

Oriental Echoes: William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights*¹

Aiman Sanad Al-Garrallah, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University (Jordan)

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Abstract:

This essay argues that there are striking similarities between William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and *The Quran* and between that play and *The Arabian Nights*. In particular, this essay explores how Shakespeare's Prospero and the Quranic Joseph are similar in terms of loss, and reconciliation. It also investigates how Prospero is similar to and different from the Quranic Solomon. Furthermore, the essay examines allusions to the sea in these three texts. By way of concluding, this essay suggests that Shakespeare might have been exposed to *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights*.

Keywords: Prospero, Joseph, Solomon, Fraternity, Loss, Sea, Supernaturalism

1 Introduction

This essay examines the textual borders in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights*. Doing so, the essay suggests that there is a surprising affinity between Shakespeare's play, and *The Quran*, and between that play and *The Arabian Nights*. Mowat (2000: 28), in "'Knowing I loved my Books': Reading *The Tempest* Intertextually," traces the textual sources of *The Tempest* without making reference to any oriental texts: "Scholars agree in finding echoes from the *Aeneid*, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from Florio's translation of Montaigne's 'Of the Caniballes', and from Strachey's report on the voyage and shipwreck of the *Sea-Venture*." Therefore, this essay explores at once the intertextual scope and the oriental infracontexts of *The Tempest*. When considering *The Tempest*, an Arabic reader immediately sees links between that play and *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights*. Briefly put, this essay raises the possibility that William Shakespeare may have had some knowledge of both texts, taking into consideration that *The Quran* was first translated into Latin in 1143, and many tales of *The Arabian Nights*, such as the Sindbad cycle of stories, translated into

¹ I would like to thank Professor A. D. Cousins, who has read and commented on the prepublication draft of this paper.

Spanish in 1253², were included in the Latin version of Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina Clericalis*, published in the 12th century³, as has been observed by Irwin (1994: 92-95).

2 Fraternal Conspiracies: Prospero and Joseph

For my purposes, a useful theme to start with is hatred, jealousy and betrayal between brothers. The Quranic narrative of Joseph and the Shakespearean narrative of Prospero are to a great extent not dissimilar. Joseph and Prospero are just, honest, competent and subject to the jealousy and hatred of their brothers. The motives for killing the most virtuous brother, Joseph in *The Quran*, Prospero in *The Tempest* and some brothers in *The Arabian Nights*, are almost the same. Most notable amongst them are envy and political greed. The envious brothers in *The Tempest* and *The Arabian Nights* throw the targeted brothers into the sea, and the Quranic Joseph into a well. Joseph's brothers and Prospero's brother decide not to kill them because Joseph and Prospero are loved: Joseph is loved by his father and Prospero is adored by his people. Joseph is thrown into a well, whereas Prospero and his daughter are sent aboard a ship. Joseph's brothers' evil intention is self-evident in the following verses:

9 "Kill Joseph or cast him out to some (other) land, so that the favour of your father may be given to you alone, and after that you will be righteous folk (by intending repentance before committing the sin)." 10 "One from among them said: "Kill not Joseph, but if you must do something, throw him down the bottom of a well, he will be picked up by some caravan of travelers" (Surah 12: 9-10)⁴.

Similarly, Prospero divulges his brother's conspiracy to his daughter:

My tale provokes that question. Dear, they durst not,
So dear the love my people bore me, nor set
A mark so bloody on the business, but
With colours fairer painted their foul ends.
In few, they hurried us aboard a bark,
Bore us some leagues to sea; where they prepared
A rotten carcass of a boat, not rigg'd,
Nor tackle, sail, nor mast; the very rats
Instinctively had quit it: there they hoist us,
To cry to the sea that roar'd to us, to sigh
To the winds whose pity, sighing back again,
Did us but loving wrong⁵ (Act I, Sc. ii).

² For Shakespeare's knowledge of the Latin and Spanish languages, see Nicoll (1959: 141-2); Blumenfeld (2008: 18); Mabie (1900:37-8); Muir (1977: 1); Leishman (1961: 37); and Thomas (1922: 4).

