

The 'Phantom Line' on the Play Figure of 'The Tempest' Alan Thenless

The Phantom Line features in the final geometrical figure of The Tempest. Sylvia referred to this line initially as a 'shadow line'. It appears in the First Folio only as a stage direction, but the words are mysteriously never spoken.

'The extra shadow line that must appear in the figure comes after Act line 151 and Act IV, *In Country footing*'. It is implied at the words, 'Prospero starts sodainly and speakes'.

(ref. Eckersley Archive, Tempest Basic Numbers).

It seems that Sylvia's use of the Phantom Line appears with the second version of the Tempest figure, drawn in 1994. In this second figure the Epilogue features centrally at the top. Geometrically the additional line then creates a harmonizing possibility of the line-markers of the Epilogue lying symmetrically around the place on the figure where the play opens (we could imagine here a picture of Prospero's magical staff). Thus, symbolically and artistically, we can see that the wielding of magical control, that we witnessed at the beginning of the play in Prospero's empowering of the elements is harmonized now, even geometrically on the figure, by that part of the play that intimately describes the relinquishing of those powers. Without the Phantom Line there would be asymmetry in this part of the figure and the 'picture' would be less than perfect. With regard to the numeric properties of the play, the Phantom Line does not feature, it is not counted.

With the formulation of the second 'Tempest' figure and the inclusion of the Phantom Line Sylvia was confident enough to write in a notebook of 1994 (ref. Eckersley Archive, Tempest notebook 1 p. 51), 'From this aspect Play and Epilogue are one.'

