

The Tempest Study Guide

The Tempest by William Shakespeare

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Introduction

Critical consensus places the composition of *The Tempest* sometime in the years 1610-11. Its first recorded performance was before King James I on November 1, 1611, making it one of the last, if not the last, drama that Shakespeare produced without the help of a collaborator.

Although regarded as one of the dramatist's most original works, *The Tempest* is said to have been influenced by a number of texts, including Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals" (translated into English in 1603), Sylvester Jourdain's *A Discovery of the Bermudas* (1610), *A true Declaration of the estate of the Colony in Virginia* (1610), as well as other accounts of exploration and discovery in the New World. In terms of plot, several possible sources have been put forth, though none contain more than scant resemblances to Shakespeare's play. Thus, many scholars agree with the assessment of Frank Kermode that the genesis of *The Tempest* is in no single work, but in a body of formal literature and folklore that typically features a magician, a lovely young princess, and a group of stranded courtiers and commoners.

The work is said to be of a piece with Shakespeare's other late plays, which, though comedies, are not without tragic elements and dark undertones. This facet of the play was less frequently noted by early commentators, who stressed both the play's imaginative singularity and depth of observation. However, *The Tempest's* intermingling of moods has led many recent critics to focus on the complexities and ambiguities of the work. An example of such criticism is that of the play's central character, Prospero, a somewhat mysterious figure who supports many shades of interpretation. Prospero is a magician and the originator of the action in the play. The forces that motivate Prospero include revenge against those who have usurped his power, as well as reconciliation, which is symbolized by the union of Ferdinand and Miranda. Analysis of these motivating factors is central to the critical thought regarding the thematic structure of *The Tempest*.

Additionally, *The Tempest* is thought to confront the question of the effects of colonization and civilization on human nature in relation to the Christian theme of redemption.



Plot Summary

While traveling at sea King Alonso of Naples and several members of his court, including his brother Sebastian, his son Ferdmand, his advisor Gonzalo, and Duke Antonio of Milan are caught in a powerful storm and shipwrecked on a tropical island where Prospero and his daughter, Miranda, live. Meanwhile, Prospero relates to his daughter the tale of their exile on this island. Twelve years ago, Prospero, then Duke of Milan, saw his rule usurped by his brother Antonio, who, with the aid of King Alonso, set him and his young child adrift at sea. Both would have died had Alonso's kind counselor, Gonzalo, not equipped their boat with provisions, including Prospero's magic books and wand. The currents brought them to the island, which once belonged to the now-dead witch Sycorax. The only inhabitants they encountered were Caliban, Sycorax's grotesquely malformed son, and Ariel, a spirit of the air long since imprisoned in a tree by Sycorax. Prospero endeavored to educate Caliban, teaching him language and attempting to instill moral character, but failed in the latter. And, after Caliban's failed effort to rape Miranda, Prospero was forced to reduce him to a slave, assigning him the tasks of chopping wood and finding fresh water. The magician freed Ariel from his prison, but then placed the spirit in his service, exploiting his powers over the air and sea. Anxious to earn his full freedom, Ariel serves his master dutifully, creating the tempest at sea and leading the shipwrecked voyagers to safety on the island. While all survive the storm, Prospero sees that they are splintered into groups, leaving each to believe that the others have perished. Ferdinand is separated from the rest and drawn by the song of Ariel to Prospero's cave. Miranda, upon seeing the prince (the first man aside from her father and Caliban that she has ever beheld) immediately falls in love. Prospero does not disapprove of this, as it is part of his plan, but treats the boy with mock circumspection before Miranda. Claiming that Ferdinand must be tested, Prospero enslaves the boy with his magic.



Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

This is one of William Shakespeare's later plays. It tells the story of an Italian nobleman who, after a long exile on a magical island in the company of his young daughter and a pair of nature spirits, is confronted with the opportunity to take revenge on those who caused him to be sent away. The tension between the desire for revenge and the need for forgiveness fuels its central thematic and dramatic conflict.

During a powerful storm at sea, the Boatswain and several sailors struggle to keep their ship on course. Their aristocratic passengers, including Alonso, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, Sebastian, and Adrian, stumble onto the deck to observe the situation. The Boatswain urges them to return to their cabins, saying they're getting in the way. As Gonzalo urges the others to be confident in the Boatswain, Alonso and Ferdinand go below. Antonio berates the Boatswain for being rude, several sailors cry out that the ship is lost, and Antonio claims that they've all lost their lives because their sailors are drunk. As sailors cry out that the ship is breaking up, Antonio and Sebastian go below decks to be with Alonso. Gonzalo expresses the wish to be back on dry land, and then goes below decks with the others.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

In technical terms, this scene contains the crisis that sets the action of the play in motion, dramatizing the storm magically created by Prospero to get Alonso, Antonio, and the others to his island. However, because the storm is also the source of the play's title, it carries with it metaphoric and symbolic value.

In essence, such a storm is an upheaval of nature, the product of an increase in instability that results in a corrective eruption of energy. This eruption triggers a return to relative calm, peace, and natural order. This, in turn, is a summary of the play's central story. As the action reveals, the island lives of Prospero and Miranda are the result of an act of unnatural, *moral* instability-Prospero's being forcefully removed by Antonio from his rightful (natural) position as ruler of Milan. Prospero's actions throughout the play are a corrective eruption of the energy of nature; not only his own true nature as Duke of Milan, but the power of earth's nature, which he has learned to harness while on the island and which he unites with his own natural right to the title to bring about a correction of the instability. By the end of the play, natural order has been restored. Several of the play's subplots also follow this same basic pattern, that of growing instability, a release of corrective energy, a return to the status quo, albeit to lesser degrees of moral and/or emotional intensity. These include the Prospero/Ariel plot, the Antonio/Sebastian plot, and the Caliban/Stephano/Trinculo plot. In short, the play is full of metaphorical tempests, all of which are metaphorically foreshadowed by the action of this brief opening scene.



Act 1, Scene 2, Part 1

Act 1, Scene 2, Part 1 Summary

Miranda, who has watched the wreck of the ship from the shore of Prospero's island, worries that the people on board have all drowned. Prospero assures her that by the use of his magic, he saved them all from destruction. He then sits her down and explains why he created the storm and why he saved the lives of the ship's passengers and crew. Repeatedly and irritably reminding her to listen, he tells her he was once the Duke of Milan, but was far more interested in books and in learning than he was in governing the city. For that reason, he turned most of his responsibilities over to his brother Antonio, who eventually began to believe that the job was his by right.

Prospero says that Antonio allied himself with the King of Naples (Alonso) and then arranged for a military coup during which Prospero and the infant Miranda were kidnapped. Miranda asks why they weren't killed. Prospero says the people of Milan loved him too much for Antonio to risk being condemned for their murders, and instead he cast them adrift in a rickety boat. He adds that the boat was stocked with a few provisions as well as some of Prospero's precious books by a loyal lord of Milan, Gonzalo, and goes on to say that after being cast adrift he and Miranda arrived on the island and there made their home. He concludes by saying that his magic made him aware that Antonio and several other lords were on the ship, and indicates that if he took action to confront Antonio, his life would take a positive turn. As he explains that that's why he conjured the storm, he notices Miranda is drowsy. He magically lulls her into sleep, and then calls for Ariel.

Ariel appears, vows his loyalty to Prospero, and explains in a lengthy poetic speech that he did exactly as Prospero ordered him to: created additional fear and nervousness among the crew and passengers on the wrecked ship but preserved them all from harm and magically guided them to separate places all over the island. He explains that the ship is not in fact wrecked but is hidden in a secret harbor, the sailors having been conjured into a magical sleep. He concludes by saying the other ships with which this ship was traveling are returning to Naples in the belief that the king's ship has been lost and that the king is dead.

As Prospero makes his plans for those whom he's shipwrecked, Ariel reminds him of a promise he made to free him. Prospero angrily accuses him of forgetting the way he was freed by Prospero from the slavery and imprisonment imposed upon him by the witch Sycorax. Prospero also refers to Sycorax's malformed son, Caliban, whom he also keeps as a slave/servant, and then threatens to imprison Ariel again if he doesn't do as he's told. Ariel agrees, and Prospero calms himself, saying Ariel will be freed in two days if he performs well. Ariel happily asks what Prospero wants him to do, and Prospero says he is to make himself invisible and await orders.



As Ariel rushes off, Prospero wakes Miranda, wanting to take her with him when he visits Caliban. Miranda is unwilling to go with him since she dislikes Caliban, but Prospero insists. He calls to Caliban to emerge from his cave. At first Caliban refuses, but Prospero bullies him out of his cave with a reference to Sycorax, his mother. Caliban emerges, cursing Prospero who curses him in return. Caliban speaks at length about how Prospero stole the island from Sycorax, and how when Prospero first arrived he treated Caliban well but then banished him. Prospero reminds him that he was banished after menacing Miranda. Caliban comments that if he'd had his way, his children would have populated the entire island, and Miranda angrily reminds him that he took advantage of her pity-after teaching him to speak and understand, he assaulted her and was then banished. After Caliban curses her, too, Prospero orders him to bring fuel for a fire, threatening to magically punish him if he doesn't obey. Caliban goes, grumbling.

Act 1, Scene 2, Part 1 Analysis

The first part of the scene, Prospero telling the story of how he and Miranda came to the island, is essentially exposition, an explanation of the play's narrative context. In particular, the story of how Prospero was betrayed is essential information not only in terms of establishing who the characters are and defining the nature of their relationships, but also in setting up Prospero at the beginning of his journey of transformation, for the story is not just about his return to his natural position as Duke, or even to his natural home in Milan.

The story is actually anchored, in its narrative and theme, by the way Prospero is transfigured by the events of the play, moving from being an irritable old man bent on revenge to a wiser old man having been taught compassion and the capacity for forgiveness. This, the play suggests, is the natural order of humanity-living from a place of forgiveness, compassion, and warmth. These latter characteristics are embodied in the characters of Miranda, Gonzalo, Ariel and Ferdinand, who serve as the touchstones of constancy, loyalty, integrity, and compassion against which the fickleness and manipulations of the more self-absorbed and self-serving characters (Prospero at the beginning, Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, and Caliban throughout) are measured.

The second part of the scene is also exposition, but of another sort. Instead of defining a history of facts, it portrays a history of relationship between Prospero and Ariel; a bond made up of equal parts mutual need, manipulation, affection and, on Prospero's part, testy irritability. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Ariel's loyalty is an important standard of integrity against which Prospero's bad temper and dark desire for revenge, not to mention the devious manipulations of characters like Caliban and Antonio, are measured.

Through his association with such loyalty, and with Ariel's compassion, which emerges later in the play, Prospero learns to transcend bitterness and anger and becomes, like Ariel, a free spirit. This is an example of an additional manifestation of the tempest metaphor, initially discussed in relationship to Act 1 Scene 1. The "tempest" in the relationship between Prospero and Ariel arises from the instability caused by Ariel's



increasing desperation to be free and Prospero's testy, irritable responses to him. Finally, however, as the result of learning compassion from Ariel, among others, there is a release of corrective, redemptive energy and Prospero gives Ariel his freedom.

Prospero's dark side at the beginning of the play is mirrored and amplified in Caliban, the monstrous semi-human child of the witch Sycorax. Caliban clearly feels himself wronged by Prospero in the same manner as Prospero feels wronged by Antonio. Yes, Caliban crossed a line when he attempted to rape and impregnate Miranda, but it's important to note that as repugnant as it may seem, he was only acting according to his true nature. He's being punished simply for being who and what he is, in the same way that Antonio punished Prospero. This also means that Prospero's treatment of Caliban is akin to Antonio's treatment of Prospero, a parallel that Prospero never realizes in so many words but which undoubtedly exists and is transcended, at least by Prospero, as the result of the events of the play which, as mentioned, serve to teach Prospero the value of compassion.



Act 1, Scene 2, Part 2

Act 1, Scene 2, Part 2 Summary

Ariel returns, magically leading Ferdinand to Prospero. Miranda is immediately attracted to him; at first believing him to be a spirit. Prospero assures her that Ferdinand is in fact a man, and then in aside comments to the audience, he states that her reaction is exactly what he'd hoped it would be. Miranda and Ferdinand greet each other, and it appears the attraction is mutual. Ferdinand is particularly surprised and wonderstruck to find someone who speaks his language and who knows about Naples, living on what he thought was a deserted island.

As conversation between Ferdinand and Miranda reveals that Ferdinand is the prince of Naples, asides from Prospero confirm that their growing attraction for each other is part of his plan, but that he believes he has to make things difficult for them in order to gain proof of Ferdinand's character. He speaks angrily to him, accusing him of coming to the island in order to take it over. Ferdinand protests his innocence and Miranda supports him, but Prospero tells them both to be quiet. Ferdinand draws his sword to defend himself. Prospero magically renders him immobile and disarms him. Miranda protests that he's being unfair, adding that of all the men she's seen, Ferdinand is the most beautiful. Prospero reminds her that the only other men she's seen are he and Caliban, and says Ferdinand must prove himself. He then releases Ferdinand from his immobility. Ferdinand speaks of his admiration for Miranda, Miranda tells him Prospero is usually much kinder than this, and Prospero tells Ferdinand to accompany him. As they go, Prospero speaks in aside to Ariel, promising again to free him as long as Ariel obeys. Ariel happily agrees to do whatever Prospero demands.

Act 1, Scene 2, Part 2 Analysis

There are two important points to note about this scene. The first is the portrayal of the relationship between Ferdinand, who is later revealed as relatively worldly, and Miranda, who in this scene is revealed as completely naive. In spite of their differing levels of experience, they are in essence morally and spiritually the same: open, respectful and honorable, trusting and trustworthy. As previously indicated, they are important touchstones of integrity, compassion, and vulnerability against which both the relative darkness of many of the other characters and, most importantly, the transformation of Prospero, are measured.

That being said, it's never defined in the text exactly what Prospero's grand "plan" is, and what specifically the role that the relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda is intended to play. Because Ferdinand is the Prince of Naples and because Miranda is, at least in theory, a princess of Milan, it's possible to see Prospero's desire for their union as an extension of *his* desire to create a union between the two city-states. On the other

hand, it could be that Prospero would take great glee in ruining whatever plans Alonso, the King of Naples, might have for Ferdinand's marriage.

This would mean that to Prospero, Miranda is at this point little more than a pawn in his mysterious game of revenge. If the idea that Prospero starts the play as a bitter, angry, Caliban-esque sort bent on revenge, this might fit, but then he refers to having to test Ferdinand's character to ensure he's worthy of Miranda. It's possible, therefore, that Prospero is operating from both places; Miranda is indeed a pawn in his plan for revenge, but ultimately he cares for her just enough to ensure that she's not handed over in marriage to a monster. The increasing predominance of this loving and fatherly aspect of his character is part of what triggers and guides his journey of transformation throughout the play.



Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

On another part of the island, Gonzalo attempts to comfort Alonso, distressed because he believes Ferdinand is dead, but is repeatedly interrupted and mocked by Antonio, Sebastian, and Adrian. Alonso himself is too upset to be cheered, recalling that in addition to losing his son he's also lost his daughter. Sebastian tells him that the only reason he "lost" his daughter was that he permitted her to marry an African, a wedding that he and other advisors begged him not to allow. Gonzalo tells him he's being too harsh. Sebastian and Antonio continue to mock him, and Alonso tells him to be quiet. Ariel appears, lulls Gonzalo, Alonso and Adrian to sleep, and goes back out again.

Antonio and Sebastian wonder why they didn't fall asleep as well, and then Antonio speaks aloud a thought which he says he and Sebastian share - that there's an opportunity here for them to kill Alonso so that Sebastian can take over the kingship of Naples. At first, Sebastian doubts the wisdom and propriety of the idea, arguing that Alonso's daughter would be the heir if Alonso were killed. Antonio reminds him that she's far away in Africa, and that he (Antonio) benefited greatly from usurping Prospero from the throne of Milan. Sebastian wonders whether Antonio is troubled by his conscience and Antonio assures him that he isn't, but then in an effort to ease Sebastian's conscience, Antonio offers to kill Alonso himself and let Sebastian kill Gonzalo. Sebastian agrees to his persuasion. As they talk quietly to one another, completing their plans, Ariel returns, having overheard their conversation. He sings in Gonzalo's ear to awaken him. As Gonzalo wakes, he in turn wakens Alonso and the others. As they awake, they see that Sebastian and Antonio have drawn their swords, and then why ask why. Sebastian explains that they heard a mysterious noise and were preparing to defend them. Alonso asks whether Gonzalo heard anything and he says he heard a strange humming (Ariel's singing). Alonso orders that they all draw their swords as they search for Ferdinand. As he and the others go out, Ariel reveals in an aside his intention to tell Prospero everything that happened.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

The key purpose of this scene is to establish and define the characters and relationships of the lords who played key roles in the removal of Prospero from power fifteen years before the action of the play begins. In particular, the selfishness and greed of Antonio and Sebastian, as well as the contrasting compassion of Gonzalo, are important standards on both sides of the coin against which Prospero's behavior and transformation can be measured. In setting out to take revenge on Antonio, Prospero is essentially perpetuating the same emotional and spiritual state of negativity and power playing. On the other hand, Gonzalo's humanity and integrity are characteristics and attitudes into which Prospero evolves. Antonio is Prospero's beginning; Gonzalo is Prospero's end.



In the middle of all this is Alonso, who as Prospero explained in Act 1 Scene 2 Part 1, was part of Antonio's plot to remove Prospero from power in Milan. There are other factors to consider, however, when interpreting his character. These include the emotional vulnerability Alonso displays here, the well-meaning remorse for his role in Prospero's exile that he displays later, and perhaps most importantly, the powerfully manipulative personality displayed by Antonio as he convinces the hesitant Sebastian to kill Gonzalo and Alonso.

When these factors are taken into consideration it becomes possible to see that Alonso was as much a victim of Antonio as Prospero; that he is essentially a good man and a good ruler, but weak. Meanwhile, the Antonio/Sebastian plot is the second example of a sub-plot that manifests the play's tempest metaphor, first discussed in relation to Act 1 Scene 1. A murderous "storm" is triggered by Antonio's plotting, an eruption of corrective energy is released by Prospero (Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1), and the natural order (Alonso's unquestioned kingship) is thereafter resumed.

A question that arises from this scene is why Ariel doesn't put all the lords to sleep. An answer may lie in the fact that Ariel doesn't do anything without being told to by Prospero. The means of accomplishing the end is up to him, but Prospero dictates the end itself. In this context, therefore, it can be safely concluded that Prospero intended Antonio and Sebastian to be left awake. This idea, by extension, suggests that Prospero knows Antonio well enough to predict what he will do under these circumstances, which is exactly what Antonio does. Why is this important? The answer to that can be inferred from the end result of Prospero's actions. At the end of the play (Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1), Prospero tells Antonio that he knows what he's been up to. If Prospero *hadn't* been transformed by the experience and hadn't learned the meaning of compassion, it's very likely that he would have told Alonso exactly what Antonio had plotted; in other words, Prospero is entrapping Antonio in order to take revenge for what Antonio did to him fifteen years earlier.



Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

Caliban appears carrying a pile of wood and cursing Prospero, accusing him of sending spirits to torture him. He sees Trinculo approaching, assumes he's another spirit sent to torment him, and falls to the ground in the hopes "the spirit" won't notice him. Trinculo appears, nervous about another approaching storm. He sees Caliban and at first thinks he's a fish, but then realizes he's a man and comments that if he took him back to Naples he could make a fortune exhibiting him to the public. He hears a roll of thunder, and afraid of getting wet, hides beneath Caliban's robes.

Stephano appears, drunk. Caliban, thinking Stephano is another spirit, begs to be left alone. Stephano marvels at Caliban's monstrous appearance and his ability to speak, but sees that he's frightened and imagines that if he gives him some wine he'll calm down. As Stephano forces Caliban to drink, Trinculo recognizes his voice and calls out to him. At first Stephano imagines that Caliban is speaking in two voices and has two sets of legs, but then realizes that it's Trinculo talking and pulls him out from under Caliban. As they greet each other happily and discuss how they each escaped the shipwreck, the now drunken Caliban speaks worshipfully to them and promises to serve them faithfully. As he speaks in increasingly extravagant detail about all the things he'll show them, Trinculo wonders how he could ever have been afraid of such a weak being. Stephano demands that Caliban show them the things he's talking about. Caliban sings drunkenly and happily about being free from Prospero, and leads the others away.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

There are three key purposes to this scene, and to the relationships established in it. The first is to provide comic relief from the other levels of dramatic action - the vengeful (Prospero), the romantic (Ferdinand/Miranda), and the murderous (Antonio/Sebastian). The second is to dramatize in yet another way the play's central metaphor of the tempest and its transformative power. Granted, the emotional "storm" triggered by Stephano's getting Caliban drunk has much less emotional weight than the emotional storms triggered in the other two relevant subplots, the romantic and the murderous. Nonetheless, it is still a repetition of the same motif, or pattern: a storm of change is triggered (Stephano gives Caliban wine), an eruption of corrective energy is released (by Prospero in Act 5 Scene 1 Part 2), and the natural order (Caliban alone on the island, in his monstrous natural state) is resumed.

The third level of function in this scene is to deepen and add facets to the character of Caliban. Yes, he's a monster, but he's also a lonely and needy. If the previously discussed premise (Act 1 Scene 2 Part 2) that Caliban is a mirror of Prospero's soul is accepted, the portrayal of Caliban here can be seen as a representation of the loneliness and need at the heart of Prospero's anger and desire for revenge. These

aspects of his personality, in turn, can be seen as being at the heart (no pun intended) of his movement into forgiveness in Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1.



Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

As Ferdinand stacks firewood, he speaks in soliloquy about how he's been assigned this job by Prospero, about how it's hard work, and about how Miranda becomes upset when she's watching him, but adds that thoughts of her make the job easier. Miranda appears; unaware that Prospero is watching her (from a distance? magically?). She urges Ferdinand to not work so hard, but he tells her he must get the job done before sunset. She volunteers to work in his place for a while so he can rest, but he refuses, saying it's too hard for her. He goes on to ask what her name is, and she impulsively tells him, immediately regretting doing so because Prospero told her not to do so.

Ferdinand speaks at length about the number of women he's had the opportunity to become involved with, but how he's never found one as attractive as Miranda. For her part, Miranda says she's never actually known anyone other than her father, but would wish for no other companion but Ferdinand. Ferdinand tells her he's a prince and would prefer to not have to do this kind of work, but adds that to win her he's prepared to do anything. He confesses his love for her, she weeps with happiness and gratitude, and then offers to marry him if he'll have her. Ferdinand says he'd be happy to marry her. They take each other's hands, bid each other farewell, and exit in separate directions. Prospero comments in soliloquy that he's glad their relationship is progressing as it is, and then returns to his study of his magical book, saying he's got much to accomplish.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

As previously discussed in the context of their first meeting (Act 1 Scene 2 Part 2), Miranda and Ferdinand embody and represent several positive characteristics missing in many of the play's darker characters: honesty, integrity, openness, and vulnerability. If in this scene, they also come across as naive, impulsive, and simplistic, the play seems to indicate that the potential negativity of these characteristics is less relevant than the joy they bring into each other's lives. This, then, is another way in which their relationship defines, through contrast, Prospero's antagonistic, anger-based relationships with Antonio, Alonso, Caliban, and, even to a point, with Ariel.

It could also be argued that Ferdinand and Miranda are also the ultimate manifestations of renewal and new life, and as such represent and foreshadow the spiritual end of Prospero's journey of transformation. They are, in essence, new people—Miranda herself says, later in the play, "O brave new world/that has such people in't". She's discovering the joys of the outside world for the first time. So, in a way, is Ferdinand and so, by the end of the play, is Prospero. He begins the play cynical and deeply wounded about humanity in general and about his particular relationships. His experience of the pure and untainted joy displayed by Ferdinand and Miranda is part of what triggers his transformation into a wiser, more vulnerable human being in Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1. In

other words, it's their newness of life, the rebirth of the past embodied in their present, which provides at least some degree of inspiration to Prospero as he moves away from his bitterness and into at least a partial transcendence.



Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano appear, all three now very drunk. As Stephano brags about his escape from the ship, Caliban vows again to serve him, saying he doesn't like Trinculo. Trinculo reacts indignantly, but Stephano tells him to be quiet. Ariel appears and listens as Caliban speaks at length to Stephano about how Prospero controls him (Caliban), how desperate he is to break free of that control, and how he hopes Stephano will kill Prospero so he can break free. All the while Ariel playfully and mockingly interjects, mimicking Trinculo's voice. Stephano becomes more and more angry with Trinculo, who insists with increasing indignation that he said nothing.

At one point Stephano beats Trinculo, who moves away, and then listens as Caliban details a plan for killing Prospero and stealing away Miranda, whom he says is beautiful and would make a good wife. He specifically refers to the importance of Prospero's books, but Stephano is more interested in Miranda, and makes plans to marry her. He apologizes to Trinculo for beating him and asks whether he'll participate in the plan to kill Prospero. Trinculo agrees. In an aside, Ariel resolves to tell Prospero what he's heard. At Caliban's request, Trinculo and Stephano again sing a song they sung earlier. Ariel creates music and plays along with them. Trinculo and Stephano wonder where the music is coming from, but in a speech that's surprisingly poetic for someone so apparently monstrous, Caliban assures them it's just part of the magic of the island. Stephano says the music will make the island even more wonderful a kingdom when he kills Prospero. Meanwhile, Ariel is moving away, still creating music. Trinculo, Stephano, and Caliban follow him off.

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

As was the case in the previous appearance of the Caliban/Trinculo/Stephano trio (Act 2 Scene 2), there are three levels of function to this scene. As was also the case with that scene, the most important level of function is to provide comic relief, heightened here by the mischievous interference of Ariel. That being said, the comedy takes on a somewhat more menacing aspect, as Caliban's drunken resentment of Prospero becomes murderous, a manifestation of the second layer of function in both the scene and the trio, which is to dramatize the tempest motif. Caliban's determination to kill Prospero is an escalation of "the storm" at the metaphorical heart of the trio's thematic and dramatic purpose.

An interesting question arises here. Given the previously discussed relationship between Caliban and Prospero's dark sides, is Caliban's intent here a mirror of Prospero's? In other words, does Prospero intend to kill Antonio in the way Caliban intends to kill Prospero? There is no explicit evidence in the text to suggest that he does, but a director staging a production of this play might find it an intriguing layer of



subtext and/or motivation to explore in terms of Prospero starting even further in emotional and spiritual darkness. This would give his eventual realization of compassion that much more impact (or, as the case may be, more incredibility).

The scene's third level of function is again the delineation of Caliban. In this case, it occurs as the result of his poetic speech about the mystical nature of the island, which defines him as having more depth than might at first glance be apparent. Here again, within the context of the Prospero/Caliban parallel, it serves to indicate/foreshadow the development of Prospero's soul into something equally poetic.

This development is manifested in his famous speech in Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1, which he delivers after being awakened by Ariel, and in the relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda, to the freedom inherent in forgiveness and vulnerability. In that moment, as he declares his intention to abandon the island and its magic, he speaks more poetically than he does at any other point in the play. Put simply, the parallel is this: because Caliban speaks poetically of the power inherent in the island's natural state, Prospero's similarly poetic language once he's discovered the power inherent in compassion and forgiveness suggests that living in compassion and forgiveness is his, and by extension, humanity's natural state. Magic, transcendence, poetry and beauty, are all innate in both.



Act 3, Scene 3

Act 3, Scene 3 Summary

On another part of the island, Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo and the other lords appear. Gonzalo expresses fatigue and asks to rest, and Alonso grants him permission, suggesting that they all rest because it's becoming clear that their search for Ferdinand is hopeless. As they rest, Antonio and Sebastian urge each other to be watchful for an opportunity to follow through on their plan to kill Alonso and Gonzalo.

Prospero magically appears, conjuring music and a group of strangely dancing spirits, who bring in a banquet table loaded with food. The Lords express wonder at what they're seeing, with Gonzalo commenting on how gentle and well mannered the spirits are, more so than many people he knows. In an aside, Prospero comments that he's right, and that some of the lords he's with are examples of the bad kind of people he's talking about. The spirits suddenly vanish, and then as the Lords make ready to partake of the banquet, Ariel appears in a monstrous disguise. The banquet disappears as he accuses three of the lords (Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian) of being "men of sin".

As the Lords all draw their swords, Ariel mocks them by saying he and his fellow spirits are immune to harm. He then reminds them that they all played a part in overthrowing Prospero and in banishing him and his child, adding that the powers of the sea and the island have combined to punish them for that action, and that more punishment will follow. As he vanishes, the shapes reappear and remove the banquet table. Prospero congratulates Ariel on a job well done. He comments that while Alonso and the other lords are distracted and worried, he (Prospero) will go and visit Ferdinand.

Gonzalo asks Alonso why he seems so upset. Alonso tells him what the spirits said; adding that he believes Ferdinand was killed out of revenge for the part he (Alonso) played in Prospero's overthrow. He resolves to seek even further for Ferdinand. Sebastian and Antonio vow to go with him and help, and the three men go out. Gonzalo makes the observation that Antonio and Sebastian have been reminded of their guilt, and urges Adrian to follow them and make sure that that guilt doesn't inspire them to more acts of violence.

Act 3, Scene 3 Analysis

The nature of Prospero's plan for revenge on Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian is at least partly revealed in this scene, as they are forcibly and dramatically reminded of their guilt. It's important to note here that Alonso expresses at least a degree of remorse, an incident that supports the previously discussed idea (Act 2 Scene 1) that Antonio, at least to some degree, manipulated Alonso into the plot to remove Prospero from power. If he was as truly self-motivated as Antonio and even Sebastian, it's likely that he would express as little remorse as they do-which is to say none. Yes, it's possible that he only



experiences what remorse he does as the result of Ferdinand's apparent death, but as a Shakespearean character him/herself might put it, however, "it's all one" -it doesn't matter, because Prospero's aim is to make the conspirators aware, by any means possible, of the suffering they caused him, and to feel remorse for it. Mission accomplished in this scene with Alonso; in other words, the metaphorical tempest created by Prospero is doing its job, wrecking the ship of Alonso's security on the rocky shore of his guilt.

The secondary "tempest" in this scene is referred to almost in passing - Antonio's and Sebastian's ongoing plot to kill Alonso and Gonzalo. They are briefly distracted from their purpose by the appearance of the mystic banquet and don't directly refer to the plot again in the scene, but it can be inferred from their ready eagerness to join Alonso on his continued search for Ferdinand that the plan is still very much in their minds. It's interesting to note here that the fatigued but still perceptive Gonzalo has apparently picked up on something about Antonio and Sebastian that's leading him to intuit, if not fully understand, their plan. He gets their plan right but their motivation wrong, believing they're acting out of guilt as opposed to the desire for more power. This can perhaps be seen as a manifestation of Gonzalo's *navvety*, a trait he shares with Ferdinand and Miranda. As is the case with those two characters, however, this relatively minor flaw doesn't seem to inhibit in any way his essential integrity and honesty.

Why a banquet? Why not just a threatening appearance by the monstrous Ariel, or the presence of his disembodied voice? Aside from the fact that such theatrical tricks and mini-pageants were popular with audiences at the time *The Tempest* was first written and presented, the reason Prospero manifests such temptation for the Lords is precisely that - temptation. Fifteen years ago, the Lords succumbed to the temptation for more power. The manifestation of the banquet here is a representation of that temptation, while the fact that the food is taken from them without them being allowed to partake is Prospero's suggestion that the power they gained, the power they were tempted to take in the first place, is itself fleeting. On another level, Prospero is simply playing games with his victims, taunting and tormenting them. This is perhaps another example of the malicious side of his nature that he eventually abandons in Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1 as the result of learning about compassion from Ariel.



Act 4, Scene 1, Part 1

Act 4, Scene 1, Part 1 Summary

Prospero tells Ferdinand that all the trials he put him through were tests of his love and devotion to Miranda, and that since he's proved himself worthy he (Prospero) is prepared to give permission for them to marry. He warns him, however, that if he attempts to take her virginity before they're married he will curse their marriage. Ferdinand vows to respect his wishes, and Prospero gives his blessing to the relationship. He then calls Ariel, telling him to lure "the rabble" (Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo) to the place while he (Prospero) magically displays some of his power. Ariel agrees to go, but then asks whether Prospero loves him. Prospero says he does, and Ariel runs out. Prospero turns back to Ferdinand and Miranda, sees Ferdinand is getting a little too familiar, and speaks angrily to him. Ferdinand backs off, and Prospero conjures a magical performance by representations of three goddesses-Iris, goddess of the rainbow and a messenger of the gods, Ceres, goddess of agriculture and fertility, and Juno, goddess of marriage. All three sing and dance in blessing of the union between Ferdinand and Miranda, calling upon spirits of nature and of harvest to complete the blessing while at the same time warning them to be chaste and virtuous until sexual union can be celebrated in marriage.

Prospero suddenly remembers his plans for Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano. He abruptly ends the performance and dismisses the spirits. Miranda and Ferdinand comment on his sudden change of mood, but Prospero assures them everything is all right. In a long and well-known poetic speech, he indicates that the spirits and their performance are like life, in that everything dissolves and fades into nothing. "We are such stuff/As dreams are made on; and our little life/Is rounded with a sleep." He apologizes for seeming distracted, and urges Ferdinand and Miranda to withdraw.

Act 4, Scene 1, Part 1 Analysis

Once again, Prospero seems to be in a hurry to move the relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda along, but only on his terms. Why this is so important to him is, again, never clearly defined. Perhaps it's simply a manifestation of a desire to manipulate and control, one possible response to having been placed in a situation where he had no control (i.e., his being overthrown). Whatever the reason, he's clearly running the show here. When he sees Ferdinand taking what appears to be the initiative and trying to move the relationship along himself, Prospero is quick to toss him in a verbal cold shower, reiterating his point about the importance of sexual chastity in the presentation by the three goddesses. It must be remembered here that the goddesses, in everything they do and say, are a magical conjuration of Prospero. Yes, they are manifestations of his relationship with nature, but they are also manifestations of his opinion as to how nature can and should be controlled. Meanwhile, as was the case with the appearance and disappearance of the banquet in the previous scene, the



pageant of the goddesses serves the secondary purpose of providing a bit of audience pleasing spectacle.

Prospero's speech after the pageant is one of two very famous pieces of writing in the play. The second comes in Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1, as he's preparing to relinquish his magical powers. In that moment, he speaks with notable grace and poeticism, in contrast to his more commonly used, and generally crankier, form of speech. In addition, in that moment, Prospero's poetry (like Caliban's) refers to the island's magical nature, as well as to the nature of its magic. Because there is a hint of similar poetry here, in his comment about human beings being little more than dreams, the inference can be drawn that he becomes poetic here for the same reason: that he is referring in his speech to the nature of nature, to the nature of being, to the nature of life. He is revealing his deep connection with nature and its truths, both of which emerge from the confines of his desire for revenge, his anger and his crankiness and lead him to the place of forgiveness he finally reaches in Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1.



Act 4, Scene 1, Part 2

Act 4, Scene 1, Part 2 Summary

As Ferdinand and Miranda leave, Ariel returns. He tells Prospero that Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban are all drunk, and that he's lured them to a nearby pool. Prospero orders him to fetch some gaudy clothes, and while he's gone, muses in a brief soliloquy on how he feels betrayed by Caliban and how he will torment all three. When Ariel returns he and Prospero display the clothes and make themselves invisible as Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo come in, arguing about whether they've been fooled by Caliban's island spirit.

Trinculo and Stephano threaten to beat Caliban for having made them lose their bottles of wine, but Caliban tells them to be quiet and get ready to follow through on their plan. Stephano imagines himself king while Trinculo, who has discovered the clothes Ariel brought out, mockingly treats him as such. With drunken playfulness, they dress themselves in the clothes as Caliban urges them to remember their purpose. Stephano tells him to be quiet and continues to try on clothes. Prospero and Ariel magically create the sound of hunting dogs approaching. Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano run off. Prospero tells Ariel to continue the imagined pursuit, again promising freedom if Ariel does his job well. Ariel rushes out.

Act 4, Scene 1, Part 2 Analysis

The metaphoric mini-tempest created by Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban comes to an abrupt, comic end in this scene as in their drunkenness they become far too easily distracted. There is perhaps an echo here of Prospero's own distraction in the previous part of the scene: in the same way as Trinculo and others are distracted by the pretty clothes, Prospero was distracted by both his pretty pageant and the pretty love between Ferdinand and Miranda. On another level, however, the way Prospero engineers this scene and the one that follows can be interpreted as a manifestation of another tempest, that of Prospero taking revenge on Antonio.

In dressing fools like Trinculo and Stephano and Caliban up in gaudy, showy, and above all borrowed costumes, Prospero is mockingly suggesting that the equally foolish Antonio and Sebastian, and to a lesser degree Alonso, have dressed themselves up in gaudy, borrowed power. His inclusion of Caliban in this scenario, or rather his utilization of the opportunity provided by the drunken Caliban, takes this point further-not only are Antonio and Sebastian clothed in borrowed power, they are *animals* (like Caliban) dressed in such power.

The Prospero/Caliban parallel can again be seen in the way Caliban is prevented from realizing his revenge on Prospero, which is in the same way that Prospero is prevented from realizing his revenge on Antonio: Prospero deflects Caliban, Ariel deflects

Prospero. Granted, Ariel's intervention is involuntary where Prospero's redirecting of Caliban is deliberate, but the end result is the same.