³ It was believed that Antoine Galland's French translation of *The Arabian Nights* was the first European translation in 1704.

⁴ All reference hereafter is to Al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan (1994).

⁵ Reference to *The Tempest* is from *The Norton Shakespeare* (1997).

The theme of being lost and found again, and the theme of pain and betrayal dominate such stories. On a literary level, the stories of Joseph, Prospero and some brothers in *The Arabian Nights* are stories of loss, separation, miraculous protection, retribution, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Joseph, severed from his family, is placed in a well and then is saved by a caravan, whose members sell him into slavery in a foreign country. Prospero is placed aboard a ship in a hopeless situation, and cut off from his homeland. In *The Tale of Abdallah ibn Fadil and His Brothers*, Abdallah's brothers, seething with envy, throw him into the sea twice; in both cases he is rescued, by a bird and a dolphin respectively⁶. The same motif appears in *The Story of the Second Shaykh* when two brothers throw a third, and a woman, into the sea but the third brother is rescued and returned to his homeland.

The targeted brothers in exile go through a series of trials that undoubtedly enrich their experiences, strengthen them and, most interesting, make them more self-disciplined. Jacob and Joseph are put into several trials. For instance, Jacob feels the pangs of losing Joseph and Benjamin; Joseph is imprisoned before becoming a prophet. In like manner Prospero is put through a series of ordeals—such as experiencing alienation and dislocation on the island—before he regains his dukedom. The exiled brother punishes the most beloved in an attempt to protect him. Joseph punishes his young brother, who his father thinks is dead. Benjamin is accused of stealing the king's bowl, so he is taken as a slave.

"So when he had furnished them forth with their provisions, he put the (golden) bowl into his brother's bag. [T]hen a crier cried: "O you (in) the caravan! Surely, you are thieves!" [...] 76: So he (Joseph) began (the search) in their bags before the bag of his brother. Then he brought it out of his brother's bag. Thus did We plan for Joseph. He could not take his brother by the law of the king (as a slave), except that Allah willed it. (So Allah made the brothers to bind themselves with their way of "punishment, i.e. enslaving of a thief.") (Surah 12: 70-76).

Prospero admires Ferdinand, but punishes him because he is accused of spying and invading the island; therefore, he piles up the logs in order to make him more disciplined. In *The Story of Sultan Mahmud*, the peasants who rescue the Sultan after the shipwreck force him to turn the mill. After being punished, Benjamin and Ferdinand, who are detached from their fathers, are reconciled to them. The Sultan is restored to his humanity.

In the play and *The Quran*, exile contributes to fraternal reconciliation and thus to sincere repentance. It is in Egypt that Joseph meets his brothers, and it is on the island that Prospero meets Antonio and Alonso. Joseph's brothers and Prospero's brother cannot believe the ones they meet in exile are Joseph and Prospero. Joseph's brothers, Antonio, and Alonso repent at the end of the play. Eventually, Joseph's brothers admit their mistakes and errors, acknowledging his special and privileged

⁶ Adballah is acclaimed to be very successful. He gains a very young woman and treasures. He shares the treasures with his brothers, who become dissatisfied and demand the young woman. Therefore, they throw him into the sea, but he was saved by a bird, which took him into the palace of the jinn. Later, the Caliph appoints him governor, and his brother share in his brother, so they throw him again into a river. This time he has rescued by a dolphin.

positions; they renounce their pride and arrogance, acknowledging they have committed wrongs against Joseph and Jacob both: "They said: "By Allah! Indeed Allah has preferred you above us, and we certainly have been sinners" (Surah 12 91). At the end of the play, Alonso and Antonio, by the same token, regret what they have done to Prospero. In addressing Prospero, Alonso wonderingly repents:

Whether thou best he or no,
Or some enchanted trifle to abuse me,
As late I have been, I not know: thy pulse
Beats as of flesh and blood; and, since I saw thee,
The affliction of my mind amends, with which,
I fear, a madness held me: this must crave,
An if this be at all, a most strange story.
Thy dukedom I resign and do entreat
Thou pardon me my wrongs. But how should Prospero
Be living and be here? (Act V, sc. i)

As a result, Joseph and Prospero eventually restore their supreme positions with the help of many things -- not the least of which is the garment. That Joseph's garment is torn out from the back indicates that Potiphar's wife is a liar since this means that Joseph has not, by implication, succumbed to her temptation. At the end of the same Surah, Joseph sends his garment to his father, which enables him to regain his eyesight after he covers his face with the garment. Similarly, Prospero's garment helps him conjure up spirits by putting it on. In this regard, one may venture to say that the play and *The Quran* transcend *The Arabian Nights*⁷ in that the envious brothers in the latter do not repent.

Another important trial that dislocated characters go through is their transcendence of sexual desire. Joseph does not succumb to Potiphar's wife's temptation; in like manner, Prospero asks Ferdinand not to have any sexual intercourse with Miranda before marriage. More interesting, encounters of gender, in the play and *The Quran*, are surprisingly alike. The female views the male as if sanctified and glorified. Joseph is depicted by the women, and addressed by Potiphar's wife, as an angel, a portrayal that highlights Joseph's transcendence of human beauty in that the women are overwhelmed by his beauty at the banquet, cutting their hands with their knives because they are unaware of what they are doing:

So when she heard of their accusation, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them; she gave each one of them a knife (to cut the foodstuff with), and she said (to Joseph): "Come out before them." Then, when they saw him, they exalted him (at his beauty) and (in their astonishment) cut their hands. They said: "How perfect is Allah (or Allah forbid)! *No man is this! This is none other than a noble angel!*" (Surah 12: 31) (Italics mine).

⁷ All reference to *The Arabian Nights* is hereafter from Burton (1885).

By the same token, when Miranda encounters Ferdinand for the first time, she is magnetically attracted to his beauty: "I might call him/A *thing divine, for nothing natural/I ever saw so noble*" (Act I, sc. 2) (Italics mine). Thus, surely the point here once again is that Miranda's response to the beauty of Ferdinand explicitly echoes the women's to Joseph's. It is also tempting to suggest that the female in both situations momentarily loses her consciousness as a result of the beauty of Joseph and Ferdinand because it surpasses what could be called merely natural masculine beauty.

3 Supernaturalism: Prospero and Solomon

In addition to affinities between the Quranic Joseph and Prospero, the Quranic Solomon, Prospero and the Solomonic legends in *The Arabian Nights* can in many ways be viewed as similar. To begin with, the names of Solomon and Prospero can be translated to the peaceful, the complete and the prosperous. In *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights*, Solomon is endowed with wisdom and even-handed justice – wisdom that Prospero is deprived of before the beginning of the play, but undoubtedly he displays it in exile. Solomon spreads his power over wide dominions through successfully industrial and commercial enterprises, his great fleet, and the naval expeditions along the coast of the Red Sea and through the Mediterranean as far as Spain. So likewise is Prospero, in having authority over the island, freeing Ariel, and teaching Caliban how to speak.

In *The Quran*, *The City of Brass*, *The Story of The Fisherman and the Jenni*, *The Story of Janshah*, *The Story of King Saba*, *The Story of Solomon* and *The Story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba*, Solomon has supreme power over the winds, transportation, and jinns and learns the languages of birds and ants. In like manner Prospero raises the tempest with the aid of Ariel in a successful attempt to bring the royal family ashore. Solomon's power features recurrently in *The Quran*:

[81] And to Solomon (We subjected) the wind strongly raging, running by his command towards the land which We had blessed. And of everything We are the All-Knower. [82] And of the devils (from the jinns) were some who dived for him, and did other work besides that: and it was We Who guarded them (Surah 21).

