in turn affects my adaptation of the play into the TTRPG module.

Drawing from these scholars and their development of the field of adaptation and remediation studies, I would like to examine a case study of Shakespearean adaptation and translation across media. I draw from the theories of adaptation scholars using the self-declarative model of adaptation as well as social semiotics in foregrounding modes of meaning made through different texts. My adaptation is therefore a self-declared adapted product and active process, "resting on the agentic semiotic work of the maker of such texts" ("Multimodal Discourse Analysis" 35). The action of adaptation includes an interpretation or distillation of narrative elements and the reinterpretation and reconstruction of those elements, which Kress refers to as design, composition and production work that results in an ensemble ("Multimodal Discourse Analysis" 36) and to which Herman refers as narrative design principles or *story logic* ("Story Logic in Conversational and Literary Narratives" 130). This process-assemblage is a collection of ideas and signs that have been selected, edited, and arranged in the adapted media format.

To conclude this section on definitions, I would like to use the analogy of “translation” to study the adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* into a playable TTRPG module.

“Translation” is a useful term for me as it encapsulates my goal and process of determining the important elements and story logic of Shakespeare’s play and making necessary cuts, adjustments, and creations to remediate it into the interactive format of the TTRPG, with the goal maintaining some fidelity to the play while honouring the open-world promise of the TTRPG medium. I explain this further in the section “Goals of Translation and the Role of the Translator”.

The source for this project is a singular text, the Oxford edition of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, edited by Stephen Orgel, as well as my own experiences with its adaptations. Mikhail Bakhtin’s influential work in explaining the dialogic relationship between works is frequently cited in adaptation studies, which has been used to examine how belated and anterior adapted works impact and affect source texts. As the active translator, I work with the source text but have been informed by my own personal, professional, and academic experiences with the play and its many multimedia adaptations and intertextual or tangentially-related texts. These experiences inform my distillation and translation of the source, which ultimately affects my adaptation.

I use the term “adaptation” to refer to the nebulous definition of a likely-acknowledged intertextual and dependent relationship between an anterior source and a temporally belated text, and “remediation” to refer to a similar relationship with the additional criterion of being translated across media formats. I use “translation” to refer to the process of remediation; the act of cutting, distilling, rewriting, and repositioning the source elements into the new media form.

Beyond Definitions: Literature Review

Adaptations have existed for as long as humans have been making art. But critical discourse in the field of adaptation studies has primarily concerned itself with text-to-film adaptations and questions of fidelity to source material, what constitutes an original in comparison to an adaptation, and how the field can or should embed intertextuality and poststructuralist criticism after the theoretical turn. While this focus has moved towards medium-inclusivity the last fifteen years, the field has built itself on the scholarly analysis of literature-to-film adaptations and the cultural and academic perspectives of cross-media translation.

Fidelity has long been the defining metric by which critics and audiences evaluate adaptations, yet scholarship in the field frequently revisits the productivity of this discussion. Stam notes how cinematic adaptations of literature are frequently couched in moralizing terms like “‘infidelity’, ‘betrayal’, ‘deformation’, ‘violation’, ‘bastardization’, ‘vulgarization’, and ‘desecration’ [which] proliferate in adaptation discourse, each word carrying its specific charge of opprobrium” (Stam 6) and reflects on the hostility laid against film adaptations of literary texts. Stam references possible sources of this hostility, ultimately concluding that contemporary adaptation discourse reflects a moralistic and judgmental perspective, while an intertextual approach would redirect attention to the dialogic relationships between texts and the structuralist gaps between different media and modes of expression (Stam 46).

The field has emerged from, and continues to devote a significant effort to, the examination of literary texts adapted into film. Kamilla Elliott notes that “adaptation studies” became the field’s dominant term, displacing “literature film studies” as recently as the mid-2000s, with the renaming of the Association of Literature on Screen to the Association of Adaptation Studies (Elliott 576). While Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* broadens the

study of adaptation beyond literature-to-screen adaptations and includes video games, theme park rides, graphic novels, operas, and musicals, adaptation studies have been primarily preoccupied with the business of literature and screen adaptations, from which the cultural derision of adaptations has arisen. A certain skepticism emerges when culturally-valued literary texts are translated into board games, tabletop games, video games, television series, or other forms of new media. Scholars have moved away from rigid definitions of adaptation, allowing for new analyses of these cross-media adaptations, but culture and critics remain skeptical of the literary merit of remediated adaptations.

Allen writes that literary texts “are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature” (Allen 1), foregrounding the necessity of the semiotic and dialogic approaches in narratology. Adaptations are not unilaterally-imposed pure translations, and when comparing a source and its adapted text we must consider the role of the audience, the structural affordances and limitations of the media, and the degree to which culture and context affect the texts. Hutcheon writes “multiple versions exist laterally, not vertically” (xv), reflecting on Kristevian intertextuality as a defining feature of adaptations and re-writing the privileging of source or original texts when analyzing the adapted text. Sanders also invokes Kristeva, but distinguishes between quotation and citation in degree of deference to a source (Sanders 6). She writes, “Quotation can be deferential or critical, supportive or questions; it depends on the context in which the quotation takes place. Citation, however, presumes a more deferential relationship; it is frequently self-authenticating, even reverential, in its reference to the canon of authoritative, culturally validated texts” (6). A focus in adaptation is therefore not the moralistic degree of faithfulness but the question of how, what, and why an adaptation selects, copies,

mirrors, translates, and encodes source texts in process and practice, and how these are affected by the audience.

Cartmell and Whelehan created a multimodal diagram of the field of adaptation studies and the topics frequently discussed within them. This diagram views adaptation theory as a series of sub-conversations, which include intertextuality, narratology, close textual analysis, fidelity, nature of adaptive relationship, reception, contexts, and consumption. This diagram serves as an entrance point to my methodology of analyzing the case study of remediating *The Tempest*; fidelity is a point of conversation but not my primary one; as are media specificity, dialogism and intertextuality, cultural perspectives and contexts, and nature of the adaptive relationship.

Finally, a key theoretical framework in this paper is Herman's structuralist story logic and Ryan's medium-conscious narratology. While structuralist categorizations of what constitutes a narrative necessitates an allowance for deviation and flexibility, Herman's categories of narrative *macrodesigns*, which include spatialization and temporalization, and *microdesigns*, which include events and circumstances, provides a critical structure to the narrative elements that I have adapted across media. Marie-Laure Ryan has built on Herman's structuralist story logic and expanded the concept of the story-world to examine medium-conscious narratology and the role that medium specificity plays in the structures of narratives. She proposes that story-worlds consist of *existents*, *setting*, *physical laws*, *events*, and *mental events*, and this practical toolkit provides a framework for translating the constituent pieces of a narrative across media.

Identified Research Gap and Research Question

The ubiquity and increasing popularity of digitally-mediated entertainment has necessitated a theoretical shift away from film-only adaptation studies. We can find video game adaptations of literature (*Dante's Inferno*), television adaptations of video games (*The Witcher*), sprawling multimedia franchises (*Star Wars*, *Marvel's Avengers*), and even board games adapted from television (*Battlestar Galactica*). While adaptation studies scholars have made room for adaptations beyond literature-to-film, the field has only recently become increasingly inclusive of digital media and the potential for these media in interactive and narrative spaces.

What has been all but ignored, despite its surging popularity in the last decade, is the potential of pen-and-paper or board-based tabletop games in both games scholarship and adaptation studies. TTRPGs embody many of the same features of video games while avoiding the barriers of large-scale development, software integration, and the necessity of hardware. Most TTRPG players require nothing more than a facilitating Dungeon Master (DM), a working knowledge of the ruleset, and a piece of paper to track skills and abilities. The flexibility of this game derives from the mediation and skillset of the DM, who facilitates the game session for players and who arbitrates rules and results based on the TTRPG system.

The most well-known and played TTRPG system, *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D), published by Wizards of the Coast, has created an open source platform for players and DMs to share their written game modules. These modules are contained story-handbooks designed to be adapted and facilitated by the DM, much like Shakespeare's play script is meant to be adapted by a stage director.

D&D modules have a long history of embedding intertextual and adaptive references from previous game modules, popular game settings or worlds, and works of literature. The

publisher, as well as unsanctioned fan writers, draw inspiration from cultural texts and narratives such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Dracula*, Lovecraftian horror, the literary Gothic, and more. One of Wizard of the Coast's most popular modules, *The Curse of Strahd*, is adapted from a previous edition's vampire horror module *Ravenloft*, which itself was a module designed to adapt Gothic horror elements into the Dungeons and Dragons second edition ruleset. Similarly, Shakespeare-based adaptations are not new to TTRPG players and module writers. *Exit Pursued by Owlbear*, a recently-published anthology of five Shakespeare-inspired modules, is one of the best-selling modules on the module-sharing site DMsGuild. References to Shakespeare's plays have appeared throughout modules in every edition of D&D, and the game even embeds intertextual references to Shakespeare in its ruleset, with an elements-controlling subclass, Tempest Cleric.

A sustained analysis of TTRPG-based interactive narratives and adaptations may be well-received in the field and contribute to the acceptance of these narratives as worthy text-objects of study. My research questions stem from my role in creating a case study to examine how a narrative can be remediated from, in Hutcheonian terminology, a linear "telling" or "showing" form to a playable "interactive" form. What is lost, gained, and changed in translating across media with unique affordances and limitations? What role does fidelity play in remediation?

The Rationale for a Case Study

In the absence of a singular definition of adaptation, case studies stand as representative examples of the adaptation and remediation process. Making my own adaptation is an opportunity to examine the process of adaptation while exploring the little-studied medium of the TTRPG module. By creating my own example of literature-to-game adaptation, using one of the most famous and well-studied pieces of literature as my source material, I can draw from the

long history of Shakespearean adaptation while drawing from the contemporary scholarship in medium-conscious narratology and interactive adapted media. There are also interesting parallels between the media formats of the play and the TTRPG module; both are text-based potentialities designed to be adapted and facilitated from their “telling” mode to either the “showing” or “interacting” mode. In Shakespearean adaptation studies, the difference between stage performance or film adaptation to interactive TTRPG is only a question of the role of media formats and the tools we use to construct them. This makes room for more scholarly visitations of the less-studied but viable media format of the TTRPG inside of adaptation studies.

As for my choice of *The Tempest*, it is the play’s magic and monsters’ similarity to the magic and monsters of D&D that inspired this remediation. In particular, D&D’s referential “Tempest Cleric” initiated my interest in the potential of the play to be remediated as a TTRPG module. As a frequently-studied and staged play, a remediated version of *The Tempest* allows new in-routes for pedagogical applications, such as teaching the play to students or questioning the role of adaptation in game studies. This work stands as an example and early exploration of how to adapt canonical literature into newer, less-studied formats and also for how to study cross-media adaptations.