Act 5, Scene 1, Part 1

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 1 Summary

Prospero appears, commenting that all his plans are going well and asking Ariel where Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, and the others are. Ariel tells him they've been imprisoned in a cave just as he ordered, describing them as unhappy, grieving and repentant (presumably over what they did to Prospero, of which they were reminded at the banquet). Prospero comments wonderingly on how Ariel, a spirit of air, should feel compassion for them when he (Prospero) does not. He realizes that their penitence is all he really wanted, and that now he knows they're sorry for what they did, he can end their imprisonment. He tells Ariel to free them, and Ariel goes. When he's gone, Prospero has a lengthy and famous soliloquy in which he invokes all the spirits and powers that have aided him and vows to let them go, adding that when he's finished all he has to do, he'll break his magical staff and bury it in the earth, and then cast his magic book into the sea.

Ariel appears, leading the distraught Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian, Antonio, and Adrian. All appear to be in a kind of a trance. As they arrive, Prospero comments on each of them - on Gonzalo's honor and respectability, Alonso's and Sebastian's cruelty, and Sebastian and Antonio's ambition. He proclaims forgiveness for them all, as "unnatural" as they are, notices they're emerging from their trance, and tells Ariel to bring the clothes he was wearing when he was expelled from Milan. Ariel fetches the clothes and helps to dress him, singing a merry song. Prospero then tells him to return to the hidden ship, wake the sailors, and bring the boatswain. Ariel rushes off.

As Gonzalo and the others awake, Prospero presents himself in his true identity. Alonso, despite his uncertainty about whether Prospero is real or not, begs pardon for what he did. Prospero welcomes them all, assures them that their island/conjured confusion will soon disappear, and then in an aside tells Sebastian and Antonio that he knows their plans, but for now will remain silent. He tells Antonio he forgives him for what he did, and demands that he return the title of Duke of Milan. Alonso asks Prospero how he came to be on the island, and then recalls the shipwreck and what he believes to have been the loss of Ferdinand's life. Prospero claims to understand his sense of loss, saying he lost his daughter in the same storm to which Alonso lost Ferdinand. He then goes on to assure Alonso and the others that he truly is Prospero, that he'll tell them his entire story at another time, and then reveals Ferdinand and Miranda, bantering playfully with each other as they sit at a game of chess. At first Alonso thinks Miranda is a goddess that rescued Ferdinand from the shipwreck, but Ferdinand tells him she's mortal, that she's Prospero's daughter, and that they're betrothed. Miranda, meanwhile, exclaims with delight at seeing such apparently wonderful examples of humanity. Gonzalo speaks a prayer of thanks that he's been spared to see the great blessing of the union of the heirs to Naples and Milan. Alonso gives his blessing to their union.



Act 5, Scene 1, Part 1 Analysis

The first section of this lengthy scene contains the play's thematic and narrative climax, the high point of action and emotion so far. It's important to note that this high point is actually a very quiet moment—the point at which Prospero, through conversation with Ariel, wonderingly realizes the transcendent and life-affirming qualities of compassion and forgiveness. He has completed his journey of transformation. He is no longer the power-defined, revenge-motivated, irritable old man of the play's first scenes. His inner wisdom, hinted at in his affection for Ariel and Miranda, is finally and fully released, and he abandons his quest for revenge.

It's this quest, fueled by fifteen years of increasing bitterness, which fueled his deepening exploration of the world of nature magic—he studied magic so that when the time came for him to take his revenge, he'd be both ready and able. He was already more than willing. His letting go of revenge is therefore the inspiration for the letting go of his magic, which he does in the famous speech that concludes this section. He has no more need for revenge, so therefore he has no more need of magic. It's important to note, however, that at no point does the text indicate that he actually does what he says he will do. He's never seen, or spoken of, breaking his staff or tossing his book into the sea. In fact, later in this scene he promises to use his magic to ensure a safe and speedy return to Naples for Alonso and the others.

Does all this mean he doesn't, in fact, dispel his magic powers? Not necessarily, but ultimately it doesn't matter—the point is he's reached a stage of compassion and forgiveness, which is what his soul needed him to do. This is the new state of natural being emerging from the metaphorical "tempest" of emotion and transformation set in motion by Prospero's creation of the storm and drawing of Alonso and the others to the island.

Prospero's new capacity for forgiveness immediately manifests in his treatment of the clearly penitent Alonso and the clearly less penitent Antonio and Sebastian. It's important to note that Prospero's whispered comments to Antonio are now all the revenge he needs. Prospero is saying he knows what Antonio was planning to do to Alonso and Gonzalo, and that all he (Prospero) has to do is tell Alonso and it's game over. The threat of exposure, rather than actual exposure, is what keeps them in line. This is the reason for Antonio's and Sebastian's relative silence from this point to the end of the play—they know they have been out-manuevered. Meanwhile, the chess game played by Ferdinand and Miranda is a symbol of Prospero's maneuvering, the game he has been playing throughout the course of the play—moving people and souls around on his island in the way the chessmen are moved about on their board.



Act 5, Scene 1, Part 2

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 2 Summary

Ariel returns with the Boatswain, who is somewhat befuddled as a result of Ariel's enchantments, but who is articulate enough to explain that the ship and its entire crew are safe. As Prospero is congratulating Ariel on a job well done, Alonso speaks with wonder about everything that's happened. Prospero tells him to not worry about how strange everything seems, again promising to explain it all. He tells Ariel to bring Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano, and then as Ariel rushes off, tells Alonso and the others that there are still a few of their company with whom they've yet to be reunited.

Ariel returns almost immediately, leading the still drunk Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban, who are still wearing the gaudy clothes they put on earlier. Sebastian and Antonio make mocking jokes about Caliban, Prospero tells the story of Caliban's powerful witch/mother, and explains that the three of them plotted to take his life. Alonso recognizes Stephano as his butler and Trinculo as another servant, and wonders how they got hold of the wine that made them so drunk. Prospero teases Stephano for having wanted to be king, and Stephano sheepishly admits he would have made a very bad one. As Alonso is commenting on how strange Caliban is, Prospero comments that his manners are as misshapen as his looks. He then tells Caliban to take Stephano and Trinculo away and Caliban goes, muttering about how stupid he must be to look at Stephano as a god.

Prospero then invites Alonso and the others to rest with him for the night, saying he'll explain everything, "the story of my life, / And the particular accidents gone by / since I came to this isle. . . ." He then says he'll accompany Alonso and the others back to Naples, where he will participate in the wedding between Miranda and Ferdinand-after which, he says, he will retire to Milan and contemplate his death. He adds that he will magically ensure that the trip to Naples is fast and smooth . . . and then as everyone leaves, he gives Ariel his freedom.

Prospero then speaks an epilogue asking to be freed from the confines of the stage by the audience's applause.

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 2 Analysis

As previously discussed (Act 4 Scene 1 Part 2), the foolish, clumsy, drunken appearance of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban is intended by Prospero to be a mockery of the false power, moral emptiness and vicious animalism of Antonio and Sebastian. It's interesting to note that the one time they say anything of note following Prospero's whispered warning to them is to mock Caliban and others-it's a classic case of those of low status mocking those whose status is even lower in the name of preserving at least a modicum of status for themselves.



There are three other elements of note in the scene. The first is Prospero's comment that he will spend the time following his return to Milan contemplating his death. It's perhaps ironic that once he's been released from his servitude to anger and vengefulness (in the same way as he's about to release Ariel from his servitude to him) his life seems in some ways to be over. He is perhaps wondering in this moment what gives his life meaning if he doesn't have anger and revenge to sustain him. This leads to the second noteworthy point-his commitment to magically ensuring a safe and speedy trip back to Italy. This is a contrast to his previous commitment to abandoning his magic (Act 5 Scene 1 Part 1). The suggestion here is that he's reconsidering that commitment-he's no longer got revenge to motivate him and has nothing but death to look forward to, so perhaps he'll continue his study of magic after all.

The final point of note in this scene is Prospero's freeing of Ariel, which as mentioned previously has echoes of, and parallels with, Prospero's freeing of himself from the bonds of anger and revenge. Ariel, the airy spirit of nature, is free to be who he truly is. Prospero, who is at this point in the play the embodiment of the forgiving and transcendent power of nature (an aspect of himself he discovered through his relationship with Ariel), is now also free to be who he is. The irony, of course, is that he feels as though he's now a stranger to himself, hence the hints that he's not *quite* ready to give up the magical part of himself; at least, not just yet.

The epilogue is a theatrical device employed in several genres of theatre almost since theatre began, devised to cap the play's action, to indicate to the audience that the play is over, and to request that they be generous with their applause. The play's lead performer, simultaneously in the voice of the character he/she was portraying and him/herself, often spoke such epilogues. All these levels of function exist in the epilogue here, but there is one additional element of note. Prospero's words include members of the audience in the naturally magic, or magically natural, world of the island; specifically, he describes the breath of the audience as the wind that will fill the ship's sails for the trip back to Italy. This seems to be a following through of his commitment to Alonso to ensure the trip back is fast and safe. Once again it seems that Prospero isn't ready just yet to give up his magical abilities, which in turn seems to suggest that he intends to remain connected to the new, deeper experience of humanity and life he's discovered as the result of being on the island - the natural magic of forgiveness. One might well ask, at the conclusion of a performance of *The Tempest*, how much, if anything, do members of the audience carry with them of this magic. Prospero has just said the audience is part of the magic of the island. Where, he and the play seem to wonder, is the forgiveness in them.

Characters

Adrian:

He is a lord attending King Alonso of Naples, and a minor character in the play. After the tempest, Adrian is washed ashore in company with Alonso and several other members of the king's court. His and Gonzalo's efforts to cheer up the dejected king in II.i are ridiculed by Antonio and the king's brother, Sebastian. Thus Adrian's optimism serves as a foil to Sebastian and Antonio's mean-spirited cynicism. (A foil is a person or thing that highlights another character's traits through contrast.) When Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio are temporarily driven crazy by Prospero's spells, Adrian sorrowfully watches over them, along with Gonzalo and Francisco (III.iii.104-09; V.i.7-13).

Alonso:

He is the king of Naples and the father of Ferdinand. King Alonso, his son, and his courtiers get caught in the tempest on their way home from the marriage of his daughter to the king of Tunis (II.i.69-72). In I.ii.121-32, we learn that as Prospero's "inveterate" enemy, Alonso contributed to his overthrow by sending troops to Milan "i' th' dead of darkness" to support Antonio's takeover and to banish Prospero and his daughter. In return for this support, Alonso was awarded an annual tribute from the usurping Duke Antonio's coffers, as well as the subjection of Milan to Naples. Thus, twelve years later, when Prospero discovers that Alonso and his followers are nearby aboard a ship, he creates the tempest to wash them ashore and exact a longoverdue revenge.

Alonso's first appearance in the play occurs in I.i, while he is on board the ship during the storm, trying to exert his authority over the toiling crew. Faced with the fury of the tempest, the master of the ship, his boatswain, and his crew ignore the king's commands and order him below deck. Alonso next appears in II.i, grieving over his missing son, Ferdinand, whom he believes to have been drowned, and refusing to be consoled even by his faithful counselor, Gonzalo. At the close of II.i, Alonso is saved by Ariel and Gonzalo from being assassinated in his sleep by his own brother, Sebastian, and Antonio.

By the time he appears again, in III.iii, Alonso is exhausted from wandering around the island with his courtiers, and announces his despair to Gonzalo: "Even here will I put off my hope, and keep it / No longer as my flatterer" (III.iii.7-8). At this point, Prospero exacts his final revenge by driving Alonso mad with an illusory banquet and with Ariel's appearance as a harpy.

At the close of the play in V.i, Prospero takes pity on his old enemy Alonso, releases him and his courtiers from madness, and shows him that his son and heir is not only alive, but engaged to Prospero's daughter, Miranda.



Even before he learns that his son is still alive, the remorseful Alonso repents of his crimes against Prospero and restores his dukedom, at the same time asking for Prospero's pardon (V.i.118-19). The subsequent union between Alonso's son and Prospero's daughter is seen as the ultimate reconciliation between the two men as they look forward to the future through their children. Indeed, when Alonso calls himself Miranda's "second father" and begs her for forgiveness of prior wrongs, Prospero sounds once more the note of reconciliation by urging Alonso to forget the past: "Let us not burthen our remembrances with / A heaviness that's gone" (V.i. 199-200).

Antonio:

He is the current duke of Milan and the treacherous brother of Prospero, the former duke of Milan. At the beginning of the play, Prospero tells Miranda how as duke he retreated to his studies after entrusting Antonio, "whom next thyself / Of all the world I lov'd," with the practical side of governing Milan (I.ii.66-78). Greedy for total power, Antonio usurped his brother with the help of King Alonso of Naples, and set Prospero and the infant Miranda adrift in a rotten boat. As the play opens, Antonio is traveling nearby on the ship carrying King Alonso and his courtiers home from Tunis—thus providing Prospero with the opportunity to bring his enemies to justice. Critics have noted that Antonio displays his villainous nature virtually from the moment he appears in the play. As the ship is being battered by the storm, Prospero's "perfidious" brother swears at the hard-working boatswain, calling him a "whoreson, insolent noisemaker"; shortly afterward, he accuses the crew members of being "drunk ards" and blames them for any deaths that may occur as a result of the tempest (I.i.43-44, 56). Later, when he lands on the island with Alonso and his followers, Antonio ridicules Gonzalo for his optimism, mocking the old counselor's effort to cheer up the king and laughing at his description of the ideal commonwealth (II.i. 1-190). Once Alonso is charmed asleep by Ariel, Antonio persuades Sebastian (Alonso's brother), to try to murder the king and succeed him on the throne of Naples— even though, as critics have observed, there is little point in being king now that everyone is shipwrecked on an island far away from home (II.i.202- 96).

Antonio is one of the "three men of sin" (Alonso and Sebastian being the other two) who in III.iii are driven to madness by Ariel as punishment for their crimes against Prospero. Prospero restores his "unnatural" brother to health in V.i and forgives him for his crimes, along with Alonso and Sebastian. Antonio says very little for the rest of the play, and it has been argued that he, alone, remains unrepentant.

Ariel:

He is a spirit of the air. In I.ii.250-93, we learn that Ariel was once the servant of Sycorax, a wicked sorceress who had imprisoned the spirit in a "cloven pine" for refusing to fulfill her "earthy and abhor'd commands" (I.ii.277, 273). Ariel remained trapped inside the tree for twelve years, crying out in pain, until Prospero arrived on the island, released him, and bound the airy spirit to his service. Thus at Prospero's



command, Ariel stirs up the tempest which strands Alonso and his followers on the island (Li). Again acting on his master's instructions, he beguiles Alonso's son, Ferdinand, with music—convincing the prince that his father is dead ("Full fathom five thy father lies") and leading him to the admiring and "admir'd" Miranda (I.ii.375- 412; III.i.37). Ariel also saves Alonso and Gonzalo from assassination by Sebastian and Antonio (II.i.300- 5), and warns Prospero of plots being formed against him by the drunken Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban. In III.iii, Ariel helps his master create an illusory banquet for Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio, only to torment these "three men of sin" by whisking their feast away and then chastising them for their crimes against Prospero. In IV.i.57-138, the airy spirit presides over a betrothal masque in honor of Ferdinand and Miranda's engagement. In IV.i.255- 66, he helps Prospero punish Caliban and his coconspirators with cramps, pinches, and "dry convulsions."

As the play nears its conclusion, Ariel rounds up all the transgressors so that Prospero can judge and forgive them. The spirit's final task is to provide "calm seas [and] auspicious gales" for the journey back to Naples, after which Prospero regretfully sets him free (V.i.315-19).

Early in the play, Ariel expresses his impatience with servitude, receiving a threatening rebuke when he reminds Prospero in I.ii.242-50 of his promise to liberate the airy spirit. Nevertheless, Ariel fulfills Prospero's commands assiduously and with skill. In I.ii. 195-205, he describes how he has accomplished "every article" of his master's instructions for the tempest:

I boarded the King's ship; now on the beak,

Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flam'd amazement. Sometime I'd divide,
And burn in many places; on the topmast,
The yards and boresprit, would I flame distinctly,
Then meet and join. Jove's lightning, the
precursors
O' th' dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
And sight-outrunning were not; the fire and cracks
Alonso is saved by Ariel and
Gonzalo from being assassinated in
his sleep by his own brother,



Sebastian, and Antonio."

Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune

Seem to besiege, and make his bold waves

tremble,

Yea, his dread trident shake.

Ariel carries out most of his duties while invisible, but he is capable of transforming himself into a variety of shapes—from several flames burning in "many places," to a harpy sufficiently formidable to dispose of a banquet with the clap of its wings. He is also comfortable in a variety of environments, being able to "fly, / To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride / On the curl'd clouds" (I.ii.190-92). In V.i.88-94, Ariel suggests that he is small enough to rest inside a flower or to ride on the back of a bat. Prospero, who relies upon him throughout the play, fondly calls him "delicate" and "dainty," refer ring to him as "my bird" (IV.i.49,184; V.i.95). Finally, Ariel has been called morally neutral, being neither a demon nor an angel. It has also been observed that he shows both a detachment from and a connection to humanity when, at the close of the play, he declares that, were he human, he would feel pity for the punishment endured by Alonso and his followers (V.i.17-21).

Boatswain:

He is an officer on the ship bearing Alonso and his courtiers home to Naples from Tunis where they had celebrated the marriage of Alonso's daughter to the king of Tunis. As the play opens, the voyagers are caught in a violent tempest conjured up by Prospero, and the boatswain is struggling unsuccessfully to keep the ship from going aground. His blunt treatment of the royal passengers (who are superior to him in social rank) as they repeatedly come on deck to question him is an indication of the severity of the storm. As the boatswain himself puts it, "What cares these roarers [tempestuous waves] for the name of king?" (I.i. 16-17). Throughout Li, the king's counselor Gonzalo doggedly insists that the boatswain is destined to die by hanging on land rather than by drowning at sea, thus foreshadowing *Tempest* Antonio is one of the 'three men of sin' (Alonso and Sebastian being the other two) who in III.iii are driven to madness by Ariel as punishment for their crimes against Prospero." the ship's safe arrival. The boatswain's next and final appearance occurs at the close of the play, when he delivers the astounding news that the crew is safe and that the ship "Is tight and yare, and bravely rigg'd as when / We first put out to sea" only three hours earlier (V.i.224-25).