[15] And indeed We gave knowledge to David and Solomon, and they both said: "All the praises and thanks be to Allah, Who has preferred us above many of His believing slaves!" [16] And Solomon inherited (the knowledge of) David. He said: "O mankind! We have been taught the language of birds, and on us have been bestowed all things. This, verily, is an evident grace (from Allah)." [17] And there were gathered before Solomon his hosts of jinns and men, and birds, and they were all set in battle order (marching forwards)" (Surah 27).

[12] And to Solomon (We subjected) the wind, its morning (stride from the sunrise till midnoon) was a month's (journey), and its afternoon (stride from the midday decline of the sun to the sunset) was a month's (journey i.e. in one day he could travel two months' journey). And We caused a fount of (molten) brass to flow from for him, and there were jinns that worked in front of him, by the Leave of his Lord,

and whosoever of them turned aside from our Command, We shall cause him to taste of the torment of the blazing Fire. [13] They worked for him what he desired, (making) high rooms, images, basins as large as reservoirs, and (cooking) cauldrons fixed (in their places). "Work you, O family of David, with thanks!" But few of My slaves are grateful" (Surah 34).

[34] And, indeed We did try Solomon and We placed on his throne *Jasadan* (a devil, so he lost his kingdom for a while) but he did return (to his throne and kingdom by the Grace of Allah and he did return) to Allah with obedience. [35] So, We subjected to him the wind, it blew gently to his order wither whoever he willed, - [36] And also the devils from the jinns (including) every kind of builder and diver,- [38] And also others bound in fetters. [39] (Saying of Allah to Solomon): "This is Our gift, so spend you or withhold, no account will be asked" (Surah 38).

It must be emphasized, however, that the Quranic Solomon is not identified with black magic.

102. They followed what the devils gave out (falsely of the magic) in the lifetime of Solomon. Solomon did not disbelieve, but the devils disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, *Harut* and *Marut*, but neither of these two (angels) taught anyone (such things) till they had said, "We are only for trial, so disbelieve not (by learning this magic from us)". And from these (angels) people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's Leave. And they learn that which harms them and profits them not. And indeed they knew that the buyers of it (magic) would have no share in the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold their ownelves, if they but knew" (Surah 2: 102).

These verses show that Solomon has not used heavenly gifts for ill purposes, but has been at odds with devils who perform evil. Similarly, Prospero has full control over the air, spirits, goddesses, fairies and nymphs. He uses these powers only for benevolent purposes, such as his own restoration to the throne, Ferdinand's and Miranda's marriage, Alonso's repentance, and punishment of the recalcitrant. It is also no surprise to argue that Solomon's detachment from devils in the above-excerpted verses, links in closely with Prospero's vendetta against Sycorax, the witch, who represents black magic. She is allied with the devil, who gives her power over the air with its invisibility and swiftness of motion, but her evil work results in her banishment and, eventually, death. Similarly, Solomon, in *The Story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba*, kills the island's disobedient king and then rules over the island. More important, in *The Story of Solomon, The Queen of Sheba, The Story of Solomon and The Story of King Saba*, all creatures on the island are submitted to him. In particular, in *The Story of King Saba*, he is helped by the crow, which shows him the deserted island on which it lives, just as Caliban shows Prospero all the secrets of the island in Act I, Sc. ii.

The motif of jinns' imprisonment by Solomon, because they disobey him, also finds echoes in *The Tempest*. In *The City of Brass*, Solomon is celebrated as a person who has control over Jinns, Marids and Ifrits, and who can imprison them in cucurbits of

copper and seal them with his ring. Like Solomon's ring in *The Arabian Nights*, which is a symbol of his power, Prospero's mantle, staff and books enable him to conjure up invisible spirits. In *The Story of the Fisherman and the Jenni*, the jenni tells the fisherman that he belongs to Sakhr, disobedient to Solomon. Like Ariel, the jenni is rewarded and thus released by the fisherman at the end of the story. The idea of being made captive by Solomon and then released, in *The Arabian Nights*, resembles Ariel's captivity by Sycorax and subsequent release by Prospero.