Methodology

This research paper analyzes the adaptive process and product through the case study of *The Tempest* remediated as a Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) playable module. Cartmell and Whelehan’s diagram of adaptation theory (15), which presents adaptation studies as a series of interconnected relationships such as intertextuality, narratology, close textual analysis, fidelity,

degrees of adoption, culture, contexts, and reception, serves as a launching point for my analysis of the adaptation process and this specific case study.

This paper also draws from Kress and Van Leeuwen's construction of the social semiotic as an analogy for the process of remediation ("Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design"). Social semiotic theory provides a toolset that allows me as the adapter-translator to go through the adaptive process of "selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, analogization, popularization and reculturalization" ("Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics" 68) while privileging the grammatics of each media format. Kress and Van Leeuwen explain this process as a "production stance" towards sign-making and a transformation of signs that rests on the interest and subjectivity of the sign-maker ("Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design" 12). It is this subjectivity and framework for translating signs that I adopt in this paper to convert *The Tempest* from a play script to a TTRPG module with a semiotic focus on fidelity.

I also draw from Herman's theory of *story logic*, which is the structuralist categorization of narrative elements. Herman's framework simplifies the labour of selecting which elements of the source text to translate and allows the idea of source fidelity to exist in a structuralist sense. Marie-Laure Ryan expanded the concept of the story-world to propose that story-worlds consist of existents, setting, physical laws, events, and mental events, and this practical toolkit provides a framework for translating the constituent pieces of a narrative across media.

Introducing the Case Study

The process of translating Shakespeare's *The Tempest* into the playable TTRPG module begins with a familiarization of the D&D ruleset. Published by Wizards of the Coast in 2012, the

fifth edition ruleset is relayed in a 300 page *Player's Handbook* which details the game's world, its rules of play (divided into two subtypes; turn-based combat rules and exploration rules), character-building rules, items, and spellcasting rules. Over a dozen supplementary texts have been published in the last decade and these texts allow for more possibilities in character creation and gameplay. These texts detail a sprawling and complex game system that requires a significant amount of playing and memorizing to facilitate a rules-accurate campaign. Yet D&D is designed to be adapted and facilitated by the DM in the manner that suits their preference, including following the rules closely or deviating by a wide margin. The parlance for the thousands of pages of rule canon spread across a near-decade of publication is referred to as the "rules as written". Alternatively, rules and mechanics that go outside of the rules as written are referred to as "homebrew" or "homebrewed" rules.

The combination of adaptability and sprawling ruleset poses a significant challenge in the creation of a module. While I have deferred to the rules as written as much as possible, I acknowledge the possibility and occasional necessity of deviation from the ruleset in creating this module, especially in service to fidelity to the play. Ultimately I have designed this module to work within the rules as written as much as possible and to adhere to the D&D module style guide, but have prioritized narrative fidelity and interactive choice over concrete adherence to the D&D ruleset.

The remediation process of *The Tempest* includes translating the text of the play into a text-based module format. But the process of remediating *The Tempest* is not one of simply repeating the elements of the play in a playable format. Janet Murray writes "we cannot be satisfied with just reproducing older information formats in digital form" ("Inventing the Medium" 45). The process of translation includes reworking the source into the adaptation, but is

not limited to merely reproducing the elements in a new format. The goals of translation, the mediation and “transformative role” (“Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design” 12) of the translator, the formal qualities of the media, and the audience all impact the process and the adapted work.

The unique media formats of *The Tempest* (the script and the performance) as well as the adapted texts (the text-based module and the facilitated game in practice) impact the remediation process. As the translator of the text, I also approached the remediation project from my own perspective and locus, which impacts the adaptation process and my own analysis of it. Finally, the translation goals, which are enacted by the translator but also a mediating factor in the translation process, affect the final product and reject the binary logic of translation fidelity.

The goals of translation, the mediation of the translator, the formal qualities of the media, and the audience all impact the process and the adapted work. Ultimately, this translation process becomes a series of medium-specific narrative choices, with fidelity to the source being a relationship of degrees of reference to the elements, or story logic, of the play.

The Goals of Translation and the Role of the Translator in Practice

The “fidelity debate” has long been a consideration for adaptation scholars, who argue against fidelity as the primary goal of adaptation and adaptation studies. Bruhn writes, “Scholars have criticized the idea that faithfulness is the most interesting and productive instrument with which to confront adaptations; early on, critics argued that fidelity is both difficult to ascertain and problematic for normative evaluation.... Most current research considers fidelity discourse as no longer viable” (Bruhn 5). Yet in the absence of a neat definition of adaptation, fidelity remains a consideration in its role in explaining the relationship between the source text and the

adapted text. If an adaptation has no discernible connection to its source other than declaration, then is it an adaptation? What does fidelity mean in post-fidelity adaptation studies?

In adapting the play into a D&D module I have laid out goals for the adapted work that guided my translation choices, which includes a degree of fidelity. In my process, I weighed all of my translation choices against this goal: balancing fidelity to the source text with the “promise of the TTRPG”, which is the players’ ability to make meaningful choices.

This goal is deceptively simple. Fidelity, while certainly not the business of adaptation studies, is an important consideration for me as my goal is to translate the source text into a new media format as a case study of the translation process. But when considering fidelity to the source text, a key question is of fidelity to *what*? Which aspects of the source are considered the most important to translate, and which features are less important? What makes *The Tempest* itself, rather than another text?

David Herman draws from semiotics to pose the idea of “story logic”, a structural toolset that delivers and communicates narratives. He notes that stories do “not merely have but also constitute a logic; narratives are not just organized systems of signs but also strategies for organizing thereby making sense of experience” (“Story Logic in Conversational and Literary Narratives” 132). He breaks these elements into narrative design principles such as temporalization, spatialization, contextual anchoring, states, events, and more. These design principles provide a useful structuralist framework for distilling the “dominant feel” of the narrative and translating it into another medium (“Story Logic in Conversational and Literary Narratives” 134). Marie-Laure Ryan has built on Herman’s story logic to negotiate the role of media and medium specificity in structuralist narratology, categorizing elements of narratives both as narrative-only structures and medium-dependent characteristics.

In my attempt at maintaining fidelity to *The Tempest*, I use Herman's structuralist story logic and Ryan's negotiation of media and narrative elements to broadly categorize the elements of the play that were to be remediated into the module. The deserted island setting, the temporal narrative that lasts for only a few days (with a backstory, presented and mediated by Prospero, that precedes the narrative by over a decade), its setting-based "story-world" narrative structure, its characters, the key events and motivations for those events, and the "dominant feel" of these elements when put together were preserved. The module maintains the play's physical laws, including magic capabilities, social rules and values, and intradiegetic elements. While the process of selecting these elements of the play that needed to be translated occasionally felt more natural than structurally-imposed, it was nonetheless difficult; questions of what to choose, why, and how they can be preserved during remediation was a key issue and remained a constant concern during the remediation process.

Yet fidelity is and was not my only concern, as fidelity-only translation would result in a limited, linear, and non-interactive TTRPG module. One of the infamous, albeit unofficial, tenets of D&D is to avoid "railroading", which is forcing player characters to follow a specific narrative throughline that eliminates agency and meaningful player choices. Herein lies a key medium-specific concern when remediating the text into the TTRPG: the "promise" of the medium is the players' ability to interact with a world with few limitations other than the mechanics of the system. TTRPGs allow players and DMs to craft scenarios, characters, settings, and interactions *ad hoc*, with few limitations imposed by hardware capabilities or software constraints. The rules of the game provide fungible parameters, but players have the ability to freely explore, encounter, and experience a story-world facilitated by a DM. While the skill and

intention of the DM determines how flexible the game is in practice, in theory TTRPGs are some of the most open-world and flexible interactive formal games in existence.

Wizards of the Coast have made clear their goals for D&D as a medium, which they call their three pillars: exploration, social interaction, and combat. These pillars undergird the developers' module design and the goals of the ruleset, ensuring that players experience these three aspects of adventures ("The Player's Handbook" 8). Therefore pure fidelity to a linear plot goes against the spirit and rules of the interactive TTRPG. A TTRPG module based on *The Tempest* that only allows players to observe the events of the play would not fulfill the promise of exploration, interaction, or combat, and instead impose the linear construction of the source medium on the module. This inherently becomes a conflict; to adhere to the source material is to "railroad" the players into experiencing the linear narrative in a slightly different format; to allow for the full interactive promise of D&D, however, is to deviate from the source text based on player whim. Ultimately, I attempt to negotiate this key conflict to allow players meaningful choices while maintaining the "story logic" of the play.

As such, my role as translator is not one of pure fidelity, but of a "degree" of adaptation fidelity that makes explicit the nature of the adaptive relationship (Cartmell and Whelehan 15). So with the goal of balancing meaningful player choices with medium-specific fidelity to the source texts, my adaptive changes emerged in the following categories: setting, characters, dialogue, narrative points, interactivity, and the final conflict.

Translation: Setting and Temporality

The setting, or "story-world" ("Storytelling and the Sciences of the Mind" 14) is a series of locations that further the narrative of the TTRPG based on the settings of the play. This story-

world is an interactive space that houses the narrative of the module, allowing the narrative to progress as players complete medium-specific “deliberate user actions” (Hutcheon 50).

Translating the “showing” mode of the setting of the play to the explorable “interactive” story-world requires a media-conscious narratological approach. The play’s narrative, which consists of events, mental events, and existents, and setting, which houses the narrative and communicates its physical and temporal laws, must be translated into the interactive TTRPG setting.

The audience of the play experiences these settings in a different order and chronology than the characters of the play, and this is the first conflict I encountered in translation. The play begins with the audience seeing the ship mired by a storm, but Prospero and Miranda are watching the ship from shore simultaneously, which is only seen by the audience in the next scene. These two events happen at once, but the audience experiences them in scene order due to the spatial and temporal constraints of stage performances. The audience’s perspective jumps from location to location based on the acts and scenes of the play, while the characters are constrained to their first-person perspectives and experiences of the location. Bolter and Grusin call this “a continuous, first-person point-of-view shot, which in film criticism is called the “subjective camera”” (Bolter and Grusin 4). The boathands, for example, spend the majority of the play in a magical sleep on the shipwrecked boat, and their subjective camera sees very little of the island or the events of the play. Ferdinand does not land on the beach with the other noblemen, and instead spends some time wandering the wilderness before meeting Miranda and her father.

The chronology and spatial exploration of the play are different for the audience than the subjective experiences of the characters. This is important when considering the actions that

occur before and after the play. Prospero's barque landed ashore on the island after his usurpation by Antonio twelve years before the first scene of the play, and so Prospero's subjective camera and chronological experience of the setting of the island begin long before the play does. Therefore the character's temporal experiences of the setting and the chronology of the play are separate considerations when translating the setting of the play into the TTRPG.