Caliban:

Described in the character list as "a savage and deformed slave," Caliban is the son of Sycorax, an evil witch who has since died but who once held sway over the island now ruled by Prospero. Regarding him as a "beast" and a "poisonous slave, got by the devil



himself' upon Sycorax, Prospero has forced Caliban into servitude (IV.i.140; I.ii.319). By contrast, Caliban considers himself mistreated and overworked. He bitterly accuses Prospero of befriending him in order to take advantage of his gratitude and rob him of the island which he considers his birthright:

This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,

Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st

first,

Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst

give me

Water with berries in't, and teach me how

To name the bigger light, and how the less,

That burn by day and night; and then I lov'd thee

And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,

The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and

fertile.

Curs'd be! that did so!

For I am all the subjects that you have,

Which first was mine own king;

(I.ii.331-39, 341-42)

Calling him a liar, Prospero reminds Caliban that he was treated well until he tried to rape Miranda: "I have used thee / (Filth as thou art) with human care, and lodg'd thee / In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate / The honor of my child" (I.ii.345-48). Caliban readily admits the attempted rape, retorting, "would't had been done! / Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (I.ii.349-51).

This exchange sets the stage for Caliban's behavior during the rest of the play. On his own gathering wood in II.ii, Caliban continues to curse his master; then hearing a noise which he thinks must be Prospero's spirits coming to punish him, he throws himself onto the ground in an attempt to hide. The noise turns out to be the jester Trinculo, followed shortly afterward by the drunken butler Stephano. Stephano plies the frightened Caliban with liquor, and in drunken gratitude, Caliban swears his obedience to the butler, promising to serve him and to show him the best places on the island, and giddily



celebrating his new-found "freedom" (II.ii. 125-86). Later in III.ii, Caliban persuades Stephano and Trinculo to try to murder Prospero, but the plot is foiled by Ariel in IV.i, and the three conspirators are punished with cramps, pinches, and convulsions.

At the close of the play, Caliban repents his plot against Prospero, and regrets his foolish admiration for Stephano: "I'll be wise hereafter," he declares, "And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass / Was I to take this drunkard for a god, / And worship this dull fool!" (V.i.295-98).

Critics are divided on what to make of Caliban. Those who view him negatively point out that he is a potential rapist who plots to commit murder. They observe that he foolishly trades one master (Prospero) for another (Stephano), and that his so-called wish for freedom turns out instead to be a desire for the self-indulgence he obtains through Stephano's wine. Those who regard Caliban with sympathy argue that Prospero and Miranda are intruders on the island, and that by choosing to serve Stephano rather than accept Prospero's "civilizing" education and enslavement, Caliban practices a measure of self-determination. It has been noted that while Caliban is brutal, he is also sensitively appreciative of beauty. In III.ii.135- 43, he offers a lyrical description of the music that can be heard all over the island, referring to "sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not." In this context, Caliban has been regarded as an example of the distorted Renaissance view of the New World inhabitants, who on the one hand, were believed to be vicious savages and on the other, pure children of nature.

Alternatively, it has been argued that Caliban's blunt and savage "naturalness" acts as a foil to the concept of civilization demonstrated by the graceful and cultured Miranda, as well as to the perniciousness of civilization shown by the Machiavellian Antonio.

Ceres:

She is a character in the betrothal masque created by Prospero to honor and educate the newly engaged Miranda and Ferdinand; the masque is performed by Ariel along with a group of "meaner," or lesser, spirits (IV.i.35-138). (A masque is an elaborate production consisting of song, dance, and music and usually featuring ornate costumes and scenery as well as characters from mythology. In the Renaissance, masques were a popular form of courtly entertainment, particularly during the reign of James I.) Ceres is the Roman goddess of agriculture, or mother earth. At the beginning of the masque, she is called upon by Iris on behalf of Juno to celebrate "a contract of true love" between Ferdinand and Miranda (IV.i.84). Ceres introduces the lesson of chastity by warning Iris that she will not stay if Venus and her son, Cupid, have been invited. Ceres resents Venus and Cupid for helping "Dis" (Pluto) to abduct her daughter, Proserpine, to be his queen in the underworld. Eventually, Ceres joins Juno in singing a "marriage-blessing" to the young couple (IV.i.106).



Ferdinand:

He is the son and heir of King Alonso of Naples. Ferdinand is the first to leap overboard during the tempest, and in keeping with Prospero's plan, he lands on the island alone, separated from his father's group. Ariel uses song to convince the youth that his father is dead and that the island is enchanted, as well as to lure him into the presence of Miranda:

Full fadom five thy father lies,

Of his bones are coral made:

Those are pearls that were his eyes:

Nothing of him that doth fade,

But doth suffer a sea-change

Into something rich and strange.

(I.ii.397-402)

When he first encounters Prospero's daughter, Ferdinand is struck by her beauty. In fact, his first reaction to Miranda resembles her initial reaction to him: she believes that he is a spirit rather than a man, and he wonders whether she is goddess of the island (I.ii.410-28). The two of them quickly fall in love with one another, but Prospero, who has foreseen the match and secretly approves of it, decides to test ... at Prospero's command, Ariel stirs up the tempest which strands Alonso and his followers on the island (I.i)."

Ferdinand's love, "lest too light winning / Make the prize light," and forces the youth into servitude on the pretense that he is a spy (I.ii.452-53). Ferdinand replies that the loss of his father, and his own imprisonment and hard labor "are but light" to him as long as he is near Miranda (I.ii.486-94). Ferdinand appears again in III.i, bearing firewood for Prospero and remaining steady in his love for Miranda. Prospero frees him from servitude in IV.i, blessing his engagement to Miranda with a betrothal masque. At the close of the play, Ferdinand is reunited with his father, who also gives his blessing to the marriage.

Miranda's love for Ferdinand is influenced to some extent by her innocence and inexperience. Up to this point she has seen only two other men: her father and Caliban. By contrast, Ferdinand bases his love for Miranda on all the women he has seen and known at his father's court, and concludes that while they all possessed at least one defect of some sort, she on the other hand is "perfect" and "peerless" (III.i.47).



The union of Ferdinand and Miranda has been said to symbolize the play's theme of reconciliation, bringing together as it does their parents, Alonso and Prospero, who were once bitter enemies.

Francisco:

He is a lord attending King Alonso of Naples, and a minor character in the play. After the tempest, Francisco is washed ashore in company with Alonso and several other members of the king's court. In II.i.114-23, he tries unsuccessfully to reassure the downhearted Alonso that his son, Ferdinand, survived the shipwreck (in some editions of the play, these lines are spoken by Gonzalo). Francisco's efforts to instill optimism in the king are undermined by Sebastian's assertion that Alonso himself is to blame for Ferdinand's fate. Francisco speaks once more in III.iii.40, when he briefly comments .. Caliban considers himself mistreated and overworked. He bitterly accuses Prospero of befriending him in order to take advantage of his gratitude and rob him of the island which he considers his birthright . . . (I.ii.331-39, 341-42)." on the strange spirits who deliver the illusory banquet conjured up by Prospero to torment the king.

Gonzalo:

He is an honest and trusted advisor to King Alonso of Naples. In I.ii. 160-68, we learn that twelve years ago, when Prospero was usurped and he and his daughter, Miranda, were set adrift at sea, Gonzalo took pity on the two of them, supplying them not only with the food and water necessary to survive, but also with those things that make life easier:

Some food we had, and some fresh water, that

A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,

Out of his charity, who 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 lov'd my books, he furnish'd me

From mine own library with volumes that

I prize above my dukedom.



Among these books are Prospero's volumes of magic, which enable him to control the spirits of the island and, as it happens, to create the tempest that brings Alonso and his court ashore.

Gonzalo is unusual among Alonso's stranded courtiers for his integrity and optimism. After the tempest washes them ashore in II.i.1-9, he tries to comfort his king by remarking on the "miracle" of their survival. When Alonso refuses consolation, Gonzalo tries to distract him with his own definition of the ideal commonwealth (II.i. 148-57; 160-65). It is revealing that Prospero's treacherous brother, Antonio, and Alonso's equally untrustworthy brother, Sebastian, systematically react with sarcasm to Gonzalo's cheerful efforts.

In II.i.300-05, Ariel wakes Gonzalo from his enchanted sleep just in time to save Alonso from being murdered by Sebastian and Antonio. Prospero spares "'the good old Lord Gonzalo'" from the madness which he subsequently inflicts on the others (V.i.8-19). At the close of the play, Prospero embraces Gonzalo as a "noble friend, /.. . whose honor cannot / Be measur'd or confin'd" (V.i.120- 22).

Noting that Prospero's illusions are seen differently by each of the castaways, critics have observed that, significantly, Gonzalo is the only one of the king's followers to notice that their clothes are clean and dry in spite of the tempest; furthermore, apart from Adrian's comment in II.i.47 that the air is sweet, Gonzalo is alone in his assessment of the island as green and filled with "every thing advantageous to life" (II.i.50).

Iris:

She is a character in the betrothal masque created by Prospero to honor and educate the newly engaged Miranda and Ferdinand; the masque is performed by Ariel along with a group of "meaner," or lesser, spirits (IV.i.35-138). Iris is the "manycolored" goddess of the rainbow (IV.i.76), and as Juno's messenger she is the first to appear in the masque, summoning Ceres to wait upon her queen. Iris reinforces the betrothal masque's theme of prenuptial chastity when she reassures Ceres that the scandalous Venus and Cupid have not been invited to the celebration. She also mentions that Venus and her son had hoped to bewitch Miranda and Ferdinand into sleeping with one another before marriage, but were disappointed when the virtuous couple could not be tempted to break their vow of chastity (IV.i.92-100).

Juno:

She is a character in the betrothal masque created by Prospero to honor and educate the newly engaged Miranda and Ferdinand; the masque is performed by Ariel along with a group of "meaner," or lesser, spirits (IV.i.35-138). In Roman mythology, Juno is the queen of heaven, goddess of marriage and women, and wife of Jupiter. She appears in the masque along with Ceres to bless the young couple with a prosperous life together and fine children, but also to remind them not to have sex before marriage.



Mariners:

They are the crew on board the ship bearing Alonso to and from Tunis. When the ship gets caught in Prospero's tempest, the mariners are ordered by the master and boatswain to keep it from going aground, but in I.i.51, they announce that "all [is] lost" and that shipwreck is imminent (I.i.51). In I.ii.226-37, we learn that Ariel has in fact steered the ship safely into harbor and has charmed the mariners to sleep below deck while Prospero carries out his plans against Alonso and his courtiers.

Master (of a ship):

He is the commander of the ship bearing Alonso and members of his court from Tunis back to Naples when it is run aground by Prospero's storm. The master appears briefly in I.i.1, 3-4, to give orders to the boatswain during the tempest. This marks his only appearance during the storm, despite Alonso's insistence on speaking to him rather than merely to the boatswain. The master's next and final appearance in the play (this time without dialogue) occurs in V.i, when he and the boatswain are led onstage by Ariel. The boatswain, rather than the master, describes the remarkable preservation of the ship.

Miranda:

She is the daughter of Prospero, the usurped duke of Milan. Miranda, who is approximately fifteen years old, makes her first appearance in the play at I.ii.1-13, where she vividly reveals to us Prospero's powers as a magician while at the same time showing her compassion and empathy by begging her father to stop the tempest that he has created:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have

Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.

The sky it seems would pour down stinking pitch,

But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek,

Dashes the fire out. O! I have suffered

With those that I saw suffer. A brave vessel

(Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her)

Dash'd all to pieces! O, the cry did knock

Against my very heart.



After reassuring her that all on board the ship are safe, Prospero acquaints his daughter with the story of her past information which he has concealed from her until now, when he deems that both she and circumstances are ready. Miranda's name is derived from the word "admire," or wonder, and in fact, she listens with wonder and rapt attention to her father's description of his former life as duke of Milan and of their arrival on the island, calling it a tale which "would cure deafness" (I.ii.106). . At the close of the play, Prospero embraces Gonzalo as a 'noble friend, / . . . whose honor cannot / Be measur'd or confin'd' (V.i. 120-22)."

Miranda's capacity for wonder is a result of her innocence. She has lived on the island for twelve years with no one else around her but Prospero, the spirit Ariel, and Caliban (who tried to rape her, and who is regarded by her as more of a beast than a man). All that she remembers of her former life are the women who tended her (I.ii.47), and in keeping with the fanciful atmosphere of the play, this memory comes to her "rather like a dream than an assurance" (I.ii.45).

Prospero has been his daughter's only teacher. Remarking that her education with him has been more thorough and profitable than that of other girls who "have more time / For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful" (I.ii. 172-74), he prepares her for her introduction to the world, explaining to her that among the people who have washed ashore are his enemies, Alonso and Antonio.

Nothing, however, prepares Miranda for her first view of Alonso's son, Ferdinand. She shows her inexperience by mistaking him for a spirit, and in response to her father's reassurance that he is a man, she remarks: "I might call him / A thing divine, for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble" (I.ii.418-20). She promptly falls in love with Ferdinand, despite her father's pretended disapproval. When Prospero tests Ferdinand's affections by calling him a spy and sentencing him to servitude, Miranda rushes to the youth's defense, asserting that "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple" (I.ii.458).

Miranda's next appearance is in III.i, where she expresses her compassion for Ferdinand as he wearily collects wood for her father, and where the two of them vow to marry each other. Prospero drops his pretense of disapproval in IV.i, honoring the couple with a magical betrothal masque. In keeping with his role as Miranda's teacher, Prospero has the masquers remind the inexperienced Miranda about the importance of prenuptial chastity (IV.i.91-101). Miranda appears once more in V.i. where she is presented for the first time to her future father-in-law, the newly repentant Alonso. Her reaction to Alonso and his courtiers again demonstrates her capacity for innocent wonder when she exclaims, in an often-quoted passage, "How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people in't!" (V.i. 182-84).

Critics have remarked that since Miranda and Ferdinand were not involved in their fathers' conflict, their engagement represents a better future for Prospero and Alonso by marking an end to the discord between them.



Nymphs:

They are characters in the betrothal masque created by Prospero to honor and educate the newly engaged Miranda and Ferdinand; the masque is performed by Ariel along with a group of "meaner," or lesser, spirits (IV.i.35-138). These water nymphs, or "Naiades, of the windring brooks" are summoned by Juno and Ceres via Iris to "celebrate / A contract of true love" by dancing with the reapers (IV.i.128, 132-33). Appropriate to the theme of the betrothal masque, the nymphs are "temperate," or chaste (IV.i.132). Their dance with the reapers is abruptly broken off and the masque ended when Prospero suddenly remembers that he must thwart Caliban's "foul conspiracy" against him (IV.i. 139- 40).

Prospero:

He is the usurped duke of Milan and the father of Miranda, as well as a powerful magician. Prospero is responsible for the tempest which casts Alonso and his courtiers upon the island where he and his daughter live. Faced with his daughter's distress at the storm and the foundering ship, Prospero concedes that he has caused the tempest, but assures her that no harm has come to any of the passengers. Declaring that "I have done nothing, but in care of thee" (I.ii.16), he doffs his magic robes and tells Miranda the story of their past. Twelve years ago, he explains, he was not merely the "master of a full poor cell," but the rightful duke of Milan and therefore a "prince of power" (I.ii.20, 55). As duke, he was more interested in his books and "secret studies" than in ruling his city-state, so he unwisely entrusted the running of his government to his brother, Antonio (I.ii.74-77). Unfortunately, this newly received power "awake'd an evil nature " in Antonio, who conspired with King Alonso of Naples, to unseat Prospero and take his title (I.ii.93). The duke, however, was so popular with his people that Antonio and Alonso didn't dare to assassinate him; instead they cast him adrift on the ocean with his infant daughter, eventually to land on the island.

Prospero concludes his narrative by observing that his luck has since changed for the better: his enemies Alonso and Antonio were aboard the ship caught in the tempest, and they are now on the island—at the mercy of the duke whom they usurped.

During the three to four hours following the storm, Prospero controls the action of the play and is thus the only character, apart from Ariel, who is aware of all that occurs. He involves himself directly in the courtship between Ferdinand and Miranda, first enslaving Ferdinand in order to test his constancy and afterward lecturing them both on the virtue of chastity, reinforcing his lesson with the betrothal masque (I.ii.451-53; IV.i.35-138). For the most part, however, Prospero remains aloof from those he is punishing. He relies on Ariel to awaken Gonzalo in time to prevent Antonio and Sebastian from murdering Alonso (II.i.297-305). Likewise, it is Ariel and not Prospero who appears directly before Antonio, Sebastian, and Alonso to whisk away the false banquet, condemn the three of them as "men of sin," and punish them temporarily with insanity (III.iii.53-58). It is also Ariel rather than Prospero who participates most actively in the punishment of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban, luring them with music into the "filthy-mantled pool,"



tempting them with "glistening apparel," and, at Prospero's command, sending goblins to plague them with cramps and pinches (IV.i.182, 193, 258-60).

At the close of the play Prospero confronts all of his enemies directly and rebukes them for their ill-treatment of him and his daughter. At the same time, he introduces the theme of reconciliation, making peace with Alonso through the marriage of their children, Miranda and Ferdinand, and even forgiving his treacherous brother, Antonio (V.i.185-200, 75-79).

Prospero has been described as godlike in his detachment, doling out punishment and regulating the other characters' perceptions of reality. He has also been compared to Christ for his redemption of the sinful Alonso and his followers. Alternatively, Prospero has been called domineering and exploitative for the manner in which he manipulates his own daughter and Ferdinand. Further, he has been condemned as cruel with regard to his harsh rejection of Ariel's impatience for free dom ("If thou more murmur'st," he warns the airy spirit in I.ii.294-96, "I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty'entrails till / Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters"). It has also been argued that his takeover of the island and his enslavement of Caliban smack of colonialism. According to these viewpoints, Prospero is as much in need of selfknowledge and redemption as are his enemies, and while he starts out patriarchal, colonial, and vengeful in his attitude, by the close of the play he has recognized his limitations and has also learned forgiveness. What's more, it has been suggested that Prospero must learn to control his anger with reason, and to temper his sometimes arcane studies with the practical art of government before he is ready to return to Milan as duke, and that once he accomplishes this, he resembles the ideal Renaissance Man.

Some critics have asserted that Prospero—who manipulates scenes and events in the play, stages masques, and directs the actions of other characters—represents Shakespeare's craft as playwright. Noting that *The Tempest* is likely to have been the last play which Shakespeare wrote completely on his own, these critics argue further that the play serves in part as Shakespeare's farewell to the theater, particularly when toward the end of the play, Prospero reviews his career as magician and declares his intention to retire: "I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fadoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book" (V.i.54-57). These critics also refer to the elegiac tone of some of Prospero's lines—in particular, his famous observation to Miranda and Ferdinand that "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep" (IV.i.156- 58).

Reapers:

They are characters in the betrothal masque created by Prospero to honor and educate the newly engaged Miranda and Ferdinand; the masque is performed by Ariel along with a group of "meaner," or lesser, spirits (IV.i.35-138). Iris summons the reapers to join the nymphs in celebrating Miranda and Ferdinand's "contract of true love" (IV.i.133). Their dance with the nymphs is abruptly broken off and the masque ended when Prospero



suddenly remembers that he must thwart Caliban's "foul conspiracy" against him (IV.i. 139-40).