Ariel, along with the spirits he summons, namely, Ceres, Iris, Juno and the nymphs are reminiscences of the jinns and Ifrits mentioned in *The Quran* and *The City of Brass*. He can raise storms, thunder, and lightning; he can dive in the seas and walk invisibly. In Act V, Sc. i, Prospero asks Ariel to bring the royal ship, with the mariners, the master and the boatswain. Ariel replies: "*I drink the air before me, and return/ Or ere your pulse twice beat.*" To bring the ship in such a rapid way of course echoes bringing the throne of the Queen of Sheba "*within the twinkling of an eye.*" In *The Quran*, the story runs as follows:

[39] And Ifrit (strong) from the jinns said: "*I will bring it to you before you rise from your place (council).* And verily, I am indeed strong, and trustworthy for such work.

[40] One with whom was knowledge of the scripture said: "*I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye!*"-then when (Solomon) saw it placed before him, he said: "This is by the Grace of my Lord- to test me whether I am grateful, truly, his gratitude is for (the good of) his ownself, and whoever is ungrateful, (he is ungrateful only for the loss of his ownself). Certainly! My Lord is Rich (Free of all wants), Bountiful" (Surah 27). (Italics mine).

In both cases, Ariel, Ifrit and Asif bin Barkhiyya⁸ are able to rapidly perform a very difficult task, involving bringing people and things from distant places. Such a signal strongly suggests Shakespeare's imitation of the dominant motifs of *The Quran*.

The Tempest concludes with Prospero's return to his homeland and thus to his dukedom. Just so, the Quranic Solomon is dethroned then returns to power:

[34] And, indeed We did try Solomon and We placed on his throne Jasadán (a devil, so he lost his kingdom for a while) but he did return (to his throne and kingdom by the Grace of Allah and he did return) to Allah with obedience. [35] So, We subjected to him the wind, it blew gently to his order witherover he willed, - [36] And also the devils from the jinns (including) every kind of builder and diver,- [38] And also others bound in fetters. [39] (Saying of Allah to Solomon): "This is Our gift, so spend you or withhold, no account will be asked" (Surah 38:34-38).

⁸ Wheeler (2002: 270) suggests: "the person who is said to have knowledge from the "Book" [27:40] was Asif b. Barkhiyya, the son of Solomon's maternal aunt. It is also said he was a man from the believers of the Jinn who was said to have knowledge of the Great name of God. It is also said he was an Israelite, one of their scholars. A fourth opinion is that he was Gabriel."

4 The Sea

Apart from the fraternal conspiracies and the supernatural elements explored above, the three texts abound in allusions to the sea. It is part of the narrative structure of the stories on various levels; it serves as the setting travel of the stories. First, it is a symbol of salvation. In *The Quran*, Moses is put in the sea by his mother in order to escape the death imposed upon him by Pharaoh. The story runs as follows:

38. "When We inspired your mother with that which We inspired. 39 Saying: 'Put him (the child) into the *Tabut* (a box or a case or a chest) and put it into the river (Nile), then the river shall cast it up on the bank, and there, an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his shall take him.' And I endued you with love from Me, in order that you may be brought up under My Eye, 40 "When your sister went and said: 'Shall I show you one who will nurse him?' So We restored you to your mother, that she might cool her eyes and she should not grieve. Then you did kill a man, but We saved you from great distress and tried you with a heavy trial. Then you stayed a number of years with the people of Madyan (Midian). Then you came here according to the fixed term which I ordained (for you), O Moses!" (Surah 2038-40)⁹

Similarly, in *The Story of Abdallah bin Fadil and His Brothers*, Abdallah is thrown into the sea by his brothers and the third brother is thrown into the sea by his two brothers in *The Story of the Second Shaykh*. In *The Tempest*, Prospero and his daughter are put aboard a rotted old boat with no mast and sails and are left to drift to their deaths. Gonzalo provides them with food, water, clothes and Prospero's most important books on magic. In Act I, scene ii, Prospero divulges his story to Miranda:

In few, they hurried us aboard a bark,
Bore us some leagues to sea; where they prepared
A rotten carcass of a boat, not rigg'd,
Nor tackle, sail, nor mast; the very rats
Instinctively had quit it: there they hoist us,
To cry to the sea that roar'd to us, to sigh
To the winds whose pity, sighing back again,
Did us but loving wrong (Act I, Sc. ii).