The medium of the TTRPG is fundamentally an explorable setting that exists in relatively consistent, linear temporality that is independent of the players and characters. Therefore the setting of the TTRPG is more a "world" than a "stage", as it continues to operate in temporality whether the characters are on-stage or off, asleep or awake, or aware of others' actions or not. The population of the world continues to act independently whether the players can see them or not, and this means that the module's scope must be constrained in order to limit the amount of content. For example, what is happening in the continent's capital city of Waterdeep during the events of the module? Are there other ships that have been affected by this storm? To answer every question of every location in the world of the module would be impossible, so I have limited the scope of the setting and its temporality; the narrative of the module begins on the ship, and then the ship and characters are stranded on the island until they are freed; this process should only take a few in-game days, but may take more or less time depending on players' choices.

Other than this limitation of scope, the order of presenting the setting poses a translation challenge. Are the TTRPG players characters of the play or are they the audience of the play? How can the stage-setting be transposed into an open-world setting? And reflecting back on the role and goals of translation, how can this balance fidelity to the source material while ensuring meaningful, interactive choices for the players?

The players each have their own player characters (PCs) who experience the narrative of the TTRPG alongside the non-player characters (NPCs). The players are more like characters of the narrative than the audience of the play. They do not passively observe the narrative as it is presented, and instead operate inside the world and experience the setting from their own subjective camera. They have the ability to affect and interact with the NPCs in different settings. Therefore the players begin the module by travelling on the ship with the other NPCs like Alonso, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, and the shiphands, although they must determine their own reasons for being there. Then the boat is struck by the storm and they are shipwrecked along with their fellow travellers on the beach of the island. This happens to follow a similar setting-experience trajectory to the play, wherein the audience first sees the ship and then the island after. But instead of jumping between the dialogue of the noblemen to Prospero and Miranda to Trinculo, Caliban, and Stephano, the PCs will experience the setting from their own subjective cameras based on the locations they choose to travel to and NPCs they encounter.

In the play, the audience is only privy to the interactions that occur on the deck in the first scene. In an open world game, the whole ship exists and is theoretically accessible and traversable. Each of the characters who are on the ship must be located on the ship at this time, and they are independently acting in that space whether the players can access them or not. While this off-stage temporal continuity exists in other media, it is often inaccessible to the audience, and merely presumed, explained, or later shown. But in the interactive and open-world exploration of a TTRPG module, this audience-hidden information needs to “exist”, and either be accessible or reasonably hidden. Therefore, while the play limits the audience and the characters to only the deck, the whole ship must be created and made narratively and spatially accessible to the PCs.

The chronology or layout of the module does not need to predict the chronology of the subjective experiences and choices of the characters. It may be impossible to write a perfectly chronological module, as players are free to make decisions inside of the world which may take them to any part of the island at any time. Instead, the module is written in chapter form, and each chapter has a limited setting and narrative plot points, which give in-game options to the players based on where they go and who they encounter in each location.

These tasks are delivered when players interact with the NPCs in their setting, and these interactions are called “encounters”. For example, players can have encounters with almost every character on the ship prior to being shipwrecked. The ship has been designed to be explorable, and Alonso, Gonzalo, Ferdinand, Trinculo, Stephano, Antonio, Sebastian, and the Boatswain can all be found in different locations of the boat. Alonso and Gonzalo are playing chess, Trinculo and Stephano are drinking Stephano’s wine, and Ferdinand is seasick, relatively unable to speak. Encounters with these NPCs occur only when the players go to those locations; the setting is the determining and limiting factor for who the players encounter and what the NPCs are doing at that time. The module does not relay these actions in chronological order, and instead relays them by location, with the first chapter being the setting of the ship, and the next being the setting of the island.

When translating the locations of the play to the TTRPG, the boat, the island, and the characters of the island all exist, and traveling to different settings triggers different narrative plot points. However, this does not mean that the players can skip to the end of the narrative simply by appearing in the right location. Instead, I have included narrative checkpoint encounters that trigger actions of characters which affect what occurs in each setting, which is consistent with Herman’s idea of the story-world. The first time this locational checkpointing

occurs is at the end of chapter 0, when the ship succumbs to the storm and the PCs and NPCs are transported to the beach of the island. Prior to this shipwreck, NPCs like Alonso and Gonzalo were found on the ship. After this wreck, they are found on the beach. After another encounter-trigger, they will be found imprisoned in the grove of trees. These narrative checkpoints ensure that players can explore the open world without breaking the narrative chronology.

Therefore the setting and the narrative chronology are inexplicably linked as a story-world. Movement from setting to setting in the module triggers the progression of the narrative; and the narrative is discoverable in the setting of the module. In this way, the NPCs are setting-like. They can be found on maps or in different locations, and these encounters occur when players visit these settings.

The story world must be clearly detailed in the module so that the DM can ensure these settings are populated with the narrative encounters. Yet the play does not contain this level of setting detail. The module requires more detail than the medium of the play contains. Detailed maps, scale distances, flora and fauna, dimensions of buildings, objects and even the economic value of objects may be needed when playing the module. If fidelity to the source is one of the primary goals, what information does the translator use in the absence of translatable information?

When faced with needing to include information in the module that does not occur in the play, the translator must decide whether to include this information or to offload that labour to the DM. For example, the PCs will have their own reasons for adventuring and traveling on this particular ship. The DM can allow the players their own reasons or assign them, as they have better insight than the module writer for their players' backgrounds and choices. The choice of what information to offload and what to include means that the translator is also a delegator;

adapting the play is not a simple one-to-one translation of characters and setting from the medium of the play to the medium of the TTRPG module. The DM becomes a belated assistant translator or adapter, who uses the module and adjusts it to suit their own purpose.

When information must be included in the module but is not included in the play and cannot be offloaded to the DM, then the translator also acts as content creator. For example, the size of the ship is not included in the play, only that it has features such as a mainsail and topmast (1.1.34-35), and can carry all of the characters, many of whom are nobles. These details, along with the historical time and location of the play, can lead me to assumptions of what the ship might look like, and these can be translated into the setting of the TTRPG. However, D&D has its own conventions, some of which run counter to my assumptions from the play. The island exists somewhere off the coast of Italy, for example, but in the world of D&D, Italy does not exist. As part of the proprietary agreement for DMs to create their own modules using the D&D ruleset, Wizards of the Coast has authorized and created a specific campaign setting and world that players may adapt for themselves, which is a sprawling continent called the Forbidden Realms. I have attempted to find a location analogous to the coast of Italy inside of the Forbidden Realms, and the Sword Coast of the continent seems to be the most geographically and meteorologically similar. The Sword Coast hosts a number of smaller islands at various points of colonization or discovery, and it is possible that there is an island there that has escaped notice for the twelve years that Miranda and Prospero have been shipwrecked there. This translation from one of the seas surrounding Italy to the Sword Coast in the Forbidden Realms is a decision necessitated by the medium of the TTRPG module and also a creative translation based on matching weather and geographic conditions across geographies.

The setting of the island now must match the geographic features of the islands of the Sword Coast while also maintaining the temporal and meteorological conditions of the play. However, the PCs and NPCs can interact with the setting, and so the topographic and natural features of the island must also be created and accessible. The island's size, scale, and distance between key setting locations, and the difficulties in reaching these features (for example, whether players need to scale mountains or simply walk up a hill to reach Prospero's hut) must all be decided and conveyed in the absence of this information in the play and its necessity in being included in the TTRPG module.

The final decision in relaying the information of the setting and location is whether to include visual aids. DMs may choose to facilitate the game in "theatre of the mind" style, which is a style of TTRPG that uses no visual aids and allows all actions to occur in oral storytelling form. Alternatively, many DMs choose instead to play with visual aids such as maps and illustrations, which is especially useful in situations with tactical spatial combat. As a longtime D&D player, I find the maps and visual aids preferable, and I often DM with an erasable grid that allows me to draw the setting in birds'-eye-view on the table. These drawings and maps, however, need not be included in the module. Here the choice has been limited by my skills as a translator; I do not feel confident in designing and illustrating maps for my module, and therefore have chosen to offload the labour of map-making and design to my DMs at their discretion, relying only on text-based setting description.

Ultimately, the translation of the setting from the play to the TTRPG is not so simple as a transposition of information from one medium to another. The affordances and limitations of each medium must be considered, as well as the perspectives of the audience and the players or characters, the question of setting in comparison to temporality, the inclusion of visual aids, the

mediation of the DM, and even the legal requirements of using Wizards of the Coast's D&D ruleset. These aspects affected many of the decisions I made in adapting the setting from the play to the module, often relying on creation rather than translation of the story-world's setting and temporality. In these creative decisions the role of translator was adjusted to the role of creator, where I used the information I had to shape a detailed, interactive story-world that felt consistent with the story logic of the play.

Translation: Characters and Capabilities

Almost all of the characters of the play have been adapted into non-playable characters (NPCs) in the TTRPG module. The two exceptions are Sebastian, who has been removed and his characteristics folded into the character of Antonio, and the shipmaster, who has been made an unnamed member of the crew.

The players' introductions to the NPCs are similar to the order to the introduction of the characters of the play. *The Tempest's* first scene begins on a ship during a rough storm, where the titular tempest threatens the ship off-course. In the play, this scene includes an introduction to Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, and Gonzalo, as well as the Boatswain and his ship master. In the play, only characters who appear on stage are accessible to the audience. In the TTRPG module, however, the "stage" is anywhere that the player-characters (PCs) have the ability to explore. Therefore all characters that are on the ship must be accessible on this map, or alternatively exist but remain inaccessible due to some physical limitation or roadblock derived from the setting, such as behind a locked door.

In this first scene I have assigned activities and locations to all members of the ship and crew so that the players may interact with these characters on the ship. The players can watch,

assist with, impede, or otherwise encounter the NPCs as they explore the ship. These encounters have been designed with a few goals in mind: first, to introduce the PCs to the NPCs in memorable, interactive encounters that are unlikely to result in combat, and second, to reward PC exploration with narrative information. These goals stem from my earlier, primary goal of balancing fidelity to the source text with the importance of meaningful choice in the TTRPG module. Players who interact with the NPCs may find information that is otherwise inaccessible, and this information builds a picture of the characters and their relationships to each other. Players who attempt to search Antonio's room will find his journal with some scribbles indicating a plot to usurp Alonso, as well as complaints about the fool Trinculo. Similarly, players who attempt to intervene or understand the relationship between Gonzalo and Alonso may find that Gonzalo is allowing Alonso to win their chess match. These encounters further the narrative, but only emerge in active engagement from the PCs.

But where do these specific encounters come from? In the play, the only interactions on the ship are between the Boatswain and some of the courtiers, which gives the audience indications of the characteristics of some of the characters but certainly not all of them. The audience of the play is unable to interact with the characters at all; in the module, however, the audience is the player, and they are able to interact and affect the NPCs on the ship.