Sebastian:

He is the traitorous brother of King Alonso of Naples. Sebastian reveals his villainous temperament as early as I.i.40-41, when he calls the boatswain "a bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog." Once ashore in II.i, he joins Antonio in making sarcastic remarks against Gonzalo each time the old counselor tries to cheer up the despairing Alonso. In II.i. 124-36, Sebastian blames his brother for the shipwreck and for the apparent drowning of Ferdinand, arguing that if Alonso had agreed to let his daughter marry a European rather than the king of Tunis, then the trip to Africa would have been unnecessary and the tempest would have been avoided. In II.i.202-96, Sebastian consents to Antonio's plot to assassinate Alonso; the two men are stopped in their attempt in the nick of time by Ariel and Gonzalo (II.i.297- 307). Along with Alonso and Antonio, Sebastian is driven mad by Ariel for his sins (III.iii.53-60). Prospero forgives Sebastian in V.i, and restores him to health with his brother and Antonio. Later, when Prospero shows the three of them that Ferdinand has survived the tempest and is playing chess with Miranda, the reformed Sebastian describes the event as "A most high miracle!" (V.i.177).

Ship-Master:

See Master

Spirits:

They are the "strange shapes" and "meaner fellows," or less powerful spirits, who help Ariel perform illusions such as the false banquet in III.iii, the betrothal masque in IV.i, and the hounds which hunt Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban in IV.i. Their appearance enhances the magical quality of the play and emphasizes the powers of Prospero, who can summon and dismiss them at will.

Stephano:

He is Alonso's butler and also a drunk. Along with Trinculo and Caliban, Stephano participates in the play's comic subplot. He escapes the tempest-tossed ship and makes it to the island by floating on "a butt of sack [Spanish wine] which the sailors heav'd overboard" (II.ii. 121-22). He first appears in II.ii, where he inadvertently frightens Caliban (who initially thinks that Stephano and Trinculo are a couple of Prospero's spirits sent to punish him), afterward winning Caliban's adoration by plying him with wine. The drunken Caliban vows to worship Stephano, offering to gather wood for the butler and to show him the best food and water supplies on the island "just as he once did for Prospero. In III.ii Stephano enters into a conspiracy with Caliban and Trinculo to



assassinate Prospero and become ruler of the island. Their plot is stymied by Ariel, who uses his music to lure the three drunks into a "filthy-mantled pool" (IV.i. 182), distracts Stephano and Trinculo with fine clothing (IV.i. 194- 254), and finally chases and torments all three of them with spirits shaped like hunting dogs (IV.i.255- 66). Aching with cramps and bruises, Stephano repents of having wanted to be "king o' the isle" (V.i.288-89). Thus the comic subplot in which Stephano participates mirrors the more threatening conspiracy of Sebastian and Antonio against Alonso.

Trinculo:

He is Alonso's jester and a participant with Stephano and Caliban in the play's comic subplot. After the tempest, Trinculo is washed up on the island alone. In II.ii, he runs into Caliban, who has thrown himself on the ground to hide from what he thinks are Prospero's avenging spirits but what is in fact the arrival of Trinculo. Trinculo crawls under Caliban's cloak for shelter against another rainstorm, and shortly afterward Stephano appears, drunkenly mistaking the two of them for a four legged, two-voiced monster. Trinculo takes part in Caliban and Stephano's drunken plot to assassinate Prospero, and like them, he receives a punishment of pinches, cramps, and bruises from Prospero's spirits once the plot is discovered.

When he first finds Caliban, Trinculo observes that this "strange fish" could be worth a lot of money in England, where "they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, [but] they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian" (II.i.27, 31-33). Thus the jester articulates what has been identified as the play's focus on the New World and England's subsequent fascination with any discoveries from the Americas.



Character Studies

Prospero

Prospero is the central force behind the entire action of *The Tempest*, and remains the only character (except for his servant, Ariel) who is aware of everything that takes place over the course of the play. Prospero first appears in Act I, scene ii, in the role of father and educator to his daughter, Miranda, at which time he relates the tale of his lost dukedom and his lust for revenge. Yet he does not reveal his plan to Miranda; instead, he sends her to sleep (to spare her innocence) before conversing with Ariel about what should be done with the victims of the recent shipwreck. His tone changes somewhat when he speaks to Ariel, as he uses coercion and threats to assure that his bidding is done. Likewise, he treats the slave, Caliban, with a heavy hand; while he once had hopes of educating the creature, he appears to have long since given up in that endeavor. He remains Machiavellian in his behavior even after Miranda awakes and beholds Ferdinand. Feigning skepticism, he reveals in an aside his pleasure that the two have met and fallen in love.

In the first scene of Act III, Prospero appears to soften slightly as he witnesses the growing love of Miranda and Ferdinand. Still, he has more important business that requires his attention and he achieves it through Ariel, who carries out his whims in punishing Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, and later Caliban and his companions. Here Prospero uses his skill in magic to achieve his ends. He instructs Ariel to create the masques—a mock banquet for the king, with illusory delights, and a betrothal masque for Ferdinand and Miranda—while he stands back from the action.

By the opening of Act V, Prospero has for the most part achieved his goals. He speaks with confidence, "Now does my project gather to a head / My charms crack not; my spirits obey." With the conspirators brought before him, Prospero takes his pleasure in reprimanding them and in demonstrating his victory. But first he decides to abjure his magical powers, "I'll break my staff / Bury it certain fadoms in the earth, / and deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book." He no longer needs the assistance of magical powers and will return to oversee his dukedom in Milan. Ariel can be set free and Caliban can once again be sole ruler of the island.

While his initial motivation is highly charged by a desire for revenge, the final note of Prospero's character is one of mercy and forgiveness. Generally he is perceived as wise, benevolent, and just. His role in the play as a magician and an artificer of the plot give him an almost god-like quality, since he controls the other characters' perceptions of reality and metes out punishment and reward as he sees fit. Likewise, Prospero plays the role of ruler in the microcosmic society on the island. His word becomes law, though many seek to depose him. Still, he appears fair in his dealings with others, expresses his fatherly love for Miranda, and appears more eager to set things right than to harshly discipline those who have wronged him. Additionally, in his final plan, which brings his



daughter and Alonso's son, Ferdinand, together, he demonstrates a movement toward reconciliation rather than revenge.

Ariel

Ariel makes his first appearance midway through Act I, scene ii, as he is called upon by Prospero to do his bidding. Obedient without being sycophantic, Ariel expresses his confidence and pride in his magical skill which has brought King Alonso and his followers to the island. A spirit of the air possessing the ethereal qualities of that element, Ariel desires, above all, his own freedom, which he hopes to bring about by serving his master well. Still, he is anxious to see the day of his release. He asks Prospero after completing a task, "Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains / Let me remember thee what thou hast promis'd, / Which is not yet perform'd me." The promise is that of liberty, which Prospero assures him will soon come to fruition, but quiets the restless spirit by reminding him of his former imprisonment in a "cloven pine" at the hands of the witch Sycorax. Thus admonished, Ariel continues in his chores by enchanting young Ferdinand with his songs, including the lyric beginning "Full fathom five thy father lies," which convinces the prince that his father, King Alonso, was drowned in the tempest. This is, of course, only the first of Ariel's actions used to deceive the newcomers to the island.

Ariel again proves himself an able servant in the opening scene of Act II, when he awakens Gonzalo in time to forestall the conspiracy of Sebastian and Antonio as they plot to murder their king. Likewise, he warns his master of the parallel conspiracy brewing with the drunken Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano in the following act. Act III, scene iii, bears further witness to Ariel's powers of illusion as he helps Prospero create a magical banquet for Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian. Causing the banquet to disappear with a clap of his wings, he rebukes the "three men of sin."

In Act IV, Ariel once again serves his master faithfully by presenting the masque in honor of Miranda and Ferdinand, and later doling out Prospero's punishment to Caliban and his fellow conspirators. The last act of the play finds Ariel once again at Prospero's side. He runs the last of his errands, bringing all of the other characters in turn before the magician, who finally grants him his only request, freedom.

The spirit Ariel is, by most accounts, benevolent like his master. Though an otherworldly creature, he is charged with no religious significance. Neither angel nor demon, he is morally neutral. His only defining characteristic is his elemental quality that predisposes him toward the liberty and freedom of the air. His magical powers also seem to derive from the air and range from a control over that element-including the ability to become invisible and to change his appearance-to the power of enchantment with his mesmerizing voice. Overall, Ariel deals in illusion and, although he can appear menacing, his actions never directly cause any physical harm.



Caliban

While primarily an actor in the comic subplot that mimics the more serious affairs that occur on the island, Caliban is, from a thematic standpoint, one of the most important characters in the play. He is first introduced in the second scene of Act I, in which he appears in all his bitterness as the slave of Prospero, forced to stack his wood. Contrasted to Ariel, who is a being of the sky, Caliban is presented as a vile creature of low cunning, associated with earth. He is bestial in appearance and manner, and forever disobedient and rebellious to his master. Caliban tells Prospero how greatly he regrets having revealed all of the island's secrets, while the magician reproves him for having attempted to rape Miranda. Caliban's response is typical of his amorality, "O ho, O ho! would't had been done! / Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans." Prospero now uses Caliban as a menial slave, though once he had attempted to educate the creature. Caliban's thoughts on this effort at enlightenment are readily seen from his own words, "You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!"

Caliban appears again in Act II, scene ii. He is happened upon by Trinculo, then Stephano and, after some physical comedy and the imbibing of some wine, he declares his eternal allegiance to the latter. While the three fall in together, some distinction can be made between Caliban and the king's jester and butler in terms of language. While Caliban often speaks in verse, Stephano's and Trinculo's discourse is in prose. This fact becomes more readily apparent in the second scene of Act III. While Caliban has since launched a plot to assassinate Prospero, he reveals his lyrical connection to the island and his closeness to its beauty: "Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not. / Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments / Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices, / That, if I then wak'd after long sleep, / Will make me sleep again"

Act IV, scene i, finds Caliban's hoped-for conspiracy (and freedom) put to an end by Prospero and Ariel. While Caliban attempts to keep Trinculo and Stephano in check, they become distracted by the glittering clothes that Ariel has placed before them. Caliban responds to their dalliance, "I will have none on't: we shall lose our time, / And all be turn'd to barnacles, or to apes / With foreheads villainous low." He is right, and the trio of inebriated conspirators is chased from the stage by Ariel's spirits in the form of wild hounds. All three reappear in the only scene of Act V, herded before Prospero by Ariel. Prospero grants Caliban pardon for his thoughts of treachery and the slave laments his failure. Caliban's final words imply that he has learned somewhat of a lesson, but ring with irony considering his past actions, "I'll be wise hereafter, / And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass / Was I, to take this drunkard for a god, / And worship this dull fool!"

Caliban has traditionally been described as amoral, bestial, and recalcitrant, yet has attracted a great deal of attention for his seemingly incongruous knowledge and appreciation of natural beauty. Completely uncivilized, he is said to represent the state of man prior to society. His character comes from reports of wild men in the New World



that Shakespeare would most certainly have heard. As such, he is neither good nor evil because his motivations lie outside the moral codes of the Europeans. In his rebellion he likewise evinces his antipathy for the rules of civilized men, and he longs instead for freedom outside the mores of society and for the peace and beauty of his tropical island.

Miranda

Miranda, like the other major characters in *The Tempest*, first appears in Act I, scene ii, but is involved very little in the action of the play itself. She is approximately fifteen years old at the time the drama unfolds, and has lived on the island for the past twelve years with only her father, Ariel, and Caliban as companions. She asks her father to put an end to the storm that he has called, fearing that someone might be hurt. Prospero assures her that no harm will be done, and then, at her request, tells her the story of his former life as Duke of Milan as well as the tale of how they came to the island. Miranda is intelligent and inquisitive by nature, but until this point was never allowed this knowledge of her past. Instead she was quieted by her father with the words "Stay: not yet." In her reaction to Prospero's story she demonstrates her compassion, innocence, and limitless capacity for awe at the world around her. This is nothing, however, when compared to her response to the appearance of Ferdinand, who is brought before her and her father by Ariel. Her words reveal her inexperience, "What is 't? a spirit? / Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir, / It carries a brave from. But 'tis a spirit." Prospero assures her it is not. She continues, "I might call him / A thing divine; for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble." She instantly falls in love with Alonso's son, who returns these feelings. And, despite Prospero's fatherly jibes at her innocence of worldly things, events unfold exactly as he has planned.

Miranda does not appear again until Act III, in which she and Ferdinand declare their love. Miranda offers to bear some of the logs that Prospero has engaged the youth to stack, but he declines, declaring that he labors willingly for one as beautiful as she. Inexperienced and innocent, Miranda represents boundless love unfettered by self-consciousness or the conventions of society. She agrees to be his wife if he will be her husband, and under the watchful eyes of Prospero the match is nearly complete. Prospero only has to grant his blessing, which he does in Act IV, scene ii, by holding a betrothal masque in honor of their love.

The last glimpse into Miranda's character comes in the final scene of the drama as Prospero reveals her and Ferdinand playing chess to Alonso and the others gathered. The lovers quarrel over the game lightly, but their love is certain. Miranda accuses, "Sweet lord, you play me false." Ferdinand denies this accusation, and she responds, "Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play." Then, upon seeing the courtiers before her, she once again expresses the limitless awe and wonderment that are among her defining qualities, "O wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, / That has such people in 't!" Prospero, in reply, comments with his characteristically disillusioned voice that highlights her unfamiliarity with worldly matters, "'Tis new to thee."

Conclusion

The Tempest, like many of Shakespeare's plays, has continued to elicit a broad range of scholarly interpretations and has eluded any conclusive judgments as to its dominant themes or the nature of its characters. The work is, however, generally regarded as a complex combination of romance, comedy, and tragedy that highlights many of Shakespeare's characteristic concerns with the nature of dramatic art, Christian themes of reconciliation and forgiveness, and the perils of human interaction in society. *The Tempest* is also seen by many as the culmination of the dramatist's later work, and has been compared in terms of its intricacy and depth with Shakespeare's comedy *The Winter's Tale* and his tragedy *King Lear*.

(See also *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vols. 8, 15, and 29)



Themes

Magic

Magic has a strong presence throughout *The Tempest* and pervades nearly every action in the play. While this quality informs the work with a fairy tale atmosphere, it is important to recognize that in Shakespeare's time the topic of magic was treated with more seriousness than in our own. Some Renaissance scholars, such as Henry Cornelius Agrippa (of whose writings Shakespeare may have been cognizant), possessed much expertise in the subject of magic and wrote books describing the different sources of magical power. In simple terms, Shakespeare's audience would have been aware of two types of magic, the white (good) and the black (evil). In this scheme Prospero likely would have been deemed a theurgist, or practitioner of white magic—a force derived from divine sources and dealing in the control of natural elements. This form of magic is said to have affinities with the natural sciences, as in the study of alchemy (the forerunner of modern chemistry). The other form of magic, black magic, is only tangentially related to the action of *The Tempest*. It was supposed to come from demonic sources, such as those that might have been wielded by Caliban's mother, the witch Sycorax.

Prospero and his servant, Ariel, are the two principal workers of magic in *The Tempest*. Both possess powers of illusion and deception. Under Prospero's orders, Ariel creates a powerful tempest at the beginning of the play that appears to destroy Alonso's ship and strand all of its passengers on the island. By the end of the play, however, the Boatswain exclaims that the ship "Is tight and yare bravely rigg'd, as when / We first put out to sea." Likewise, Prospero uses magic to separate and confuse the new inhabitants on the isle and to convince each that the others were surely killed in the storm. Prospero's manipulation of others through magic points to one of the important motifs in the work, the contrast between appearance and reality. Thus, as the illusions are lifted at the end of the play, Shakespeare invokes the theme of disenchantment, and places reality aright. These effects are particularly revealed in the characters of Caliban, who appears to have reached a level of disillusionment by rejecting his previously slavish behavior, and Alonso, in his newfound remorse for his past evil actions toward Prospero. Another significant critical application of this topic is a comparison of Prospero's magical powers to the work of an artist (i. e. Shakespeare) and his manipulation of reality through art. Many biographical explanations of *The Tempest* equate Prospero with Shakespeare and claim that the play represents Shakespeare's farewell to drama. Evidence for such an interpretation relies on the fact that Prospero consistently manipulates scenes and events in the play: he stages masques, orchestrates illusions, directs the actions of his fellows on the island, and finally, in the epilogue to the work, addresses the audience, asking for applause—, "But release me from my bands / With the help of your good hands: / Gentle breath of yours my sails / Must fill, or else my project fails, / Which was to please." Prospero's "project" therefore becomes the same as Shakespeare's, the entertainment (and perhaps instruction) of his



audience. His magical manipulations are thus aligned with Shakespeare's own artistic endeavors in creating the play.

Order and Structure

Critics have over the centuries been very interested in the structure of *The Tempest*, noting that, in a manner quite uncharacteristic of him, Shakespeare closely adhered to the classical concept of the unities of time and space in that play. The action takes place entirely on the tropical island that is home to Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban, and its duration is only a few hours—approximately as long as a theatrical performance of *The Tempest* would take. The only other play in which Shakespeare observed the classical unities rule is the early *Comedy of Errors*, and his reasons for this late departure from his usual practice have remained somewhat mysterious. Various theories have been advanced by critics in this regard: some, for example, contend that Shakespeare wanted to prove to his detractors, like Ben Jonson, that he could indeed write a tightly unified play; others suggest that the play might be a very early and immature work in which Shakespeare conformed to the unities out of inexperience; still others view the play as Shakespeare's farewell to the theater in which he wanted to portray a perfectly ordered, balanced world as a sort of final vision. In this latter biographical interpretation, the dramatist is linked with the character of Prospero, an artificer and magician, through whom Shakespeare comments on his own role as an artist and arranger of reality.

Most scholars, however, have focused on Shakespeare's skillful use of order and structure in *The Tempest* as a means of advancing the themes of reconciliation, restoration of order, and forgiveness in the play. *The Tempest's* strong use of symmetry, contrast, and parallelism in characterization and structure neatly contributes to the idea of order achieved by the end, with characters commenting upon each other (for example, Ariel on Caliban, and Prospero on Gonzalo) and various scenes inviting parallels that ultimately contribute to harmony. Many commentators have also called attention to Shakespeare's handling of time in the play. All scenes are based firmly in the present, with the past referred to only to illuminate the present, and the hoped-for future presented as an offshoot of the present. With so much emphasis on the now, the theme of the need to seize the opportunity to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation while the moment is right is highlighted through Shakespeare's masterful handling of order and structure in the play.