When Miranda asks her father about how they come ashore, he responds:

By Providence divine.
Some food we had and some fresh water that
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,
Out of his charity, being then appointed
Master of this design, did give us, with
Rich garments, linens, stuffs and necessaries,
Which since have steaded much; so, of his gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnish'd me

⁹ The same story recurs in *The Quran*, Surah 28: 7-13.

From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom (Act I, Sc. ii).

These two stories underline the function of the sea as a symbol of salvation; in addition, they indicate the great need of parental tenderness and of heavenly protection. Moses, Prospero and Miranda, heaven-protected, are put aboard two ships in order to escape inevitable death. Like Moses' mother, who nurses him, Prospero nurtures Miranda.

Prospero's and his daughter's confrontation, in Act I, Sc. ii, surprisingly echoes a similar scene in *The Arabian Nights*, in which the sea forms an important part of the imaginary geography and serves as the setting for a plethora of stories. In *The Story of Jansha*, the revelation of the mother and her child signals that of Prospero and Miranda:

One day, he said to his mother, "My father Daniel was exceeding wise and learned; tell me what he left by way of books or what not!" So his mother brought him the chest and, taking out the five leaves which had been saved when the library was lost, gave them to him saying, "These five scrolls are all thy father left thee." So he read them and said to her, "O my mother, these leaves are part of a book: where is the rest?" Quoth she, "Thy father made a voyage taking with him all his library and, when he was shipwrecked, every book was lost save only these five leaves. And when he was returned to me by Almighty Allah he found me with child and said to me: 'Haply thou wilt bear a boy; so take these scrolls and keep them by thee and whenas thy son shall grow up and ask what his father left him, give these leaves to him and say, 'Thy father left these as thine only heritage. And lo! Here they are.' "And Hasib, now the most learned of his age, abode in all pleasure and solace, and delight of life, till there came to him the Destroyer of delights and the Severer of societies. (*The Arabian Nights* Vol V, p. 396).

Nevertheless, the sea is also a locus of punishment. In *The Quran*, Allah punishes Pharaoh by drowning him in the sea. The following verses are worth quoting:

"And We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh with his hosts followed them in oppression and enmity, till when drowning overtook him, he said: "I believe that *la ilaha illa (Huwa)*: (none has the right to be worshipped but) He," in Whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of the Muslims (those who submit to Allah's will" (Surah 10:90).

Drowning is apparently used as a very effective means of retribution. Because infidels do not have any faith in Allah's signs and are heedless of them, they will be drowned in the sea as is revealed in Surahs (7:136) and (42:33).

Allah justifies raising the wind to the sea in order to punish the infidels: "Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea and send against you a hurricane of wind and drown you because of your disbelief, then you will not find any avenger therein against Us" (Surah 17: 69). Elsewhere He iterates:

[22] He it is Who enables you to travel through land and sea, till when you are in the ships and they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they are glad therein, then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think that they are encircled therein, they invoke Allah, making their faith pure for Him Alone, saying: "If you (Allah) deliver us from this, we shall truly be of the grateful" (Surah 10: 22).

The stormy wind causes the waves to attack the mariners from all sides and drown them. In *The Tempest*, with the help of Ariel, Prospero raises the tempest in order to punish Antonio and Alonso because they have conspired against him. Miranda describes the fearful atmosphere that the tempest causes: the sky pours down "stinking pitch" and the waves dash the fire out. Ariel explains how the tempest destroys the ship through lightning and the dreadful thunder: "the fire and cracks/ of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune/ Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble/ Yea, his dread trident shake" (Act I, Sc. ii)¹⁰.