Similarly to the issues of translating the setting from the play to the module, the module requires information about the characters that do not exist in the play. In the absence of some information, I have had to create a significant amount of information about the NPCs that is discoverable by the PCs. This information includes the personality traits of the NPCs, their relationships to each other, individual goals and attributes, and stat blocks, which indicate their combat abilities.

Stephano has been changed from a drunken butler to a wine merchant, which allows characters that are not affiliated with the noblemen of the ship to have been travelling, thus opening up options for the PCs to determine why they were travelling on the ship. Stephano's new role also allows the PCs to interact meaningfully with Stephano and his companions through the side quest of collecting the wine barrels. Players may stumble upon Stephano's stores, they may assist him in collecting the wine, or they may drink it themselves and experience in-game drunkenness. While fidelity to the text is one of my concerns, this adjustment allows PCs more opportunity for open-world exploration, interaction, and self-determined backstory.

Combat also plays a significant role in D&D, having its own ruleset and requirements that must be included in the module. In the play, there is little to no combat, and all combat emerges in minor conflict, such as the tussle between Trincolo, Caliban, and Stephano. Combat, as a key pillar of the medium, is something that must be integrated into the module in ways that make sense to the narrative, but fidelity-focused translation is impossible in the lack of combat or character-based combat statistics of the play.

I have made combat emerge in the fight between the players and the "curse of Sycorax", a witch-spirit guarding Prospero's spellbook, and in the final battle, which is an adjusted version of the wedding-performance with the spirits summoned by Prospero. Prospero, a wizard of the island, has been given a stat block, with abilities and characteristics based on his race (Human) and class (Cleric, subclass Tempest), which are defining characteristics in the D&D ruleset. Tempest Clerics have the ability to conjure storms and injure others, and the name of this subclass is in direct reference to Shakespeare's play. I have also given Prospero additional levels in the Wizard class. Wizards are primarily a spellbook-using class and their magical abilities stem from their books, and this ensures that Prospero's spellbooks are both narratively and

statistically meaningful in the module. These classes still limit his abilities to only certain spells and traits, which do not include summoning spirits or even performing marriages. Therefore Prospero has also been given additional spell abilities that are considered homebrew, as they are not inside of the D&D ruleset and yet are vital to his role in both the play and the TTRPG module.

Trinculo, a fool and comic character, has been given the class of Bard, which would account for his ability to perform and convince characters around him. The TTRPG medium also requires stat blocks for NPCs that engage in combat. Stephano has been given the combat abilities suited to a “Drunken Master Monk”. Caliban has been given the racial stats of an Ogre and the class of Fighter, which makes him a strength-based humanoid (albeit not quite human) character, which befits how he is seen by the characters of the play.

Similarly, Sycorax does not appear in the play; she is a character and narrative force that exists outside of the temporal and spatial boundaries of the narrative, and should fidelity be my only concern, Sycorax would only appear in this capacity. However, as a witch, she fits well into the world of D&D and as a force of conflict for Caliban, Prospero, and the players. Yet, since the goal is some sort of narrative fidelity, it does not seem right to insert a long-dead character when translated across media. Instead, I have made Sycorax a tool of conflict, much like in the play. She opposes Prospero, and limits his ability; she is a reason for Caliban’s animosity towards Prospero and possibly towards the players; and she does not wholly exist, instead representing a cursed spirit below the island that provides conflict and combat for the players and advances the game narrative.

Finally, one of the primary and core possibilities in the interactive space of D&D that does not exist in the play is the players’ capability to make meaningful choices that affect the

narrative. This is in contrast to the linear narrative style of the play, and poses a problem as a translator when attempting to allow meaningful choice while still advancing a narrative that resembles and represents the play. Here I have made the decision for the players to choose sides in the final combat. This allows for the illusion of meaningful choice inside of a static final scene that is similar to the climax of the play.

Players may choose to side with Prospero, who wishes to complete a marriage between his daughter and Ferdinand while summoning three spirits in performance and simultaneously imprisoning the noblemen of the boat in a grove of trees. Alternatively, players may choose to aid Caliban in his usurpation plot of Prospero. Caliban has been granted more power and agency in this role, transforming him from pitiable to more formidable force and aided by Stephano and Trinculo, who are similarly more effective in their fight than mere comedic effect. Caliban's fight against Prospero is one for his freedom and his land, and players may find themselves empathizing with his character and choose to side with him in stopping the marriage and completing his usurpation of Prospero on the island. This reflects the shifts in scholarship and popular culture views of Caliban and Prospero, which differ from *The Tempest's* first run over four hundred years ago, which I will discuss more in the chapter on audience and user reception. Ultimately, accounting for player choice provides an interesting problem and opportunity as translator of a linear narrative into an interactive one.

The formal capabilities of the interactive medium also allow, and even require, agency for non-playable characters that do not exist in the play. Miranda, for example, is a limited-agency character who has simple motivations and desires but does not often act to affect the play in meaningful ways. The temptation to rewrite Miranda as a woman of agency stems from my personal experience with feminist criticism; I often had to reflect back on my goal of fidelity

with meaningful choice when deciding how to translate Miranda into a character with agency. This also stems from the longstanding history of D&D being a masculine space. While more women than ever play TTRPGs now, the field has been consistently dominated by male voices and published modules rely on male villains, masculine tropes, and build from the sexist traditions of the works they repeat, such as H.P. Lovecraft's writing. I felt that it was important for players to engage with Miranda as a character whose motivations and actions are as complex and holistically authentic as any other; her two-dimensionality is a point of contention for me. However, with the goal of fidelity with meaningful choice, this posed a problem. What is Miranda's motivation, other than to act subservient to her father and then to her lover-husband? Her goal is to be married to the man she has seen only once, the third man she has ever encountered in her life on the island. How can I, as the translator, make this an authentic and meaningful identity in an interactive space?

Miranda becomes a location of conflict, and players may assist her in granting her wish to marry Ferdinand. Ferdinand has been given the monotonous and near-impossible tasks of chopping and hauling logs from Prospero, and Miranda despairs at his ever completing them. In her separation from Ferdinand she begs the players to assist him in these impossible tasks, which the players can do since they have magical and skillful capabilities. These tasks include hauling wood, discovering magical plants, and ultimately assisting Prospero in capturing the noblemen and imprisoning them in a grove of trees. These tasks are indirectly the result of the agency and characterization of the men of the play; Miranda does not gain any additional motivations other than love in her translation to TTRPG character. In service to fidelity, she remains a subservient woman, who exists to advance the marriage plot and provide character development for

Prospero. Still, she has her own dialogue and has been given her own voice to express these desires, and the players may choose to assist her or not in her side quest.

Ultimately, the characters of the play have been translated into their nearest statistical equivalents with many opportunities for creative additions. This process becomes less one of neat translation and instead more of a problem solving or creative writing process, wherein NPCs need to have discoverable motivations and capabilities that allow conflict but that do not exist in the play. In my role as translator, it is in the assigning of statistics and motivations that I have made the most significant changes or additions to the source material, with the goal of meaningful interactive encounters for the players.

Translation: Dialogue

Incorporating “read-aloud” text in D&D modules is a common practice that allows DMs to read spoiler-free text with key setting or narrative information. I have included a significant amount of read-aloud text in the module as the dialogue in the play is a key part of its identity. A fidelity-focused adaptation includes a translation of the dialogue of the characters, which contributes to what Herman calls the “dominant feel” of the text (134).

In translating the setting and characters, the TTRPG required me to assign and incorporate additional information that did not exist in the play. For read-aloud text and dialogue, however, the situation is the opposite; character dialogue is the most abundant form of textual information in the source text as it is primarily a play script with some descriptive stage directions. It would be impossible to include all of this dialogue in the module, and in fact not preferable (see “The Goals of Translation and the Role of the Translator in Practice”).

In my translation, I have taken dialogue from the play and adapted it for accessibility, brevity, narrative coherence, and to match the temporality and spatialization of the story-world. The read-aloud text and dialogue is located in interaction with the NPCs, who in turn are located on the map, and therefore the dialogue is inherently tied to setting exploration and character interaction.

Dialogue from the play has been significantly selected and edited to suit the much less dialogue-heavy format of the TTRPG. While the roleplay aspect of TTRPGs frequently requires a lot of ad-libbed dialogue from the DM, the inclusion of read-aloud dialogue in the module assists the DM in facilitating the language and speaking style of the characters of the play. This module includes more dialogue and read-aloud text than is customary in comparison to other written modules. This choice stems from the goal of fidelity in conjunction with medium-specificity, as the text is adaptable by the DM and therefore “over-inclusion” of dialogue is a minor inconvenience and not a medium-breaking choice.

The dialogue’s location in the module has been adjusted from the physical locations of the characters when they were spoken. For example, the first chapter of the module includes a scene where Ferdinand is sick and says “Is it over? No, it begins again!”. In the play, Ferdinand does remark “It begins again” (1.2.395), but he is referring to the soundscape produced magically by the spirit Ariel while he is on the island. While the dialogue matches the character, it has been re-spatialized and recontextualized for a different purpose; it retains very little of its original meaning in this recontextualization, and yet the spoken dialogue remains the same.

In the first chapter of the module Alonso comments, “What strange fish wishes to make a meal of us?”. This is an edited translation of Alonso’s dialogue in the play, when he questions where his son may be, asking “what strange fish / Hath made his meal on thee?” (2.1.113-114).

While this dialogue is very similar to how it appears in the play, it has been cut, adjusted, and repurposed throughout the TTRPG module to more closely match the new narrative and the roles of the NPCs. This gives the players the feeling of experiencing the play while also adjusting the experience to suit the open-world interactive style of the module. Yet it shows how the same dialogue, when recontextualized and repositioned in the story-world of the module, the meaning can change significantly.

One of the most culturally impactful and memorable scenes in the play is Prospero's epilogue in act 5. This monologue is important to the spirit of the play as well as having played a key role in scholarship and contextual understanding of the play since it was first published. Yet its self-reflexive and metaphoric qualities makes it difficult to adapt to the new medium and retain these meanings. Orgel reflects on Prospero's renunciation of magic in his final words, comparing it to how his devotion to his studies led to his usurpation in the first place, concluding that the renunciation of magic mirrors his giving up vindictiveness and vengeance (51-52). While these themes can be transferred to the module, what is more difficult to translate is the subtext of the final monologue in Shakespeare's final play. Prospero refers to himself as a fictional character, and "expands the fiction beyond the limit of drama" (Orgel 55), pulling the audience into the drama. But in the module, the "audience" has been interacting with the characters all along; and this fourth-wall-breaking is embedded in the interactive medium. In adapting the spirit of this monologue, Prospero may reference his own fictionality in the story-world of the game, or renounce his magic inside the boundaries of D&D. But another difficulty in translating this monologue is the possibility that Prospero did not survive the final conflict; he may not be alive to deliver any sort of monologue if the players chose to side with Caliban in the concluding encounter. While there is the possibility for last words or "non-lethal blows", which is a type of

combat that reduces an enemy to zero hit points while avoiding their death, this is a choice given to players, not mandated by the module. If Prospero does not survive the final conflict, how can he deliver his final speech?