Music and the Masque

The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's most musical plays and is filled with more songs and music than any other of his dramas. Much of this music comes in the form of Ariel's songs, which are scattered throughout the play, but music is also an integral part of the betrothal masque that Prospero throws in celebration of Miranda's and Ferdinand's love. In Shakespeare's time music was commonly associated with celestial harmony, a theory that derives in part from the writings of Aristotle and the ideas of Medieval Christian



commentators on his work. According to this theory, the planets, the moon, the sun, and the stars were said to orbit the earth in perfect crystalline spheres that produced a kind of beautiful music, representing the sanctity of the heavens. This blissful harmony is said to relate to the theme of reconciliation that informs *The Tempest*. While the play opens with its characters in a state of conflict, primarily involving Prospero's desire to revenge the usurpation of his dukedom, the motion of the play is toward reconciliation in the next generation. Prospero's feud with King Alonso is overcome by the love of Miranda and Ferdinand and their political squabbling is ended by the joining of their children in marriage.

Music is further related to the theme of reconciliation in the betrothal masque of Ferdinand and Miranda. While Shakespeare's presentation of this masque in Act IV, scene i, seems a bow to its vogue at the time that *The Tempest* was written, it nevertheless represents several integral thematic aspects of the play. In Shakespeare's time the masque—a stylized production consisting of song, dance, music, and mythology designed as a courtly entertainment—had reached a high point of popularity. This masque in *The Tempest* invokes the mythological figures of Iris, Juno, and Ceres, the last of whom, a classical goddess of fertility, places a blessing on Miranda and Ferdinand. It also invokes Shakespeare's theme of life as an illusion and the transience of worldly things. As the masque ends, Prospero tells Ferdinand, "Yea, all . . . shall dissolve / And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, / Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep."



Modern Connections

The Tempest is filled with music, magic, and super natural spirits, much of which appears during the betrothal masque conjured up by Prospero for Ferdinand and Miranda in IV.i. A masque is an elaborate theatrical production with little or no plot, usually featuring characters from mythology and consisting of music, dance, and splendid costumes. Masques were a popular form of courtly entertainment in Shakespeare's time, particularly during the reign of King James I. At their height, they were showcases for special effects: trapdoors and ropes on pulleys were used to raise and lower actors and props; scenery was painted on panels that would shift to reveal different locations or convey a sense of animation. Mountains were constructed onstage that would open up to reveal caves. Smoke was used to conceal stage machinery, and multicolored lighting was devised for illumination and dramatic effect. Renaissance audiences watching the betrothal masque in *The Tempest* would have been treated to goddesses dressed in gorgeous costumes and Juno "magically" descending in a "car," or chariot. Today, audiences continue to be fascinated with the magic of special effects. It can be argued, for example, that films such as *Total Recall* (1990), *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Twister* (1996), and *Independence Day* (1996) have been more popular for their spectacular illusions and computer imaging than for their storylines.

Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* at a time when Europeans were voyaging to and colonizing the Americas, or the New World. Critics have pointed out that colonial attitudes toward the original inhabitants of the New World were extreme and contradictory. On the one hand, natives were described as pure and noble dwellers in paradise; on the other, they were called vicious savages who needed to be civilized for their own good as well as for the safety of the colonists. It has been suggested that the character of Caliban reveals these distorted views at least in part, and that his presence also demonstrates the Renaissance fascination with the New World inhabitants as novelties or sideshows rather than as people. Trinculo underlines this point on his first encounter with Prospero's slave in II.ii.31-33, when he observes that a "strange beast" like Caliban would be worth a fortune in England, where "they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, [but] they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian." Thus Shakespeare reflects the advent of an issue which continues to be problematical today, as indigenous people work to preserve their heritage and to educate others about their culture. Finally, the fact that Alonso and his courtiers at first believe themselves to be shipwrecked far from home on an uninhabited island results in Gonzalo's cheerful description in II.i.148-57, 160-65 of what, under the circumstances, could be an ideal commonwealth:

I' th' commonwealth I would, by contraries,

Execute all things; for no kind of traffic

Would I admit; no name of magistrate;



Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation, all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty□

All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat of endeavor: treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.

Gonzalo's depiction of a community without commerce, laws, money, work, or literacy sounds extreme to his fellow castaways as well as to modern audiences; all the same, this exercise in reinventing society is relevant today in light of people's discontentment with taxes and "big government," and in the wake of recent experiments in overhauling health care, welfare, and education.

Overviews

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Critical Essay #1

Source: "The *Tempest*: An Interpretation," in *JEGP: Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. LXII, 1963, pp. 501-17.

[In the following essay, Davidson surveys various twentieth-century critical interpretations of *The Tempest*, including biographical theories that view the work as an allegory of Shakespeare's life and as his farewell to the stage; thematic speculations that emphasize the prevalent theme of reconciliation; and social/political criticism such as that of Northrup Frye, who suggests that the drama is about the evolution of a new social order. Davidson goes on to formulate his own interpretation of the play based on its adherence to the Renaissance ideals of political and natural order and its emphasis on the importance of reason in ordering society and restraining human passions.]

I

Twentieth-century critics have left us a great variety of sometimes-conflicting views on the meaning of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. They have for the most part, however, been acute in their observations and have, even in their disagreements, bequeathed us a wealth of penetrating comment and points of view on a labyrinthine piece of dramatic art. Some, more objective than others in their approach, have been disturbed by interpretations which seem to have no basis within the framework of the play itself. E. E. Stoll, for example, [in *PMLA* XLVII (1932)], wearied, it seems, by the insistence that Shakespeare was dramatizing, in a part of *The Tempest* at least, events of his own life, or writing an allegory, contends that the critic should be a "judge, who does not explore his own consciousness, but determines the author's meaning or intention" from what the play actually says.

This discussion will attempt to restate and examine briefly meaning ascribed to *The Tempest* by several of these critics of renown of the present century and to follow with an interpretation of the play based on philosophical and psychological thinking of the Tudor era and justified, I hope, by the work itself.

II

For E. K. Chambers *The Tempest* [in *Shakespeare: A Survey*, n.d.] is a "dream" or "fairy tale," the protagonists of which are "imagined beings, taken partly from folk-belief, and partly from literature, to be the symbols of forces dimly perceived by the poet as ruling that life, which is itself, after all, in another degree, but such stuff as dreams are made on." In his consideration of Prospero's dissolution of the hymeneal revels enacted for Ferdinand and Miranda, he follows Ulrici, Dowden, and others, interpreting the action as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch finds in *The Tempest* a subject which, he remarks, constantly engaged Shakespeare's "mind towards the close of his life: *Reconciliation*, with pardon and atonement for the sins or mistakes of one generation in the young love of the children and in their promise. This is the true theme of *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, successively." Stoll agrees with



Chambers that the play is a fairy tale, a "sort of glorious fairy-tale," he calls it, "precious not. . . because of the structure or situations, but because of the characters, the poetry and the rich and dreamy spirit which for the most part informs it." He is conscious of a "tendency to reverie" in the play, of a "change in his [Shakespeare's] imagery," of outlines that "tend to become vast, vague and wavering, as in a dream," and of some profound thought on "the end, not only of man's work but of Nature's, and of life as a dream, and death as a sleep." He is at total variance with Chambers with reference to any biographical interpretation. Hardin Craig, [in *An Interpretation of Shakespeare*, n.d.] like Stoll, looks at the play objectively but stresses more than do the other critics the fact that it is stage drama. In support of his view he directs attention to some significant facts unmentioned by Stoll: that "Prospero has committed error, has suffered wrongs, has striven against them, even has some struggles, often overlooked, on the island." *The Tempest*, he says, represents "Man moving toward the realization of the greatest Renaissance ideal," having "grown on the one side into a competent man of action, and on the other into a man of self-command." [In *Six Plays of Shakespeare*, n.d.] G. B. Harrison follows the lead of Chambers and Stoll in viewing the play as a fairy tale and that of Quiller-Couch in assigning as theme, "reconciliation; wrongs committed in one generation. . . set right in the happiness of the next." Donald Stauffer [in *Shakespeare's World of Images*, 1949] interprets the play as one of "moral ideas," which "grow from age and experience and self-discipline and resignation, almost from disillusion." Prospero's 'nobler reason' is for him "no scientific rationality, but an ethical control over passion." Northrop Frye rules out allegory and argues [in *The Tempest*, The Pelican Shakespeare, 1949] that *The Tempest* is about a "dissolving society" and a "new kind of social order" that moves "not out of the world, but from an ordinary to a renewed and ennobled vision of nature." Prospero, he explains, "takes the society of Alonso's ship, immerses it in magic, and then sends it back to the world, its original ranks restored, but given a new wisdom. . . ." He touches on the biographical theory and sees possibilities in it without subscribing to it. Frye's is a beautiful piece of exposition, persuasive and charmingly lucid. Mark Van Doren warns the reader [*A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, The Tempest*, The Pocket Library, n.d.] that "*The Tempest* is a composition about which we had better not be too knowing"; that "it seems to order itself in terms of meanings" which are not "self-evident," but which are subject to a variety of interpretations, even contradictory ones, and of which even "the wildest is more or less plausible." He accepts the "reconciliation" theme mentioned by Quiller-Couch and Harrison but associates with it a theme of "separation." He touches upon the biographical theory but lends it no credence.

Any of the preceding views, except perhaps the biographical, may be to an extent justified by the lines of the play. Three, however, those of Frye, Stauffer, and Craig, provide some very pertinent observations not included in the others. Frye almost induces belief in his theme of a new society. He finds arguments for it in the compassion of Prospero, in the reconciliation of implacable enemies through the marriage of their children, and in the fact that most of the characters find themselves, "when no man was his own." Prospero, however, is so much the center of the action from beginning to end, he so dwarfs the other characters, that the social aspect dwelt upon by Frye is but vaguely defined. Stauffer is aware not only of moral ideas in the play, but of moral ideas which are the outgrowth of "age, experience, self-discipline, resignation, almost



disillusion" and which anticipate "*ethical control over passion*" (italics added). Craig particularizes more than does Stauffer the experience, the self-discipline, and their results. For him, as we have noticed, "Prospero has committed error, has suffered wrongs, and has struggled against them, even has some struggles, often overlooked, on the island" and under the discipline imposed by these conflicts, has moved toward "*the realization of the greatest Renaissance ideal*" (italics added).

III

In content as well as in period *The Tempest* is, as Craig implies, Renaissance drama. It reflects such inherited classical theories and faiths and philosophies of sixteenth-century Western Europe as natural differentiation in degree and in duties of rulers and subjects ("specialty of rule" Ulysses called it in *Troilus and Cressida*); zeal for learning; the relative importance of speculative and practical living and a morality and psychology based upon convictions about the rationality, the passionate nature, and the free will of man.

Although Craig does not identify the "error" with which he charges Prospero, there can be hardly a doubt that he has in mind the cause of Prospero's failure as a Duke, a type of error of which the Renaissance took cognizance. As Frye correctly observes, Prospero "appears to have been a remarkably incompetent ruler of Milan." The obsession or passion with which Shakespeare endowed him would, for an Elizabethan, have made him so, for he devoted himself to speculative studies, "neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated / To closeness" (I.11.89-90), and by this immoderate inclination contributed to the defection of his brother, the loss of his dukedom, the exile of himself and Miranda, and the conflict that enmeshed him after he was forced by circumstance to care for himself and his daughter on a practically uninhabited island. "The government," he tells Miranda, while acquainting her with his former situation as Duke,

I cast upon my brother, And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies. . .
I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To closeness and the bettering of my mind. . .
in my false brother
Awaked an evil nature. . .
Me, poor man, my
library
Was dukedom large enough.
(I.ii.75-110)

His error is evident in his words. His lack of any practical interest in the affairs of his people, his passion for a meditative and private life, and his delegating the actual operation of governing to a kinsman, as did Lear (in itself a perversion of nature), would have proved an almost insurmountable barrier for any sixteenth-century European ruler.

Study was, however, though insufficient in itself, an asset for the gentleman of the time, and for princesses as well, as Henry VIII demonstrated, and Prospero, too; for



instruction in the liberal sciences would, says Sir Thomas Elyot, "prepare the mynde and make it apte to receive vertue." But, Elyot goes on to say, the governor should be "neyther by study withdrawen from affaires of the publike weale, nor by any busyness utterly pluckyd from Philosophy and any other noble doctrynes." John Lyly voices a similar thought, pointing out that there is an active life "which is about ciuill function and administration of the common weale," and a speculative, "which is continuall meditation and studie. . . . If this actiue life be without philosphie, it is an idle life, or at the least a life euill imployed which is worse: if the contemplatiue lyfe be seperated from the Actiue, it is unprofitable." Prospero's error helps to explain the presence of Ariel and Caliban in the play and to prepare for the climax.

On the island, to which Providence has guided him, Prospero, the scholar, dedicated to closeness, is forced to employ that function of the rational soul which, to this time, he has neglected-the active. Through the kindness of Gonzalo, he still has his books and he still uses them, but he must divide his time now between speculative and practical concerns. He discovers two inhabitants on the island, Ariel, whom he releases from imprisonment, a delicate spirit, brave, adaptable to a variety of visible forms as well as to invisibility, freedom-loving, accommodated to any of the four elements, and Caliban, a creature of earth, offspring of a witch and the devil, whom he attempts to instruct in the manners of human life. The former, Prospero detains as servant in spite of protest; the latter, subsequent to his kind treatment and its ingratitude, he shuts in a cavern and assigns menial tasks-a rebellious slave. Neither of these beings is human. Ariel, who, it must be remembered, acts only on Prospero's bidding, can, under his direction, perform rationally (I.ii.207-208) but lacks human affection (V.i.19); Caliban is without reason and acts from instinct. But both act. Chambers speaks of Ariel, as from one point of view, "the agent and minister of an inscrutable Providence," which Ariel demonstrates himself to be (III.iii.60-75), with his adeptness at working with sensory objects-seas, shores, creatures, winds-through which, according to him, Providence operates to maintain order and justice in the world. Stoll treats Ariel and Caliban in considerable detail. Somewhat contemptuous of those critics who have a "taste for an inner meaning, biographical or symbolical," he likens Ariel to Puck "in the enjoyment of his own performances and of his effects on mortals" and speaks of him as "more ethereal. . . than the fairies," representing "a power of nature, like wind or water, *harnessed for a time to man's service* [italics added], and delighting in it, yet ever ready to break loose." Caliban is for Stoll "a mooncalf," "the perfect brute," who "fits perfectly into the dramatic scheme as the creature of earth-both a parallel and a contrast with the spirit of the air. . . ." The two, he significantly remarks, constitute a "state of nature Prospero and Miranda as human figures coming in between." Stoll lays great stress upon his point that these two figures are "not single abstractions personified, but many-sided conceptions, incarnated," "developments out of popular superstitious conceptions, which are concrete," both closely associated with nature. Of their growth in the poet's mind, he explains that there was of course a guiding thread of thought, or a germinal idea-the spirit of the air in the one case, the spawn of the earth in the other-but that worked darkly under cover. Guided by touch: and instinct, the poet, when consciously active at all, was intent upon the life and shape of the imagined creature, not on a meaning within it. (Or rather upon both, for this meaning-this germinal idea is simple and inherent, not arbitrary and external. . . and the creature and its meaning are one.)



One may gladly accept all this and then, making an additional observation, point out a "germinal thread of thought, or germinal idea" in each of these nonhuman creatures that is different in some respects from those that have been suggested and more in keeping with Prospero's necessity, in his isolation, to be practical as well as informed. His volitions, it may be noted, are transformed to deeds by Ariel and Caliban on his requests and demands. The "germinal idea" for each of the two figures seems to have been drawn from the psychology well known to the period.

Briefly, one basic concept in Elizabethan psychology was that man possesses three souls—a vegetative, which he has in common with plants and the lower animals and whose functions are nourishment, growth, and reproduction; a sensible, which he shares with lower animals and whose chief function is, through affections and passions, to stimulate beast or man to activity; and a rational, which is peculiar to man and whose chief functions are to know, to speculate, and to will.

As the sensible soul, seat of the passions, was the one most closely associated with motion, it naturally became the agent of Prospero's activity, and at two levels: the basically physical or vegetal, and the mental and spiritual. Castiglione defines man's position with reference to these levels and points out two types of man's government of the active agents at the two levels, suggesting in terms of body, desire, soul, and reason, a relationship such as in *The Tempest* exists between Prospero and Caliban on the one hand and between Prospero and Ariel on the other, the former that of master and slave, the latter that of prince and subject according to laws.

Significant to any satisfactory interpretation of Caliban perhaps are this basic psychological concept of the souls and their functions; the necessity Prospero is under, after he reaches the island, to act; and his two admissions concerning his relations with Caliban: first, that he and Miranda have subjected themselves in a measure to Caliban, have come to depend upon him for building fires, fetching wood, and performing other menial services that profit them (I.ii.311-13), and second, that he acknowledges "this thing of darkness" his (V.i.275-76). It would seem that Shakespeare, in Prospero's concession of dependence on and ownership of the creature, is suggesting that the "germinal idea" for Caliban is the brute body, responding to sensory and sensual instincts and desires, and operating at the subsistence and reproductive level of life; that, in contrast, the "germinal idea" for Ariel is the spirit of the sensible soul, acting, though dissentingly at times, in the elemental world of nature under the instruction of a rational soul to the attainment of personal and universal justice. In other words, Caliban and Ariel are attributes of Prospero, practical aspects of himself of which he was hardly conscious during his strictly speculative years. Each would be free; that was the rational soul's dilemma. Caliban speaks of a time when he was his "own king" (I.i.342). His attempted rape of Miranda is representative of the flesh's natural procreative urge, an instinct whose lustful, insidious propensities Prospero has not been conscious of in himself until after his banishment and which he finds "abhorrent," "capable of all ill," and amenable to "stripes. . . not kindness." The rational soul's necessitated employment of the vegetative for practical ends has given Prospero a peep at the "unweeded garden / That grows to seed"; at that dark aspect of nature to which the bastard Edmund pledged himself in "Thou, Nature, art my goddess."



With reference to such an interpretation of Caliban and Ariel as I have attempted here, there may be pertinency in Francis Bacon's observation:

For the sensible soul-the soul of brutes-must clearly be regarded as a corporeal substance, attenuated and made invisible by heat; a breath. . . compounded of the natures of flame and air, having the softness of air to receive impressions, and the vigour of fire to propagate its action; . . . clothed with the body, and in perfect animals residing chiefly in the head, running along the nerves, and refreshed and repaired by the spirituous blood of the arteries. . . [T]his soul is in the brutes the principal soul, the body of the brute being its instrument whereas in man it is itself only the instrument of the rational soul, and may be more fitly termed not soul, but spirit.