It is pertinent to iterate that the wind is identified with punishment. The wind is very violent, and destructive; it inflicts a terrible damage. In *The Quran*, Allah punishes some peoples by striking them with a strong wind because of their evildoing. In Surah (3: 117), the extremely cold wind "struck the harvest of a people who did wrong against themselves and destroyed it." Allah raises the wind in order to help the Muslim believers and punish the infidels (the confederates) during the battle of Al-Ahzab. The wind, blowing during a very dark and cold night, is so strong that it destroys their houses and kills the infidels, as is suggested in Surah (33: 9).

It is obvious that the wind is used as a means of retribution and thus brings about justice. Ad is, for instance, punished by strong winds because of blasphemy. Its land was very fertile; so Allah sends against it "the barren wind" that destroys everything (Surah 51: 41-42). The wind is described as a sterile old woman in order to underline the sterility it leaves. Elsewhere, the wind that has struck Ad is depicted as a "furious wind" blowing during days of bad omen, as suggested in Surah 41: [16]. In Surah (54:19) and Surah (69: 6), the furious wind whose harsh voice brings out complete destruction, makes dead people as if they were "uprooted stems of palm trees." As mentioned above, the cold winds identified with a very sterile old woman cause destruction and, most tragically, death. The punished people are also portrayed as palm trees in order to emphasize the cruel and severe punishment. In Surah 46, "[34] Then, when they saw it as a dense cloud coming towards their valleys, they said: "This is a cloud bringing us rain!" Nay, but it is that (torment) which you were asking to be hastened!- a wind wherein is a painful torment! [35] Destroying everything by the Command of its Lord! So they became such that nothing could be seen except their dwellings!"

The wind, moreover, causes shipwreck, which is a recurrent motif affecting the further course of events. It plays a major role in *The Arabian Nights*, especially in *The Seven Voyages of Sindbad The Seaman*, *The Tale of the Warlock and the Young Cook of Baghdad*, *The Shipwrecked Woman and Her Child*, *The Story of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur*, *The Story of Ali and Zahir from Damascus*, and *The Story of the Two Lives*

¹⁰ A similar situation is depicted in *The Quran*, Surah 81: 7: "And when the seas shall become as blazing Fire or shall overflow."

of *Sultan Mahmud*. Sindbad has been shipwrecked many times. In his third voyage, he narrates the story of his shipwreck as follows:

As soon as the ogres caught sight of us, they cried out at us and running down to the sea-shore, fell a-pelting us with rocks, whereof some fell amongst us and others fell into the sea. We paddled with all our might till we were beyond their reach, but the most part of us were slain by the rock-throwing, and the winds and waves sported with us and carried us into the midst of the dashing sea, swollen with billows clashing. We knew not whither we went and my fellows died one after another, till there remained but three, myself and two others. (*The Arabian Nights* Vol vi, pp. 27-8).

In *The Seventh Voyage*, he describes another shipwreck:

I shipped with them and becoming friends, we set forth on our venture, in health and safety; and sailed with a fair wind, till we came to a city called Madinat-al-Sin; but after we had left it, as we fared on in all cheer and confidence, devising of traffic and travel, behold, there sprang up a violent head-wind and a tempest of rain fell on us and drenched us and our goods. So we covered the bales with our cloaks and garments and druggot and canvas, lest they be spoiled by the rain, and betook ourselves to prayer and supplication to Almighty Allah and humbled ourselves before Him for deliverance from the peril that was upon us (*The Arabian Nights* Vol VI, p. 96).

It is apparent that the tempest brings confusion, violence, anarchy, and fears of and thus resort to God. In *The Tempest*, (Act I, scene. I), respect becomes of no significance. Alonso and Antonio are marginalized and ignored even by the boatswain who is addressed as an "incharitable dog" by Sebastian. All are presented as equal in the sense that they are scared of drowning and death, and thus they resort to God. The mariners' "All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!" shows the fear they feel. Antonio chooses to die with the king: "Let's all sink with the king." All feel sad at leaving their wives and their children. Because of their approaching deaths, everybody prays to God. A similar awareness of God's significance during shipwreck recurs in *The Quran*:

And when harm touches you upon the sea, those that you call upon besides Him vanish from you except Him (Allah Alone). But when He brings you safely to Land, you turn away (from Him). And man is ever ungrateful (Surah 17: 67).