Ultimately, I have included parts of the epilogue in a farewell or dying speech by Prospero. But the doubled and layered meanings of the dialogue have resisted translation across media; the self-reflexivity of the stage and performance change in the interactive story-world medium, and thus these medium-specific elements of the play are untranslatable across media.

Conclusion

In my remediation of the play into the TTRPG I have relied heavily on Herman's structuralist story logic, Ryan's storyworlds, and my own perspectives of fidelity-focused narrative preservation and medium specificity. This perspective emerged from the necessity of using a structuralist framework to preserve and translate the narrative while understanding how the affordances and limitations of the media affect these elements and the ways they are represented and consumed. In this, the structuralist narratological perspective that seeks to distill its narrative into constituent parts seems to run counter to the dialogic perspective of the malleable source text. From the play's recategorization from comedy to romance in the late 1800s to the shifting moral, ethical, and colonial interpretations of its characters throughout its critical history, Orgel summarizes this breadth of interpretation as "...all interpretations are necessary arbitrary, and Shakespearean texts are by nature open, offering the director or critic only a range of possibilities" (Orgel 12). The play script, which is intended to be adapted into a stage performance, is a dialogic text built on centuries of interpretation. It is a text-object that has

been designed to be adapted and has been affected by each adaptation, and therefore any translation is subject to the semiotic re-representation perspective of the translator.

As the adapter and translator of the play-text into the TTRPG, I attempted to adhere to the structuralist categories of narrative elements and transpose these across media. Yet difficulties, caveats, and limitations emerged with every decision. Frequently, remediating the narrative conflicted directly with the interactive promise of the TTRPG. Moving the narrative from linear “telling” or “showing” mode to the setting-based storyworld mode of interactive narrative emergence solved many of these problems; the players are able to experience the narrative through interaction, and their choices dictate which pieces of the narrative they experience without diverting off narrative course.

Similarly, a frequent emergent issue was the problem of too little information or too much. The play script, a text-based object consisting of dialogue and stage directions, provided a significant amount of its TTRPG medium counterpart, the read-aloud dialogue, yet this abundance of dialogue needed to be significantly truncated for brevity. Conversely, the play script provides little information for what is occurring off-stage and in the rest of the story-world at any time, and this information is crucial in the interactive open world of the TTRPG. In these decisions, the ratio of information differed across media, and translation required creative, active information re-scaling.

The issue of fidelity surfaced in these decisions, as degrees of difference and creative information scaling caused me to question the possibility of fidelity when translating across media with such different affordances and limitations. The seeming impossibility of fidelity led to temptation to adjust the narrative to suit my imagined audience, which is the facilitating DM and their players. For example, there are more characters in the play than there typically would

be in a shorter TTRPG module. The number of non-combative NPCs is often limited to simplify player decision-making, reduce DM mental load, and streamline the narrative. When translating the play, I felt the medium-specific and audience-focused pressure to reduce the number of characters; could Trinculo and Stephano be blended into one character? Are Sebastian, Gonzalo, or the Boatswain necessary characters? I frequently found myself tempted to streamline the narrative, and did so in the blending of Antonio and Sebastian into one revenge-figure that betrayed Prospero and usurped his duchy. Still, this decision does not adhere to my goal of fidelity-focused translation mediated by free player choice; instead, it felt imposed by the force of the conventions of the medium.

I also felt pressure as a translator to re-imagine elements of the narrative to more closely adhere to my contemporary and culturally relativistic perspective. Miranda and Caliban are both characters that have been subject to critical feminist and postcolonial discourse, which has affected my perspective of their characters. In remediating Miranda, I struggled to concretely define her motivations and characteristics, which Orgel notes has also been a struggle for adopters of the play. He writes, “for more than two centuries the performing tradition, with overwhelming uniformity, dealt with what was felt to be an inadmissible contradiction in her character by cutting the entire exchange [about Miranda’s parentage in 1.2.118-20]” (Orgel 17). I similarly found myself wanting to streamline Miranda into an easily-understood caricature of dutiful daughter, doting lover, or alternatively rewrite her as a more contemporarily-common “strong female character”. Caliban displays a similar narrative, cultural, and dialogic complexity. When deciding how to remediate his character, I had to take into account centuries of racist caricatures of native inhabitants, the play’s location in history and relationship to colonialism, and the impact of postcolonial criticism on my perspective of the play. In my decision-making, I

deferred to presenting characters through their dialogue and spatialization in the story-world. Rather than attempting to rewrite or affect their characters in service of my contemporary and cultural perspective, I used Herman's story-logic to transpose them as they appear in the play into their closest structural analogues in the TTRPG. This transpositioning undoubtedly affects their presentation, as does my mediation as translator, but in my focus on fidelity I chose to adhere as closely to the characterizations in the play as possible.

There is more work to be done in this space. Fidelity, as shown, is not the primary goal in adaptation, and so fidelity can be limited in pursuit of goals such as feminist or anti-racist characterizations, adapting canonical stories for modern audiences, or interrogating character portrayals in canonical narratives. As adaptation studies grow to include a wider variety of media formats as well as narratives, there is more work to be done in studying how identities can and should be translated across formats.

Another surprising issue was the degree to which I felt responsible for fulfilling the promise of the TTRPG. Translating the play into an interactive linear narrative without the interference of free decision-making would have resulted in a significantly different module. Instead, the "three pillars" of D&D, which are exploration, social interaction, and combat ("The Player's Handbook" 8) required the creation of stat blocks, interactive settings, and character goals in order to fulfil this promise. Yet the concept of fulfilling the promise of a medium remains out of my hands as the module-writer, as the degree to which the players are railroaded or allowed truly free exploration and interaction in the storyworld requires the facilitation of the DM. Both the requirements of the medium and the interfering force of the DM resulted in decisions like avoiding the inclusion of maps and giving the option to skip the first chapter.

Ultimately, all of the choices I made in remediating *The Tempest* from the play-script to the TTRPG module attempted to privilege fidelity to the source text in contrast to the promise and best practices associated with the TTRPG medium. Yet fidelity across media is an ambiguous and flexible target. The process involved a collection of complex, multi-factorial decisions, including disassembling the play into its narrative elements and rescaling them into their nearest medium-specific analogues. After this process, a number of holes remained in the TTRPG, requiring pure creation to fulfill the promise of three-pillared open interaction of the medium. The result is an explorable story-world that fulfils the self-declarative definition of adaptation: I, as the translator, have attempted to adapt *The Tempest* into a TTRPG module and therefore the result is an adaptation.

Appendix

The Tempest TTRPG

“Hell is empty, and all the devils are here.”

For years, an exiled Duke and wizard-cleric has been trapped on an island, waiting to enact his revenge on the political usurpers who stranded him there. Now that the men who betrayed him have been shipwrecked on his shore, he’s ready to seize his chance for revenge and destroy anyone who gets in his way. Will the characters assist the marooned wizard-cleric to save themselves? Or will they side with the noblemen who betrayed him in the first place?

A Shakespeare-inspired fantasy adventure for characters of 1st to 3rd level

Introduction

The Tempest is an adventure set on a desert island in the Forgotten Realms. It is a standalone adventure for 1st level characters, but can be adapted into any setting or adventure. This adventure uses the milestone rule, and players will gain two levels throughout the adventure upon completion of levelling milestones or at the DM’s discretion.

The Tempest is centered around the revenge plot of the wizard-cleric Prospero, whom the players can choose to assist or hinder. The main story and its side quests have all been designed to allow the players to explore the world and characters of Shakespeare’s famous late play while still allowing for meaningful choices that impact the narrative.

DMs may choose to skip Part 0: On The Ship, which has been designed with new players in mind and uses the boat setting as a tutorial for the mechanics of D&D fifth edition.

Background

The party has gained passage on a nobleman’s ship when they find their travel suddenly jeopardized by a dangerous storm. Their boat runs aground on a nearby, seemingly-deserted island. Once on shore, players can see that the storm is strange; it rages in a ring around the island while the land remains sunny and warm, untouched by the surrounding storm. The ship can’t set sail into the storm, and so the players must discover how to calm the storm to escape the island.

But the island is not uninhabited. The storm is just the beginning of an elaborate plot by the dangerous wizard-cleric of the island, Prospero, who is determined to make the nobles from the ship suffer as he carries out his long-simmering revenge plot.

As the players explore the island, they will make or break loyalties, explore underground dungeons, and ultimately decide who to side with in order to escape. Should they help Prospero enact his revenge? Or should they try to stop him?

Prospero's Usurpation

Twelve years ago Prospero was the Duke of Milan, leading a modest city-state situated in West Faerûn along the Sword Coast. A secretive and inattentive ruler, Prospero spent his days secluded in his castle studying wizardry, astronomy, and the clerical arts, leaving the day-to-day mundanity of running the nation to his brother Antonio. Ambitious and charming, Antonio won over the high-ranking political officials, including the neighbouring King of Naples, and usurped Prospero's rule. In the cover of night, Antonio and his loyal servants threw Prospero and his 5-year-old daughter Miranda onto a ship and set them off to sea. An elderly nobleman, Gonzalo, secretly stocked the ship with preserves, clothing, and Prospero's most important spellbooks, which allowed the two to survive their aimless journey on the dangerous waters of the Sea of Swords.

A Magical Island

Prospero and Miranda floated aimlessly, almost succumbing to hunger and thirst were it not for the provisions stocked by Gonzalo. They survived and landed on an island in the Moonshae Isles that, unbeknownst to them, was already populated with magic-capable beings and spirits. Home to naiads, dryads, fey spirits, and enchanted flora, the island was ruled by a cruel witch, Sycorax, who had enslaved the spirits and used them in her own experiments. Sycorax has killed many of these spirits in blood magic rituals that resulted in the creation of a monstrous being whom she called her son, Caliban. Upon his arrival, Prospero and Sycorax engaged in a bloody magical battle that lasted for years, until Prospero was able to sever Sycorax's spirit from her body and imprison her soul in an underground cavern. But he was not left unscathed—his spellbook, the source of most of his magic, remained in her spirit's clutches, leaving Prospero's magic muted and him unable to leave the island. The monstrous Caliban, too, swore vengeance against Prospero for murdering his mother and enslaving him.