Professor Stoll, persevering and right as he is against a critic's reading his own impressions into *The Tempest* or any other literary work, does recognize that Shakespeare could "forget himself to the point of . . . entering into the soul of a phenomenon of nature" and giving it reality.

IV

I have observed above that *The Tempest* is Renaissance drama in that it reflects among other characteristics of the time, some of the closely related political, ethical, and psychological views. I have stated one of the basic principles featured in that psychology-old as Plato and new as Spenser-and have tried to show its applicability to an identification of Ariel and Caliban. Another basic belief, likewise significant to an interpretation of the play and incorporated in many of the sixteenth-century works on moral philosophy, is, that for man's attainment of the highest good in life, the *summum bonum*, obedience to natural order is essential. Just as

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place,
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
Office and custom, in all line of order. . .
(*Troilus and Cressida* I.iii.85-88)

so man, for his felicity, must "observe degree, priority, and place" of subject and ruler, of child and parent, of youth and age, of passion and reason.

Perversions of natural order such as Ulysses sets forth in *Troilus and Cressida* (I.iii.101-24) develop into a pattern in *The Tempest*, bringing complications and distress. Twelve years before the opening incident of the action Antonio, brother and subject of Prospero, had, with the aid of Alonso, King of Naples, seized power in the dukedom of Prospero and set him and his baby daughter adrift upon the sea in the rotten carcass of a tub. Prospero speaks of Antonio as an "unnatural" brother. The first incident of the play ties in with this recollected earlier one and reveals the contemptuous behavior, during a shipwreck ("degree being vizarded") of sailors toward a king's councilor and toward the king himself. In rapid succession then come the demands of a servant, Ariel, for his freedom from his master; the defiance of a master by a slave, who claims ownership of



the island on which they live; the plotting of Antonio and King Alonso's brother, Sebastian, to assassinate the king and seize Naples (a duplication in many respects of the conspiracy that unseated Prospero); Miranda's taking issue with her father concerning a lover; and the fomenting of a conspiracy by Caliban and two drunken sailors against Prospero. All these revolts, save that of Ariel, who can act under the direction of reason (I.ii.206-208), originate in uncontrolled passions: ambitious desire, anger, hatred, youthful love, cupidity.

Passions were not looked upon as evil in themselves by Elizabethans, except among the stoics; they were, however, when out of control, considered dangerous to both body and mind. One of man's greatest conflict was, at least in theory, that between his reason and his passions, and this conflict, according to Francis Bacon, became a theme even better adapted to artistic than to philosophical treatment. It is basic to the struggle in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*, where, up to the close of Canto v, Sir Guyon contends against Furor, and, through the remainder of the book, against Acrasia or concupiscible desire. Shakespeare makes the passions an active force in his tragedies, and in *The Tempest* he employs them as chief contender against Prospero.

The lines of *The Tempest* are interlaced with the diction of the contemporary psychology in its treatment of the reason and the passions. There are words, phrases, clauses that speak of the restraint of this enemy: "be patient"; "Be collected"; "music crept by me upon the waters, / Allaying both their fury and my passion"; "The white cold virgin snow upon my heart / Abates the ardor of my liver." Many expressions reflect the effects of the uncontrolled passions: "I'm out of patience"; "being transported / And rapt"; "beating my mind"; "amazement"; "infect his reason"; "a fever of the mad"; "tricks of desperation"; "immitigable rage"; "At the first sight / They have changed eyes"; "My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up"; "madness"; "Their great guilt. . . / Now 'gins to bite the spirits"; "I have made you mad"; "ecstasy"; "anger so distempered"; "vexed"; "my beating mind"; "a madness held me"; "they devour their reason." Other passages indicate a return to a normal state of mind after the working of a passion: "their rising senses / Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle / Their clearer reason"; "Their understanding / Begins to swell, and the approaching tide / Will shortly fill the reasonable shore / That now lies foul and muddy"; "their senses I'll restore."

Even the title of the play is not so much concerned with the sea storm Prospero raises as with the passions he stirs in his guests and in himself, passions that in his twelve years of isolation may have shown calm at the surface but which now, as he faces his foes, mount high again. In the books of philosophy and psychology of the day a not unusual symbol for the passions is a tempest.

Incidents of the play as well as the diction and the title speak of the passions. Prospero lectures Ferdinand on continence in love after the lovers, with his consent, have plighted troth, and predicts dire calamities if his exhortation goes unheeded (IV.i.14-24; 50-54). The scene is echoed in the wedding masque (IV.i.96-97) when Iris speaks of the "vows. . . no bedright shall be paid / Till Hymen's torch be lighted." Both Stoll and Frye are perplexed by Prospero's seemingly unnecessary admonition. Stoll associates it with a "measure of ugliness and horror, cynicism and grossness" to be found in the late



comedies of Shakespeare, and asks, "Why should he [Prospero] warn Ferdinand, about to be left for a moment with Miranda, not to break her virgin-knot, and then, the next moment, harp on the subject again?" Frye attributes Prospero's moments of anger to the "nervous strain of dealing with such characters" as those about him and states that "in his fussing over protecting Miranda from the obviously honorable lover, there is a touch of the busybody." Elizabethan psychology would have supported neither of the critics, as it leaves no doubt about the danger of concupiscible pleasures. When Prospero warns Ferdinand, "Do not give dalliance / Too much the rein" (IV.i.51-52), he is not speaking grossly and is not a busybody.

Passions of grief and remorse are vigorously presented in III.iii of *The Tempest*. Ariel appears to Alonso, Sebastian, and Gonzalo as a harpy, reminds the first three of their sins, informs them that he has made them mad, proclaims himself and his aids ministers of fate, and warns that

The powers, delaying not forgetting, have
Incensed the seas and stones-yea, all the
creatures
Against your peace.
(III.iii.73-75)

Alonso, grieving the disappearance of his son, whom he has given up for dead (III.iii.7-10), imagines that he hears the billows, the winds, the thunder accusing him of the evil he has done Prospero (III.iii.95-102) and reminding him that because of his misdeeds he now suffers the loss of his son. Sebastian and Antonio are in a frenzy. Gonzalo, seeing that "All three of them are desperate," requests that someone with suppler joints than his, "follow them swiftly, / And hinder them from what this ecstasy / May now provoke them to" (III.iii.107-109). Shakespeare had used the passions of grief and anger very effectively as a cause of Lear's madness and, in *The Tempest*, shortly before Gonzalo beseeches someone to follow the desperate trio, has Prospero, a ware of what has occurred, reflect:

And these mine enemies are all knit up
In their distractions.
(III.iii.89-90)

V

Prospero, as has been noted, while informing Miranda of his past, assumed some of the blame for his disaster, attributing it in part to his immoderate zeal for speculative learning to the neglect of his active duties as a ruler. Linked with his intemperate behavior was a self-pride, which characterizes him through most of the play: "Prospero the prime Duke," he boasts to his daughter, "being so reputed / In dignity, and for the liberal arts / Without a parallel" (I.ii.72-74). His sensitivity displays itself in his susceptibility to feelings of resentment, anger, and revenge. In the wrongs done him by his brother and in the challenges to his authority by Ariel and by Caliban, he is hurt most by their ingratitude; in each instance he lays great stress upon his own kindnesses to



these betrayers of his trust and tenderness, and on each occasion gives way to anger, just as he does when his daughter, attempting to argue a point with him about her lover, draws the quick, sharp rebuke, "my foot, my tutor?" (I.ii.469) and the more vehement reproof, "one more word / Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee" (I.ii.475-76). To Ferdinand he appears "crabbed" and "composed of harshness" (III.I.8-9). When he suddenly remembers that Caliban and the sailors are moving against him, his passion is such as to alarm Ferdinand and Miranda. To the former's observation, "Your father's in some passion / That works him strongly," the latter replies that "till this day" she has not seen him "touched with anger so distempered" (IV.i.143-45). Prospero, noting their concern, confesses vexation, and requests, "Bear with my weakness, my old brain is troubled. / Be not disturbed with my infirmity" (IV.i.159-60). He will take a turn or two, he says, "to still my beating mind."

The revenge motif in *The Tempest* has never had the attention it deserves. Stoll attributes the scenes involving Prospero's anger to "the poverty of the plot," and observes that "No obstacles opposing his omnipotence from without, one must be raised up within." Stoll seems unaware of the tension building up from the *protasis* of the second scene of the play to the moment when this man who, as scholar, had been "transported and rapt in secret studies" must make a momentous decision. "The drama," says Stoll "is indeed seldom performed: there is too little suspense, and the conjuring tricks pall upon us." Craig comes nearer the mark in his assertion quoted above that "Prospero . . . even has some struggles, often over looked, on the island." Miss Campbell takes cognizance of the vengeance motif but only to point out how Shakespeare transformed to comedy an impending tragedy of revenge. Frye seems to be quite conscious of the dark strain in the play but lets it pass with the observation that "Like Hamlet, Prospero delays revenge and sets up a dramatic action to catch the conscience of a king. . . ." It should be noted that the revenge motif carries into the secondary action as Caliban urges Stephano to avenge the wrongs Prospero has done him (III.ii.61-62). Desire for vengeance has apparently lain dormant in Prospero through the years of his banishment, and now, with the sudden advent of his foes, the great wrong of twelve years before is stirringly present again, arousing the passions and stimulating the will to action. Tensions begin building in the first act, when Prospero insists that his daughter be alert to the situation they face. "The hour's now come," he says; "The very minute bids thee ope thine ear. / Obey, and be attentive" (I.ii.3638). After outlining for her the significant events of the unfortunate past, he comes again "to the present business / Which now's upon's, without the which this story / Were most impertinent" (I.ii.136-38). He must seize upon the moment or his "fortunes / Will ever after droop" (I.ii.183-84). The suspense intensifies in Act III when Prospero announces concerning his enemies, "They now are in my power," and mounts to a climax at the close of Act IV:

At this hour
Lie at my mercy an mine enemies.
Shortly shan an my labours end. . . .

VI



The Tempest is not mere spectacle or story of a magician's supernatural dominance of men and spirits. Nor does it lack suspense. The conflict that makes drama is present in Prospero, and its resolution comes, not so much of physical, as of moral and mental travail. The two functions of the rational soul, speculative and practical, at last fuse. The former has prepared "the mynde and [made] it apte to receive vertue"; the latter wills and acts virtuously. "Degree" is preserved; reason, the distinctive attribute of man, triumphs over passion. When Ariel, who lacks human sympathy but who recognizes suffering when he sees it, reports the sorrowful plight of Gonzalo and the penitence and grief of Alonso, the "enemy. . . inveterate," Prospero meets the challenge. "Shall not myself," he asks,

One of their kind, that relish an as sharply,
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou
art'
Though with their high wrongs I am struck
to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.
(V.i.22-28)

So the conflict ends. Prospero has achieved virtue, and the virtue seems to be *magnanimity*, "the wonderful effects" of which, "appeare principally in three points," the second of which is "dutie towards enemies, against whom generositie will in no wise suffer a man to practise or consent to any wickednesse. . . ."

A note has sounded throughout the play, however, of a force superior to and within whose compass man's reason and virtue operate. At the end of the first scene, when death seems imminent to members of the court party, Gonzalo exclaims, "The wills above be done!" Near the close of the play he gives credit to the "gods" for having brought him and his party to the island, and with his comment raises the question whether all the events of the past twelve years have not been parts of a Providential plan. Between these two pronouncements Prospero makes acknowledgment to "Providence divine" for having brought him and his daughter safely ashore, Ariel associates the "powers" with the maintenance of justice in the world, and Ferdinand lays claim to Miranda through "immortal Providence." Relative to this "Providence" with its continuity and greatness, man, even with his reason, "is such stuff / As dreams are made on, and [his] little life / Is rounded with a sleep."

Another repetitive note in the play is freedom. The word "liberty" accompanies Ariel's first appearance, and the last command he receives opens the final line of the drama, "Be free." Just before his release, however, Prospero requests he set Caliban and his companions free. Ferdinand can find liberty even in confinement if, from his prison, he may see Miranda daily, and he compares his willingness to be her husband to that of bondage to be free. The freedom of Ariel and Caliban, as we might expect, follows closely Prospero's liberating himself from the passion that has ridden him and his finding his true self in the rule of reason. The relations of the servant and of the slave to



Prospero change with this event; they are no longer in revolt. Caliban's sense of values, for instance, is transformed to such a degree that he can exclaim, "How fine my master is!" and wonder at his own asininity of a moment before in mistaking Stephano for a god. In brief, master, servant, and slave, each finds his freedom in the degree or specialty of rule that nature assigns him.

Frye thinks that Prospero shows little promise of being a better Duke after his return to Milan than he was before leaving it. This view comes perhaps of the statement made by Prospero near the close of the drama, "Every third thought shall be my grave," as if he plans to be again the purely meditative man. The implication of Frye's thinking is that Prospero has learned from his long experience little of lasting worth for a ruler. We must remember, however, that he will reoccupy Milan through conquest; he has conquered himself and his political foes. His prospective mediation is certainly not unusual for his day or for his immediate situation. Having proved the power of reason concerning a passion closely aligned with life, he can now exercise that power to promote serenity of mind in the contemplation of death, a subject which seems to have haunted Elizabethan thought. Frye's prediction is not so well based as Craig's: that Prospero, having achieved virtue and restored himself to power, will, upon his return to Milan, attend to practical affairs of state without abandoning study and meditation; ". . . the Renaissance," he says, "put no premium on ignorance."



Critical Essay #2

The magical atmosphere Shakespeare creates in *The Tempest* is one of the play's defining qualities and, according to critics, this element of magic pervades many of the primary themes in the work. While the topic allows for a wide range of interpretation, it is most often associated with the opposing forces of illusion and reality and the theme of reconciliation. Robert Egan discusses this point by equating Prospero's magic with the artist's molding of reality into something that more closely resembles his moral vision. Thus, Prospero manipulates the natural world as a means to reform, punish, and instruct the other inhabitants of the island, from Caliban to Alonso. Barbara Traister also emphasizes the qualities of the magician as artist, in this case as a director in control of the action. Not only does Prospero manage his fellow players by enchanting them, he also manipulates others through the presentation of scenes and illusions, such as the masques. Here again, he uses magic as a form of moral instruction. Traister also discusses Prospero's final renunciation of magical powers, concluding that, in choosing to abjure sorcery, Prospero decides to again confront a long-neglected worldly reality. In this sense, as many other commentators have observed, *The Tempest* allows the magician/artist to briefly suspend the exigencies of the real world in order to effect a thematic change. Prospero transforms the mood of revenge and conspiracy into one of hope and reconciliation. Thus, as Frances Yates argues, Prospero's magic derives from good and compassionate sources, which, if not divine, are at least benevolent.

Source: "This Rough Magic: Perspectives of Art and Morality in *The Tempest*," in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, No.2, Spring, 1972, pp. 171-82.

*[In the following essay, Egan interprets Prospero's magic in *The Tempest* as an indicator of the play's theme of the possible moral rejuvenation of mankind. Prospero, as an artist/magician and the ultimate ruler of the island, usurps the role of God by forcefully projecting his moral vision on all of the other characters in the play, including the indigenous creatures Ariel and Caliban and the shipwrecked nobles from Italy. According to Egan, this vision lacks the elements of love and forgiveness necessary for it to succeed in a real human society. Prospero's 'rough magic,' based on the desire for vengeance, however, is transformed by the end of the drama into a moral system tempered by charity and in keeping with the Christian belief in a shared love for all humanity.]*

Is the knowing all? To know, and even happily, that we meet unblessed; not in some garden of wax fruit and painted trees, that lie of Eden, but after, after the Fall, after many, many deaths. Is the knowing all? And the wish to kill is never killed, but with some gift of courage one may look into its face when it appears, and with a stroke of love-as to an idiot in the house-forgive it; again and again. . . forever?
Arthur Miller, *After the Fall*

Whether or not *The Tempest* was chronologically the last of Shakespeare's plays is a debatable and ultimately an irrelevant question. The Bard's farewell to the London stage before serenely tottering off to Stratford is a cliché requiring little attention; quite



obviously, it takes the play for something far slighter than it is. Nevertheless, there is an unmistakable sense of finality permeating the work. Themes and their variations from throughout the Shakespeare canon seem to draw together here. The characters include a hero more sinned against than sinning, a pair of young and innocent lovers, a guilt-ridden King, a faithful old Counsellor, a machiavellian usurper, a swaggering braggart, and a fool—all central character types of the tragedies, histories, and comedies, recapitulated and condensed in this most compact and precisely ordered of Shakespeare's plays.

More specifically, *The Tempest* deals centrally with ideas and concepts of art to a far greater extent than any of the plays before it. All its events and circumstances are either the direct result or the consequence of Prospero's "Art". We have seen a poet and painter discourse on their crafts (which are for sale to the highest bidder) in *Timon*, the poet Gower has presented *Pericles*, and the art of Julio Romano has been a significant factor in the denouement of *The Winter's Tale*. But here, for the first and last time, the artist is hero and protagonist, and his principal meditations, decisions, and actions are couched in terms of his art. We may well look, then, for implications of some final statement or pronouncement by Shakespeare upon his own art. First, however, we must examine the art of Prospero in detail, evaluating its meaning through the forms it takes, the intentions on which it is founded, and the ends it accomplishes.

I

The least likely place to begin the investigation of a play is at its end, but the Epilogue of *The Tempest* offers us, through an unusual and unconventional view of the art of the play as a whole, an illuminating insight into the role of art within the play. Nearly all other Shakespearian epilogues declare or assume the termination of the play-world, calling their audiences back to an extra-theatrical norm of reality by requesting applause. This pattern is surprisingly consistent, whether couched in the utilitarian prose of the Dancer in *2 Henry IV* or the finely wrought verse of Puck. The most concise and representative example is the Epilogue of *All's Well That Ends Well*, spoken by the King:

The King's a beggar, now the play is done.
All is well ended if this suit be won,
That you express content; which we will
pay,
With strife to please you, day exceeding day.
Ours be your patience then, and yours our
pans.
Your gentle hands lend us, and take our
hearts.

The first line dominates those that follow; it leaves no doubt that the play-world's standards of identity and reality have come to an end and bear no relevance to the present situation. The speaker is no longer the King but an actor. The play, its events, and its characters are offered simply as "our parts", objects of artifice for the pleasure and approval of the audience.



The Epilogue of *The Tempest*, however, specifically does away with this perspective, purposefully eliminating any barrier between the play-world and the real:

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint: now, 'tis true,
I must be here confin'd by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got,
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell;
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands:
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please.
Now I want Spirits to enforce, Art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be reliev'd by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

The opening three lines lead us to expect a conventional declaration by an actor who is only an actor, the "charms" of his art "o'erthrown". Yet such an expectation is deliberately undercut: it is still Prospero who speaks-from the island, not from the stage-and the play has yet to reach a conclusion. Moreover, its final event, the impending return to Naples, is charged to the members of the audience. It is their "spell" (Epilogue. 8) that holds him confined; their hands must release him and their "gentle breath" (Epilogue. 11) supply the "auspicious gales" which he has promised Alonso (V.i.314). In effect, they are invited to enter the play-world and assume a role, through their applause, as a moving force in its culmination.