The verses quoted above narrate the story of Ikrama bin Abi Jahl, who fled from God's messenger, Mohammed. He rode over the sea to cross over to Ethiopia, but while he proceeded a heavy stormy wind overtook his boat and huge waves came from all sides. Everyone says that none can save them except Allah.

Similarly Pharaoh declares his Islam while he was drowning. Such an atmosphere recurs in *The Quran*:

19: Or like a rainstorm from the sky, wherein is darkness, thunder, and lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap for fear of

death. But Allah ever encompasses the disbelievers (i.e. Allah will gather them all together). 20 The lightning almost snatches away their sight, whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein, and when darkness covers them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Certainly, Allah has power over all things" (Surah 2: 19-20).

As has been examined above, in *The Arabian Nights* and in *The Tempest* shipwreck is followed by salvation.

5 Parallels

This section deals with the parallels between *The Tempest*, *The City of Brass* and *The Seven Voyages of Sindbad The Seaman*. The first two narratives draw heavily on sea voyages across the Mediterranean near Northern Africa. In *The Tempest*, the journey is from Tunis to Italy; in *The City of Brass*, the journey is from the Eastern Orient to Northern Western Africa; in the last narrative, the journey is through different seas. The sea voyage in every narrative is used to underline cross-cultural dialectics. In *The Tempest* and *The City of Brass*, the sea voyage across the Mediterranean can be seen as a means of bridging the gap between the West and the East, because the sea itself acts as the border between the West and the East. In other words, the sea voyage is the attempt to establish a sense of cultural balance between the West and the East.

Nevertheless, such an attempt does not work since the sea voyage in every narrative involves shipwrecks caused by strong winds, which bring out the mariners' fear and horror. The sailors become at risk and, even more significant, the strong winds echo the inner turmoil characters in these three narratives.

The major characters in these three narratives are rescued, after being found near islands. In *The Tempest*, the island can be located somewhere off the route from Tunis to Naples. In *The City of Brass*, it is Sikiliyah or Sicily, an island in the Mediterranean. In *The Seven Voyages*, there is a variety of islands. These islands are imaginary, fruitful, idyllic, and lack many inhabitants. On every island, there is only one ruler. The atmosphere of the island is imbued nevertheless with violence and horror since it is inhabited with fearful savages and supernatural powers. In *The Tempest*, the island is inhabited by Sycorax, Caliban, Ariel and a variety of sprites. Caliban is stereotyped as a monster, an animal, a filthy slave and a worthless creature. In *The City of Brass*, the travellers confront black, naked and wild beasts, and a tribe of black peoples—amongst them being giant and black creature with two huge wings, four arms and with exotic hair and eyes. In *The Seven Voyages*, the travellers, in the third voyage, face black apes, who speak a strange language, and a black cannibal. In the fourth voyage, the savages, cannibals and blacks swarm on the island and devour everything they see. In short, the island is associated with exoticism because of Caliban and Ariel and strange creatures. Yet eventually all discords are resolved and safety is regained.

After examining allusions to *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights* that appear to recur throughout Shakespeare's play, it can be suggested that the first two texts stand behind the third. It is possible that Shakespeare may have read those texts, a possibility raised by Irwin (1994: 95) who argued that Shakespeare's *The Taming of the*

Shrew is a reworking of the plot of "The Sleeper Awakened," found in sixteenth-century English collection of tales. Finally, and most interestingly, this surprising affinity between these three texts also indicates how *The Quran* and *The Arabian Nights* transcend cultural borders in that they cross the imaginary dividing line between the West and the East. It seems likely that these two texts are woven into *The Tempest*—a connectedness that might also perhaps be called textual telepathy.

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