Prospero's Revenge

To escape the island, Prospero needs to recover his spellbook magically guarded by Sycorax's soul monster. The opportunity arrived from the nearby passage of a ship carrying the nobles who

stole his throne: Prospero's brother Antonio, the neighbouring King of Naples Alonso, Alonso's son Ferdinand, and the helpful nobleman Gonzalo. Prospero's servant-spirit Ariel conjured up a magical storm that drove the ship onto the island, and Prospero intends to seize this opportunity to reclaim his spellbook and his throne at the same time. But he will need the players to help him, and he does not intend on telling them the whole truth. Disguised as a wizened old man in a shack with his beautiful but naïve daughter, Prospero will do everything he can to convince the players to recover his spellbook and ultimately help him carry out his revenge on those who stole his rule from him.

Unexpected Relationships

Prospero's plan has been complicated by his daughter Miranda falling in love at first sight with Alonso's son Ferdinand. Resistant at first, he assigns Ferdinand impossible tasks that he must carry out in order to marry Miranda. Miranda will beg the players to assist Ferdinand in the impossible tasks and convince her father to allow them to marry. Upon successful completion of the tasks Prospero will relent, using Miranda and Ferdinand's relationship to solidify an alliance with Alonso and reclaim his nobility through their union.

The monstrous Caliban also forms an unlikely friendship with the wine merchant Stephano and the fool Trinculo, convincing them to assist him in the murder of Prospero and promising any who will help him to reveal the magical secrets of the island. Stephano and Trinculo, who have dulled their anger towards the noblemen with years of drinking, may be convinced to join the underdog Caliban and overthrow Prospero.

Character Quick Reference

The Island's Inhabitants

Prospero. An elderly wizard-cleric who has been stranded on the island for 12 years with his daughter Miranda. He was formerly a Duke of Milan, usurped by Antonio and Alonso. Now, he wants revenge but needs access to his spellbook to enact his revenge, which is guarded by the curse of Sycorax under the island. He will hide his revenge plot, instead telling the players that when he recovers his spellbook he can help them all escape from the island. He has two slaves, Ariel and Caliban, and he also is protective of Miranda.

Miranda. Naive, under-educated, and content, Miranda knows little of the outside world and her father's past. She spends her time tending to her garden and animals and making herbal remedies. She has fallen in love with Ferdinand, a young nobleman from the shipwrecked boat, and will beg the players to assist him in the impossible tasks her father has given Ferdinand so they can be wed.

Caliban. Enslaved after Prospero killed his mother, Sycorax, he has vowed his own revenge. Violent and obsessed with alcohol, Caliban wishes to kill Prospero and reclaim the island as his own. He will swear allegiance to the players if they agree to help kill Prospero.

Ariel. Prospero's other slave is a benevolent spirit with strong magical abilities. Prospero has promised to set him free after he completes his revenge, and Ariel is determined to assist Prospero so he can gain his freedom.

Sycorax. The mother of Caliban, Sycorax was killed by Prospero after a lengthy battle on the island. She tied his spellbook to her trapped soul in a cave under the island. Prospero will ask for the players' help in removing her soul (her "curse") in her cave under the island and to retrieve his spellbook.

The Boat's Occupants

Alonso. The good-natured and bumbling King of Naples is traveling with his advisor Gonzalo, his fool Trinculo, his son Ferdinand, and the Duke of Milan Antonio.

Antonio. The brother of Prospero and the leader of Milan, the city-state he usurped from Prospero. Charismatic, cunning, and ambitious, Antonio comes across as unlikeable and self-absorbed.

Ferdinand. The King's son, who is just like Miranda; dreamy, weak-willed, and not particularly bright. He falls in love at first sight with Miranda and begged Prospero for her hand in marriage. To delay their union, Prospero has assigned Ferdinand seemingly-impossible tasks he must complete, and both he and Miranda will ask the players to assist him in these tasks so they can be married.

Trinculo. A fun-loving, raucous fool who entertains the king, sings and declaims poetry, and loves to drink. He ultimately sides with Caliban in the final fight.

Gonzalo. A stuffy, nervous, and kindly advisor who supports the King but feels guilty at his role in the usurpation of Prospero twelve years ago.

Boatswain. The foul-mouthed senior crewman of the boat. He is responsible for the ship's hull and all its components, including its rigging, anchors, sails, and deck maintenance.

Stephano. An alcoholic, ruddy-faced wine merchant shipping his wares across the sea after bartering passage from the Boatswain. His wine barrels will be scattered around the island, concentrated near the shipwreck, and he will ask the players to help him recover these wares. He ultimately sides with Caliban in the final fight.

Ship Crewmen. An assortment of crew members and the Captain of the ship, many of whom perish in the storm or are left unconscious on the wreckage of the ship.

Part 0: On the Ship

This portion of the adventure can be skipped by experienced players as it has been designed as a tutorial for the exploration and roleplay mechanics of fifth edition. If you choose to skip this section, read the read-aloud text from "On the Ship" and "The Crux of the Storm" in succession and begin the adventure in Part 1: Stranded on the Beach.

On the Ship

The party has been traveling on this ship for several days. But today the skies are grey and the crewmen are scrambling to prepare for an incoming storm. The players have some time to talk to each other, the noblemen, the crewmen, or entertain themselves as they like before the storm throws them off-course. See table for possible activities and events.

After days on rocky seas, the players find their ship jeopardized by the beginnings of a dangerous storm. They have a few hours to explore the ship, meet the crew and passengers, and practice mechanics like skill checks and saving throws.

You've gained passage on a ship stuffed to the brim with goods to sell and passengers of all stripes, including noblemen. After a few days of acute seasickness, you've emerged from your cramped chambers on the rockiest day of all. The sky has darkened, the waves are choppy than they ever have been and it seems that a dangerous storm is coming. The anxiety on the boat is palpable.

Sidebar: Running a Tutorial

Learning D&D can be a complicated and overwhelming experience. A helpful way to guide new players through their near-unlimited options is to suggest actions for players after presenting them with the situation, such as *"You can explore the ship, meet the passengers, see the provisions, or attempt to assist the crewmen in preparing against the storm."* For more independently-minded players, you can preface this with *"Would you like to know more about (item or NPC)? Would you like me to suggest avenues you can explore?"* When players make their selection, prompt them to describe how it plays out with statements like *"How do you ask that?", "How would you like to do that?"* or *"Describe what you do."*

In this tutorial, you may allow players any degree of freedom and flexibility that makes sense to you, but use the results of their actions to show in-game consequences. For example, intimidating King Alonso may result in his guards removing players from his room, or stealing wine from the merchant Stephano may make him hostile and provoke a (non-lethal) fight.

NPC	Activity	Event	Dialogue (optional)
Boatswain and crewmen	Hoisting sails, preparing the ship	The storm becomes choppy. Players must roll a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone; a second failed check results in them sliding to the edge of the deck; a third results in them	"To your cabins! A storm cares not for your nobility or rank. If you don't, give thanks you have lived so long."

		falling overboard and must swim to shore or attempt to climb back aboard.	
King Alonso	Playing chess with Gonzalo	The rockiness of the storm sends the king piece rolling off the table. Players can bet on who will win, and attempt to assist either Gonzalo or King Alonso in their game. Gonzalo will let Alonso win, which the players can determine with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.	Alonso: “What strange fish wish to make a meal of us?” Gonzalo: “We will be saved, sire. On this ship and in our blessed lives is everything advantageous”
Antonio	Pacing his room, plotting ways to seize more power and potentially overthrow King Alonso	If disturbed, Antonio will yell at the players to leave him alone. His desk contains a diary that has scribbles of usurpation plots, schemes to acquire more riches, and complaints about the drunken Trinculo and the vapid King Alonso.	<i>Written in his journal.</i> “Cheating his own life, T the drunkard fool has discovered his matching wide-chopped rascal - the merchant, S.” “Wouldst all the noblemen on this wretched ship sink with the King” “If G’s pockets could speak, would it not say he lies?”
Stephano and Trinculo	Toasting to the end of their lives	The shaky boat spills their wine. Players can convince them to share their wine with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.	“What have we here - a man or a fish? Dead or alive? Ah, they smell like fish. Let’s toast to the fish! To the dead!”
Ferdinand	Trying to read in his cabin, but getting interrupted by seasickness.	Getting seasick in a bucket. Players who fail a DC 12 Constitution check will sympathetically vomit.	“Is it over? No, it begins again!”

The Crux of the Storm

The torrential rainfall surges onto the deck of the ship and lightning cracks in the sky. The crewmen shout commands and follow orders, bracing themselves against the bough and holding the sails steady. Their shouts are lost to the wind as the ship fights against the storm, and more than one crewman is lost overboard from the crashing waves.

A crewman in the crow's nest spots land and shouts the alert, pointing to a small island in the distance. The Boatswain shouts "Cheerly, my hearts! Lay her a-hold! Set her courses off to land - we are saved!" The wind grabs his words and a gigantic wave spills over the edge of the boat, tipping everyone on board.

The ship runs aground on the deserted beach, full of water and damaged. The storm continues to rage over the water, but the beach seems mysteriously untouched by the rain, wind, and crashing water. You emerge onto the sandy shore, surrounded by bedraggled passengers dragging unconscious bodies from the water.

Part 1: Stranded on the Beach

Overview: The Island

The bulk of this adventure takes place on Prospero's island and in the caves underneath it. The island contains a windy beach, a rocky coast, and a lush, dangerous forest in the northwest. It is constantly surrounded by the continuing magical storm. Prospero's hut lies to the west. In the north-east is a magical rock formation that is both the secret entrance to Sycorax's underground lair and the location of the final encounter.

The beach is the starting point for players. Here they can encounter Stephano, the wine merchant passenger who laments his lost wares and begs the players to help him recover his wine barrels. King Alonso, too, thinks his son Ferdinand might be lost to the storm, and asks the players to find his body around the island for a proper burial. Unbeknownst to King Alonso, Ferdinand is alive and wandering the island, and soon meets Miranda and Prospero. The other crew members spend their time repairing the ship or are magically put to sleep by Ariel.

Players who have failed checks in arriving on the beach, such as Swim or Dex saving throws, may arrive unconscious on the beach and be resuscitated by their companions or fellow boat passengers (Survival or Medicine DC15).

The Beach

The ship is aground on the beach of the island. The beach is sandy, windy, and barren, but warm and relatively safe for players. Wildlife includes scuttling crabs, turtles, birds, bugs and fish. There is little plant life, but players can see trees and cliffs rising in the distance.

The beach is littered with debris and unconscious passengers and crewmen. Barrels wash ashore, and wine stains the sand. Some figures huddle together on the beach, sobbing, while a bedraggled Stephano drags wine barrels from the water to the shore. The storm rages just offshore, but does not seem to touch the sunny shore of the beach.

The sobbing figures are Alonso and Gonzalo, who believe Alonso's son Ferdinand to have been lost in the wreckage. Stephano is concerned with saving his wine from the wreckage and the thirsty survivors. Ferdinand and Trinculo are both alive, but wandering separately on different parts of the island.

The ship is run aground but intact. All of the crewmen are magically asleep, and cannot be woken.

The storm appears to surround the island, and can be seen only a dozen feet offshore but magically avoiding the island itself.

Side Quest: Alonso's Lost Son

"My son is lost, and in my rate, me too. I shall never again see him!"

"Sir, I am sure his bold head and good arms kept him above the contentious waves. I do not doubt he came alive to land!"

Alonso and Gonzalo huddle together on the shore, Alonso sobbing at the apparent loss of his son, Ferdinand, in the storm. If approached, Gonzalo will ask the players to search for Ferdinand, dead or alive, and promises that they will be rewarded handsomely for the endeavor. If pressed on the reward, Gonzalo will reveal that Alonso is the king, and Ferdinand is his only heir.

Side Quest: Stephano's Wine

"I will no more set to sea! I will die ashore with my closest companion, my comfort, my wine. But it must be found! My wine! Oh, torment. Please help me collect my wine!"

Stephano, a travelling wine merchant and alcoholic, is distraught at the possible loss of his wine in the wreckage. If approached, he'll beg the players to help him collect his wine barrels, offering 5 GP for each barrel collected and an additional 50 GP if they find a safe place to store it away from the beach. 8 barrels are scattered around the beach, 2 can be found inland, and there is a cave offshore where players can store the wine.

Encounter: Trinculo. One barrel can be found with Trinculo sitting on it and drinking from it. He can be convinced to help bring the barrel back to Stephano, who is his friend, but he may become aggressive and fight the players if they fail a DC 13 Intimidate (Charisma) check.

Encounter: Caliban. One barrel can be found in the entrance to the cave, guarded by Caliban. More on this encounter can be found in Part 3: The Underground Caves.

Successful side quest completion: *Stephano cracks open a barrel and drinks from it, greedily. After slurping his fill, he burps and wipes his mouth. "It removes the fits. Thank you! I will store the barrels and keep them safe. Now, open your mouths - here is that which you give to me."*

Players each receive a wine skin full of wine and their amount of gold promised, and will level up if they complete the quest.

Part 2: Exploring the Island

The island contains Prospero's hut in the south, a beautiful grove of trees in the north, and a dense forest in the northwest. The middle of the island is a low-density forest. From the beach, players will find a well-tread path leading to Prospero's hut, or can strike out on their own and explore the rest of the island.

Underneath the island is a series of caverns that used to be home to the witch Sycorax, who Prospero killed when he arrived at the island. She set a curse on these caverns that now guard Prospero's spellbook, which he needs to enact his revenge and escape the island.

Prospero's Hut

A well-trodden pathway has been worn through a grove of trees, and as you walk it, a small hut emerges in view. Outside the hut is a sprawling vegetable garden and free-ranging chickens, who peck at the ground and seem to stay within close proximity of the hut. A hunched elder man in torn robes tends to the garden, muttering to himself as the players approach.

Prospero will initially appear as an elderly hermit, stranded on the island twelve years ago by the same storm that brought the players crashing on the beach. He lives in the hut with his daughter, Miranda, who is gathering herbs nearby. They raise chickens, make simple potions and elixirs, and "help Caliban, the local brute" with learning to read and write. It's a simple life, he says, but he longs to show Miranda the rest of the world. He will explain that the storm is a curse set by the witch Sycorax, and he can't break it without his spellbook, which she stole and hid in her cavern underneath the island.

He will ask the players to retrieve his spellbook so he can remove the curse and they can all escape.

The Curse of the Island

“I have done nothing but in care of my daughter, Miranda. She is ignorant of the dire state of the world, having no memory of a time before we came unto this island. But at night I hear her cry, softly, for I am getting older and she may one day live alone here. If you can destroy the witch that curses us to remain in this place, my daughter and I will be forever indebted to you.”

Prospero will tell the players that the storm surrounding the island is a curse from the witch, Sycorax, who lives in a cavern to the north east. He will ask the players to help them rid the island of the curse that keeps them there. When they are ready to leave, he will give them two potions of healing and cast Bless on them, which lasts for 1 hour.

But the truth is that Prospero is casting the storm. In the cavern lies an animated skeleton of Sycorax, who maintains the curse that limits Prospero to white magic. While Sycorax’s skeleton is still alive, he can’t complete his revenge on Alonso.

The Field of Wildflowers

A beautiful, lush field of white wildflowers spreads on the ground, and the soft sound of a woman’s singing fills the air. In the middle of the field is a beautiful young woman weaving a daisy chain.

Miranda is Prospero’s daughter, and has low-level magical healing and potion-making abilities. She has recently seen a handsome young man, Ferdinand, wandering the island, and instantly fell in love with him. She will ask the players to help Ferdinand with the seemingly-impossible tasks that Prospero has required him to do.

Side Quest: Ferdinand’s Tasks

In order to get Prospero’s blessing for Miranda’s hand in marriage, he must complete 3 tasks: chop down 100 trees into logs, transfer the logs from one side of the island to the other, and stack the logs in a pyramid. Players can assist manually or using spells like Mage Hand to assist the completing of the tasks.

Miranda: “I might call him a thing divine, for I have never seen a man so natural and so noble. Please, good sirs -- Pity me, and assist the man who has inspired a love most true, and passion most ardent!”

Ferdinand: “These mean tasks would be heavy and odious but Miranda makes this labour a pleasure. She is ten times more gentle than her father, who is made of harshness. I must remove some thousands of these lods and pile them up before he will consider me for a son.”

Successful side quest completion: *Miranda: “Pray now, rest yourselves! Our love is safe and our futures more so. Oh, we will be enjoined just like this pile of logs! Thank you, friends!”*

Miranda will give the players a ringlet of her hair. When worn, the ringlet will stabilize a player brought to 0 HP and bring them 1 HP (one use only).

Part 3: The Underground Caverns

Sycorax’s underground cavern is a crumbling ruin where Caliban was born. The first time players come here, they will find Caliban hugging one of Stephano’s wine barrels and drinking from it.

The entrance to the caverns appears only as a shallow cave wall with water lapping against it, but can be opened when the puzzle is completed. The walls of the cave are slimy with wet moss, and inside are some curses and beasts guarding Sycorax’s former home.

Sycorax herself is dead - she was killed by Prospero when he arrived at the island - but her animated body remains underground, guarding Prospero’s spellbook and keeping him unable to use his full magic. Prospero wants the curse broken and his spellbook back to finish his revenge on the nobles of the boat. See Quick Reference Guide for Sycorax’s stat block.

The Inlet: the Mouth of the Cave

The mouth of the shallow cavern is lapping with water, and it smells of dank seawater. Fish carcasses ebb in and out with the waves. The unpleasant smell of decay permeates the air. This does not seem to be a cave; in fact, it seems just like a small inlet.

Encounter: Caliban

Lying half in the lapping water and hugging one of Stephano’s wine barrels is a beastly humanoid, quietly moaning and occasionally slapping the ground with one hand. It is Caliban, who moans “This cave is mine, by Sycorax my mother, which has been takest from me. But oh, it cannot be opened! I have been spoiled by celestial liquor and the language I was taught, and my only profit is that I know how to curse.”

Caliban is drunk, and he will become enraged if the players attempt to take the barrel from him. He can be subdued by the players convincing him they will help kill Prospero or give him more liquor somewhere else, and will exchange the barrel for their promise. If they fight, he will run away when he reaches half health.

This is the entranceway to Sycorax's underground lair. Sycorax was a dark witch, and the entrance can only be opened by some kind of dark magic.

Opening the Cavern

Curse you, curse Prospero, curse the beautiful Miranda. The red plague take all those who know how to curse - only my fair mother knew the gift she had, of language without words!

Caliban believes the cave is closed because he has learned language from Prospero and Miranda, and curses the language he has learned. It is partially true; the cave can be opened only with silence, as determined by the DM: Casting Deafen or Silence, by not talking and also ensuring there is no sound, by using hand gestures, etc. The cave walls will shudder and open upon successfully completing the puzzle.

The back wall of the inlet breaks into two, and the earth shudders as the crack opens into two large doors that slide out of the way. The hole opens to a dark cavern, with high ceilings and smooth, mossy walls. It immediately veers in two directions; left or right, each hole curving out of sight.

Inside the Cavern

Just inside the mouth of the cave, a high-ceilinged cavern branches to the left and the right.

The Left Cavern

As you make your way along the left fork, the cave veers sharply to the left. Skeletal remains of what look like animals litter the floor, and you have to step carefully to avoid crunching them. As you continue, the narrow cave opens into a large, black space. In the far corner, you can hear movement, but cannot see what is happening.

This room holds a Giant Spider guarding a giant pearl worth 250 gp. The players can stealth to avoid the encounter, or fight it to retrieve the pearl.

The Right Cavern.

The right cavern branches and curves inwards, and the dark is all-encompassing. There's a low whistling howl reverberating from outside the caves. You hear a clatter overhead, and a swarm of bats swoops down and attacks.

After the bat encounter, if players investigate this area then they will discover a secret pathway that leads to a second pathway into the main room.

The Main Cavern Room

A large room lies at the end of the cavern path, and as the players enter, a terrible series of screeches fills the air. The room is filled with large boulders, each rock has terrible howls emanating from them. Inside each one, a face presses out, begging to be set free. In the far corner lies a humanoid skeleton clutching a large book in its hands.

The cavern room is full of the souls that Sycorax has trapped inside of rocks. They can't be set free, but if the players put one of the mothers next to her child, their spirits will be appeased.

If the players attempt to remove the book from the dead skeleton's hands, it springs to life and fights the players (See Sycroax's Stat Block).

After the encounter, the players receive Prospero's Spellbook and can loot the skeleton to find a Ring of Protection.

Part 4: Prospero's Finale

Players may return to Prospero to deliver him the book, or they may choose to keep it. Regardless, exiting the cave triggers Prospero's finale, wherein the curse of Sycorax has been lifted and he is now able to finish his revenge. Muted Prospero is now Unchained Prospero, with his additional skills, spells, and lair actions unlocked.

He will invite the players to rest in his house, and give them 100 GP each and heal them.

Prospero: "Now, loyal friends, it is time for the truth: I am Prospero, Duke and father, and I will enact my revenge long-awaited and planned on this island. Come, join me for a play; a marvelous play that will marry my daughter and her lover, forever tying me to the royalty of my homeland, and displaying my sorcery powers to the ones who stole my homeland and throne. Will you join me? Assist my play, carry out my revenge, and you can escape this island with your life and the friendship of a powerful and royal-blooded sorcerer. Together, we will plague them all!"

He will also tell them about the real reason he wanted the spellbook; Sycorax's body was holding onto his magic, and he can now fulfil his dream of revenge on Alonso. He will ask the players to help him finish his dramatic play that will fully restore his powers. In return, if the players help him, he will stop the storm and allow them off their island. If they accept, they can meet him in the clearing in the north-west of the island.

Note. What are the courtiers doing right now? If the players encounter the courtiers before they trigger Prospero's play but after the Sycorax dungeon, they will find all of the courtiers eating a magical banquet that has just appeared in front of them. The only person to question the food and drink is Gonzalo -- the others will eat and drink greedily, then fall into a magical sleep.

Caliban's Offer

As the players head towards the north-west clearing of the island, they will be stopped by Caliban with Trinculo and Stephano just as the clearing and Prospero's play comes into view.

Caliban: "Of all of the infections that the sun has sucked up from bogs, fens, and flats, Prospero is the worst disease of all. By sorcery he has taken this island and prisoned us all here. Please, help his spirit no longer torment me - valiant friends, kill Prospero and save yourselves from this wretched island. I will show thee every fertile inch kiss thy fee and swear myself thy subject."

Caliban will offer all of the riches of the island (to him: berries, ferns, the loyalty of the tree spirits) and to fix their ship should the players kill Prospero instead of helping him enact his revenge.

After Caliban has presented the offer, Ariel will appear, and give a counter-offer.

Ariel: "Friends of Prospero, heed not this beast of the swamp, this hagseed. Prospero offers my freedom, and yours, for his chance to show his true powers to those who have stranded him here. Help his display, and I shall be freed, and you as well!"

Choosing Prospero

Should the characters choose to assist Prospero, the following occurs:

- Caliban will Roar, and will focus on attacking Prospero, Miranda, and the summoned spirits.
- Trinculo and Sebastian will fight to assist Caliban
- Ariel will support the players and Prospero in the fight
- Prospero will use his Lair Actions to summon the spirits of Ceres, Iris, and Juno

- Once all three spirits have appeared, the wedding will begin. Prospero must maintain his concentration each round to continue the wedding.
- Miranda and Ferdinand will be immobilized but able to speak
- After 5 rounds of combat wherein Miranda, Ferdinand, Ariel, and Prospero are still alive and Prospero's concentration has been maintained, the marriage is complete.

Ending Combat

Upon successfully protecting Miranda, the marriage concludes.

As Caliban dies, he says *"I'll be wise hereafter; I will seek for grace."*

A wave of light washes over the glade. Miranda and Ferdinand embrace, joyously, as Prospero looks to the sky, beaming. The courtiers trapped in the glade are freed, and they embrace each other. Alonso runs to his son and tearfully exclaims "My son!", overjoyed that his son lives and they all survived.

Prospero looks over at the players and says, "this was well done, my birds. They are released, their deeds well-shown to them, and I have bedimmed the raging tempest. You are free to leave, as are my spirits.". He turns to Ariel, the spirit buzzing in the air, and says "Dainty Ariel, my tricky spirit, I shall miss thee. Thou shalt be free." With a wave of his hand, Ariel shoots into the air, zooming in the space above the crowd. He explodes into fireworks. Watching the spectacle, Prospero says "Now my charms are overthrown, and the strength I had is most faint. I am ready to leave."

The boat has been magically repaired, the storm surrounding the island has abated, and the players are free to explore and leave at their leisure.

Choosing Caliban

Should the characters choose to assist Caliban, the following occurs

- Caliban will Roar, and will focus on attacking Prospero, Miranda, and the summoned spirits.
- Trinculo and Sebastian will fight to assist the players and Caliban
- Ariel will attack the players
- Prospero will use his Lair Actions to summon the spirits of Ceres, Iris, and Juno
- Once all three spirits have appeared, the wedding will begin. Prospero must maintain his concentration each round to continue the wedding.
- Miranda and Ferdinand will be immobilized but able to speak

- After 5 rounds of combat wherein Miranda, Ferdinand, Ariel, and Prospero are still alive, the marriage is complete.
- If the players kill Miranda or Ferdinand, Prospero will turn his rage on them, and begin to attack.

Ending Combat

Upon successfully killing Prospero, the magic, the storm, and the play characters immediately disappear. Prospero lies on the ground, suffering from his wounds, and gives his farewell speech.

Prospero: :Now all my charms are overthrown, and what strength I have is mine own, which is most faint. You have released me from my bands, with the help of your good hands. My ending is despair, unless I be relieved by prayer. Let your indulgence set me free."

A wave of light washes over the glade, and Prospero passes away. The courtiers trapped in the glade are freed, and they embrace each other.

Caliban turns to the players and says, "These be brave spirits indeed! How fine my new masters are! I will be wise hereafter, seeking grace and avoiding all drunkards, gods, and dull fools!" He takes a flower from his pouch and hands it to the players. "I am now master of my fate, and I cannot serve you or any other. But take this in my stead, to protect from the afterlife, and stay rooted on firm ground in your darkest days."

Ariel, realizing that he is freed, shoots into the air, zooming in the space above the crowd. He explodes into fireworks.

If Miranda and Ferdinand are still alive, she will mourn her father but rejoice in her marriage. Alonso is thrilled at the return of his son, and rewards the players with 200 gp and free passage on his ship to wherever they would like to go.

The players will also gain a level after successfully completing combat.

The boat needs to be repaired, but Caliban is willing to help. The storm surrounding the island has abated, and the players are free to explore and leave at their leisure.

Appendix

Character Stat Blocks

Muted Prospero's Stat Block

Muted Prospero

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (0)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +2, Int +4, Wis +6, Cha +3

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan, Elvish, Abyssal

Spellcasting. Prospero's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): Fire Bolt, Light, Mage hand, Prestidigitation

1st level (4 slots): Fog Cloud, Thunderwave, Bless, Cure Wounds, Bane, Command, Detect Magic

2nd level (3 slots): Gust of Wind, Shatter, Lesser Restoration, Enhance Ability, Spiritual Weapon

Actions

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Unchained Prospero's Stat Block

Unchained Prospero (additions to Muted Prospero in italics)

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (0)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +2, Int +4, Wis +6, Cha +3

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan, Elvish, Abyssal

Spellcasting. Prospero's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): Fire Bolt, Light, Mage hand, Prestidigitation, *Blade Ward*, *Mending*, *Ray of Frost*, *True Strike*

1st level (4 slots): Fog Cloud, Thunderwave, Bless, Cure Wounds, *Bane*, *Command*, *Detect Magic*

2nd level (3 slots): Gust of Wind, Shatter, Lesser Restoration, Enhance Ability, *Spiritual Weapon*, *Cloud of Daggers*, *Misty Step*

3rd level (2 slots), *Sleet Storm*, *Fly*, *Hypnotic Pattern*

Actions

Legendary Action (once per round at initiative 20) Summon Spirit. Once per round Prospero may summon the spirit of Juno, Iris, or Ceres who each have their own action in initiative order. One action, ritual casting. Spirits will disappear upon Prospero's HP hitting 0.

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Iris (Spirit Summons)' Stat Block

Iris (Summoned Spirit)

Medium spirit, lawful neutral

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	11 (0)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan, Elvish, Abyssal

Spellcasting. Iris's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will): Message, Vicious Mockery, Minor Illusion

1st level (2 slots): Ceremony

Juno (Spirit Summons)' Stat Block

Juno (Summoned Spirit)

Medium spirit, lawful neutral

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	11 (0)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan, Elvish, Abyssal

Spellcasting. Juno's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will): Word of Radiance, Thunderclap, Sacred Flame

1st level (2 slots): Ceremony

Ceres (Spirit Summons)' Stat Block

Ceres (Summoned Spirit)

Medium spirit, lawful neutral

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	11 (0)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan, Elvish, Abyssal

Spellcasting. Juno's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will): Thorn Whip, Mold Earth, Magic Strone

1st level (2 slots): Ceremony

Caliban's Stat Block

Caliban

Medium humanoid, true neutral

Armor Class 11 (hide armor)

Hit Points 60

Speed 40 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

19 (+4) 10 (0) 16 (+3) 8 (−1) 7 (−2) 7 (−2)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages Common

Actions

Greatclub. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Rock throw. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Roar. 1 bonus action, 5 times per long rest. Caliban adds 2 to his attack roll for one attack. To do so, Caliban must be able to see the attacker.

Ariel's Stat Block

Medium spirit, lawful neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

1 (−5) 14 (+2) 11 (+0) 10 (+0) 10 (+0) 14 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Incorporeal Movement. The specter can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Life Drain. Melee Spell Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Misty Escape. When he drops to 0 hit points outside his coffin, Ariel transforms into a cloud of mist instead of falling unconscious. If he can't transform, he is destroyed.

Spirit Sycorax's Stat Block

Medium fey hag, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

16 (+3)13 (+1)16 (+3)12 (+1)12 (+1)13 (+1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Horrific Appearance. Any humanoid that starts its turn within 30 feet of Sycorax can see her true form and must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if she is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Sycorax's Horrific Appearance for the next 24 hours.

Unless the target is surprised or the revelation of Sycorax's true form is sudden, the target can avert its eyes and avoid making the initial saving throw. Until the start of its next turn, a creature that averts its eyes has disadvantage on attack rolls against Sycorax.

Actions

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Death Glare. Sycorax targets one frightened creature she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see her, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or drop to 0 hit points.

Illusory Appearance. Sycorax covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like an ugly creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The effect ends if Sycorax takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies.

The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, Sycorax could appear to have no claws, but someone touching her hand might feel the claws. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that Sycorax is disguised.

Trinculo's Stat Block

Medium human Bard, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 45

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Wis +3

Skills Acrobatics +4, Perception +5, Performance +6

Spellcasting. The bard is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following bard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): friends, mage hand, vicious mockery

1st level (3 slots): charm person, healing word, heroism, sleep, thunderwave

2nd level (2 slots): invisibility, shatter

Song of Rest. The bard can perform a song while taking a short rest. Any ally who hears the song regains an extra 1d6 hit points if it spends any Hit Dice to regain hit points at the end of that rest. The bard can confer this benefit on itself as well.

Taunt (2/day). The bard can use a bonus action on its turn to target one creature within 30 feet of it. If the target can hear the bard, the target must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the bard's next turn.

Actions

Shortsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one: target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Stephano's Stat Block

Medium human drunken master Monk, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +4

Skills Acrobatics +4, Performance +9

Condition immunities. Poisoned

Senses. passive Perception 15

Deflect Missiles. When Stephano is hit by a ranged weapon attack, the damage is reduced by 1d10

Drunkard's Luck 1/turn. When Stephano has disadvantage on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can choose either result for that roll.

Drunken Technique. Stephano does not trigger opportunity attacks on his moves during his turn. Also, when prone, he can spend 5 feet of movement to stand up.

Lucky 1/day. Stephano can re-roll an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw once per day and choose either result.

Actions

Flailing Arms. Stephano makes two unarmed strikes against every creature within 5 feet of his position.

Unarmed Strike. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d4+5) bludgeoning damage.

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