This is not simply a metaphoric request for applause; without such participation by the audience, Prospero's "project fails" (Epilogue. 12)-that same project we have watched evolve through the play and "gather to a head" (V.i.1) in the fifth act. An appeal for applause is thus delivered, but it is spoken from within the play; while in previous epilogues the speaker stepped out of his dramatic context to address the audience in its own sphere of reality, Prospero brings the audience into the play. Here and here alone in Shakespeare, the play's art has no terminal boundaries but rather subsumes the "real", extra-theatrical world of its spectators, supplanting their sense of reality with its own.

What is the nature of this art, powerful enough to encompass the play's audience, and what is the "project" in which their participation is ultimately required? We shall return to the full significance of the Epilogue later; but meanwhile, on the most immediate level,



we know Prospero's art to be that of a formidable magician-a demiurge, in effect, since he can control and order all the elements to the extent of raising a storm which splits a vessel and shipwrecks its passengers without "so much perdition as an hair / Betid" (I.ii. 30-31) to them or to the ship itself. Miranda associates his abilities with a "god of power" (10); and indeed, his "so potent Art" (V.i.50) seems almost blasphemously close to godhead when he recalls rifting "Jove's stout oak / With his own bolt" (45-46) and even raising the dead. Yet these are not powers naturally accruing to him; they were gained by years of seclusion and study (which cost him his dukedom), and they are embodied not in Prospero himself but in such objects as his books, his staff, and his magic garment. Without his books, says Caliban, "He's but a sot, as I am" (III.ii.91). Prospero himself perceives this separation of his artistic function from his identity as a man to the extent that he can, in putting off his garment, say, "Lie there, my Art" (I.ii.25) .

A more specific dimension of his art is its consistent preoccupation with mimesis, particularly mimesis of a dramatic kind. Even the storm was a "spectacle" (I.ii.26): it was "Perform'd to point" (194) by Ariel, and all its lightnings and thunderclaps were in fact only semblances, as they did no harm. (One is reminded of W. B. Yeats's ultimate image of art in "Byzantium": "An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.") His subject spirits are never what they seem, but continually assuming roles and guises. Ariel plays a sea nymph and a harpy, and his lesser cohorts appear variously in "urchin-shows" (II.ii.5) as apes, hedgehogs, adders, and hunting dogs. Ariel, in fact, offers Prospero the services of himself and "all his quality" (I.ii.193); we recall that contemporary actors referred to their profession as "the Quality". Prospero's remarks, after the banquet has been removed from before the Court party, might well be those of a director or stage manager congratulating his performers on a job well done:

Bravely the figure of this Harpy has thou
Perform'd, my Ariel; a grace it had
devouring:
Of my instruction hast thou nothing bated,
In what thou hadst to say: so, with good life
And observation strange, my meaner
ministers
Their several kinds have done.
(III.iii.83-88)

Finally, the masque presented in the fourth act is overtly an exercise of dramatic art. It is evident, therefore, that a considerable portion of Prospero's art involves the dramatic medium. We should, however, be careful to avoid any immediate identification of Prospero with Shakespeare, or even with the playwright in general. For Prospero is not a mere representative figure or allegorical cipher; he is a fully rounded character and, potentially, a tragic protagonist. As such, he is representative only in the broad sense that Lear and Hamlet are. To understand his full significance we must focus our attention on the terms of the play itself before inferring any outside implications. Prospero is a magician as well as a dramatist-both are facets of the same "Art"-and a man as well as an artist.



II

What, then, are the ends toward which he employs his art; what, in other words, is the substance of his "project"? We can begin with his relationship to Caliban, who, while the most "monstrous" character of the play, is in effect the lowest common denominator of all its characters-indeed, of all humanity. He is the amoral, appetitive, suffering Self in all of us, ever in search of freedom to satisfy all its hungers-visceral, sexual, and emotional-and ever ready to follow any "god" who promises such freedom. Prospero's general method of dealing with this essence of fallen man is to check his degeneracy with verbal chastisement and physical pain-the "urchin shows" of apes and adders-and to draw him up toward a state of fulfillment and moral regeneration. He teaches him how "To name the bigger light, and how the less" (I.ii.337), and, through Miranda, how to speak. Moreover, besides specifically indicating the path to reformation, he shows him visions of some indistinct, heavenly ideal to spur him on further:

and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and
show riches
Ready to drop upon me.
(III.ii.138-140)

Thus Prospero has employed his art to expose and chastise Caliban's faults, lead him to goodness, and depict images of what he should be. This specifically moral function is the basic pattern of almost all his artistic endeavors. He shipwrecks the Court party with the specific intention of subjecting Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian to an ordeal of self-knowledge and purgation through the performance of his spirits. Ariel confronts them point-blank with their guilts-"You are three men of sin"-and leaves them with only two alternatives for the future: "Ling' ring perdition" or "heart-sorrow/ And a clear life ensuing" (III.iii.53,77,81-82). Ferdinand, too, undergoes a separate, punishing trial to rid him of his own "Caliban" qualities and to purify his love. Again, the ordeal culminates in a mimetic vision of the ideal which Prospero intends for him to assume: the masque of chastity.

Prospero's project, then, is no less than to purge the evil from the inhabitants of his world and restore them to goodness. Thus his relation to the rest of the characters-manipulating their lives, judging their flaws, and setting standards of goodness for them-is, again, close to godhead. Through Ariel he equates himself with the "Destiny, / That hath to instrument this lower world / And what is in't" (II.iii.53-55); and Ferdinand, in the presence of "So rare a wonder'd father and a wise" (IV.i.123), thinks himself in Paradise. Such overt and implied resemblances have led some critics into mistaking Prospero for a figuration of God the Father. But it is precisely this assumption of god-like powers and responsibilities by one who is in no way superhuman that precipitates the central problem of the play. Prospero's artistic powers, being capable of great evil as well as great good, place him in a perilous position. The line between theurgy and necromancy could be thin at times, and the mage could easily cross it unawares. We need only remind ourselves that "*prospero*" is the Italian for "*faustus*". In order to fulfill the responsibilities he has assumed before he can presume to influence others with his art-



it is imperative that Prospero himself have a comprehensive and flawless moral vision of his world. He must perceive not only what is evil in men and what, ideally, they should be, but also what men are, and what relationship he, as a man, bears toward them. Without such a clarity of vision, the exercise of his art may result in corruption for himself and chaos for those around him.

III

Our first insight into the moral vision on which his art is based emerges through his own narration (I.ii) of his first contact with evil in the world. We learn that, in the course of the "secret studies" through which his art was acquired, he "grew stranger" to his dukedom: rejected the everyday realities of statecraft for the ideal realm in his books. Being totally unaware or unsuspecting of the temptations of worldly power, he left the manage of his state to his brother, assuming that, since he reposed in Antonio an absolute love and a "confidence sans bound," his love and confidence would naturally be returned. Instead, however, it "Awak'd an evil nature," the throne was seized, and Prospero was cast away. His reaction to this eruption of evil is marked not simply by bitterness but by a pronounced incredulity "That a brother should / Be so perfidious!" He was, and is still, unable to conceive of the contradiction between what a brother should be and what his brother was. Similarly, he cannot accept the fact that his own officers supported the usurper: that any evil could exist in the world as he knew it without being "new created / . . . or chang'd . . . / Or else new form'd".

But primarily his amazement centers on the fact that his brother should have acted contrary to all logical and ideal norms of brotherhood-that his own kind could return hate where love was owed. The lapse of time has brought him no new understanding of this. He cannot even cope with its memory, and the increasing frustration of his failure to do so emerges in his irrational, peevish demands that his daughter attend him. He ignores Miranda's simple but overwhelming bit of realism:

I should sin
To think but nobly of my grandmother:
Good wombs have born bad sons.

Such an acknowledgement of evil as part of the natural condition of man is unacceptable to Prospero. His years of seclusion in his library have instilled in him a moral perspective rooted not in the real world but in the ideals of his art. Significantly, he still prizes his volumes above his dukedom, and insists on judging the real world by their rigid moral absolutes. If his brother acted contrary to the ideal of a brother, then his brother was not a brother but some alien, inhuman thing of evil, to be dealt with as an enemy. In short, he rejects the sinner with the sin.

The dangerous short-sightedness of this view is self-evident, and it is further revealed in the history of his relationship to Caliban. Initially recognizing Caliban as a human creature, he accepted him totally and afforded him all the "human care" ideally due to a fellow being. He trusted him, like Antonio, sans bound, giving him the run of his cell and the unguarded company of his daughter, without a thought of any evil he might do.



Then, when the inevitable assault (Caliban being Caliban) occurred, he relegated Caliban to the status of an entirely inhuman creature, unable to connect his evil with any species but that of a devil-begotten, "poisonous slave," an "earth," a "filth" who deserved "stripes. . . , not kindness." As he overlooks Miranda's explanation of Antonio's evil-that good wombs have born bad sons-he misses the full implications of his own comparison of Ferdinand to Caliban: that Caliban's evil is an essentially human characteristic. There is a Caliban in the best of men; his presence and even his birthright must be recognized if he is to be effectively dealt with; for if left to run entirely at large he will inevitably perpetrate evil, and if disowned and repressed he will prove a greater threat by rebelling outright.

Of course, Prospero has not, at this point in the play, permanently disowned his affinity with either Antonio or Caliban. His ultimate intention, as his arrangement of the love between Ferdinand and Miranda indicates, is to reunite himself with all his enemies and so restore a harmony and order to his world in which, presumably, Antonio and Caliban will have their places. First, however, that world must be altered by his art to fit the letter of his moral vision. Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio must all either assume a clear life or suffer lingering perdition; there is no middle ground. His faulty moral perception will not permit him to acknowledge as natural and human any being with the least taint of evil; he will accept nothing short of a world where all brothers are entirely trustworthy and all monsters entirely harmless: a prospect similar in scope and impossibility to Gonzalo's island commonwealth (II.i.139-160). But Gonzalo never mistakes his vision for more than a utopian reverie. Prospero, on the other hand, intends to eliminate, by force if necessary, all elements of humanity which will not conform to his vision.

Here, then, is the central and potentially tragic flaw in Prospero's awareness. He has, in a very real sense, confused his role as an artist with that of a god, forgetting his humanity in the process. In presuming to substitute his own sense of morality for cosmic law he has designated to himself a higher order of being and the authority to damn and destroy his fellow men: in effect, he has usurped the divine prerogative of vengeance. Thus his project is threatened with failure on two counts. His artistic ideal of a perfect world, given the nature of post-Lapsarian humanity, can never be realized. Meanwhile he is in constant danger of mistaking his own passionate resentment of the wrongs he has suffered for righteous indignation, thereby perverting his own goodness and wreaking havoc on those over whom he has power. This element of vindictiveness and vengeful passion is never far from him, and it threatens constantly to overwhelm the nobler ends of his project. It accounts for the hint of sadistic relish with which he devises and threatens new forms of punishment for Caliban, and it is even more evident in his reactions to the ordeal of the Court party in the third act. He derives an obvious pleasure from their "distractions" and rejoices not so much that his art has attained its end, in showing them their evil, as simply that they are now in his power. He still refers to them, significantly, as "mine enemies", and clearly has no intention yet of terminating their "fits" (III.iii.88-93).

IV



Ferdinand is the one character whose moral regeneration Prospero undertakes without the danger of giving way to motives of revenge, not only because Ferdinand has never wronged him, but also because he comes closest, with Miranda, to fulfilling Prospero's standard of goodness. Through the innate innocence and nobility of his nature he responds ideally to nurture, and in the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda Prospero sees the first concrete realization of the moral order he intends to impose on his world. He is, of course, overlooking the obvious fact that these are, even within the terms of the play, two remarkably good young people, and their goodness can hardly be established as a norm of humanity in general. Nevertheless he celebrates their union with a masque which, besides depicting the specific ideal of chastity he wishes to impress on them, constitutes an ultimate mimetic image of the world he means to forge through his art. As such, it is worth close consideration.

The playlet centers on Iris, Ceres, and Juno, anthropomorphic embodiments of a nature which substantiates and rewards the human values of Prospero's moral system: theirs is a world from which all that is less than flawless, let alone evil, is rigidly exorcised. But the goddesses are being played by spirits who are, in fact, elemental creatures of nature—the real nature surrounding Prospero—and they are compelled, possibly against their wills, to enact a natural order which is not their own, but Prospero's "pathetic fallacy". Moreover, the chief details in Iris' opening description of the masque's landscape include "cold nymphs", "dismissed" and "lass-lorn" bachelors, vineyards which bear no fruit but are "pole-clipt", and a "sea-marge" that is "sterile and rocky-hard" (IV.I.6070). This is a world not simply ordered and controlled but gelded of all that is spontaneous and primal, leaving only that which is cold, hard, and sterile. The culminating dance of nymphs and reapers brings to mind a similar pastoral vision, the sheep-shearing scene of *The Winter's Tale* (IV.iv.). There, however, we had the earthly, mildly ribald merriment of the Clown and his two girl-friends, along with a dance of satyrs. But none dance in Prospero's pastoral that are not "properly habited" (IV.i.138: stage direction).

Clearly, this vision fragments and distorts the realities of human experience. Venus and Cupid have been denied their rightful place in the pantheon, and the generative, sexual impulse they represent is strictly expelled from the world of the masque. Under such circumstances, the goddesses' invocations of "Earth's increase" and "foison plenty" seem as unlikely as that "Nature should bring forth, / Of its own kind all foison, all abundance" (II.i.158-159) on Gonzalo's island. There is no fertility or natural regeneration where the nymphs are cold and the bachelors lass-lorn. Ceres' "rich leas" are nullified by her pole-clipped vineyard and sterile sea-marge. Like Gonzalo's plantation, the "latter end" of Prospero's commonwealth "forgets the beginning" (II.i.153-154).

The entire masque, then, is overtly artificial and calculatedly unconvincing: a "vanity" of his art in a far more serious sense than he means the term. As such, it points up the basic flaw in his artistic and moral perspectives. His moral system is clearly at odds with human reality, and the artistic embodiment of that system, therefore, has no viable connection with reality. Not that the specific moral ideal set forth in the masque, premarital chastity, is in itself fallacious, but Prospero has set himself a greater goal



than the depiction of an ideal. He means his art to encompass and directly influence reality. In his remarks to Ferdinand and Miranda (IV.i.13-23) he draws no distinction between the order of the masque's world and that of the world outside it. On these terms, as a comprehensive image of the real world, the masque is bound to fail. Since it ignores the realities of post-Lapsarian existence, it is incapable, as art, of comprehending or Coping with the propensity for evil in fallen man. The events of the play rapidly make this as clear to Prospero as it is to us. The wide disparity between the play-world of his art and the real world he inhabits is immediately revealed by an abrupt intrusion of extra-theatrical reality; the morally precise nature of Ceres, Juno, and Iris is belied by the approach of true naturals, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, bent on rape and murder. His art-work cannot co-exist with such reality, but "heavily" vanishes "to a strange, hollow, and confused noise". Patently, his art has failed to come to terms with the nature of things as they are.

Perceiving this, Prospero addresses Ferdinand in what amounts to an epilogue: the "Our revels now are ended" speech. It is unfortunate that this passage, out of its context, has come to be misinterpreted as the central statement of *The Tempest*. In fact, it amounts to a bitter testament of nihilistic despair on Prospero's part, antithetical to the sense of affirmation the play ultimately achieves. It begins, as do the other epilogues in Shakespeare (and as the epilogue at the end of this play does not) by acknowledging the termination of the masque's play-world; it is an "insubstantial pageant" with a "baseless fabric". But Prospero goes on to imply that since his art-work has proved baseless, so any attempt to order reality through art must ultimately fad, since reality itself is only a fading illusion. Thus, while he has recognized the failure of his art, he has not yet discovered the cause of this failure: the flawed moral perspective on which his art is based. His vision is still as disastrously shortsighted as it was in his initial confrontations with Antonio and Caliban. Since reality will not conform to his concept of reality, he assumes that reality is unreal; that all the world and all humanity amount to no more than a flawed Image which will fade into ultimate sleep-ultimate nothingness.

Retaining his serious misconception of himself as god rather than man, he assumes the right to condemn as unregenerate and destroy all that will not fit his moral code:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;
. . . I will plague them all,
Even to roaring.
(IV. i. 188-190, 192-193)

Caliban is not a devil-thoroughly evil and unredeemable-but a type of humanity. Prospero has earlier denied the humanity of the Court party in the same way, calling them "worse than devils" (III.iii.36), and it is no coincidence that Stephano and Trinculo initially revealed their distorted perceptions by mistaking each other for devils (II.ii.90, 99). Prospero is committing the same error in a far graver sense: despairing in the nurture of Caliban, he despairs of the redemption of the low nature in all men; and, turning from despair to rage and vengeance, he resolves to "plague them all", to strike



out at all whose evil qualities have frustrated him. As he summons hounds named "Fury" and "Tyrant" (IV.i.257), reveling in the pain of the clowns and exulting in the fact that "At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies," his spirits become his "goblins," and he himself threatens to become a satanic personification of revenge. Tragic chaos impends.

Disaster is averted, however, by the action of Ariel, who intervenes not as a *deus ex machina* but as an advocate on behalf of Prospero's own "nobler reason" (V. i. 26). The climactic crisis of the play passes in less than fifteen lines, as Prospero undergoes a brief but intensely meaningful psychomachy. Having described the whereabouts and miseries of the Court party (and it was after a similar description of Caliban and his confederates that Prospero called up Fury and Tyrant), Ariel checks the momentum of Prospero's passion by charging him with the central moral obligation he has hitherto ignored in his artistry:

Your charm so strongly works 'em,
That if you now beheld them, your
affections
Would become tender.
PROS. Dost thou think so, spirit?
ARI. Mine would, Sir, were I human.
PROS. And mine shall.
[V.i.17-20]

Good or evil, flawed or perfect, they are human-as he is-and on this basis alone he is bound to commiserate with them, to forgive them, and ultimately to accept them:

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a
feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou
art?
Though with their high wrongs I am struck
to th' quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.
[V.i.21-28]

As an artist, he must limit his ends to the revelation of truth and self-knowledge; as a man, he can presume no further:

they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. . . .



. . . they shall be themselves.
[V.i.28-30, 32]

His moral vision is completed with the discovery and acceptance of this one truth: the overriding necessity for recognition and acceptance of one's own kind-in short, for love. This has been the element missing in his art: the flaw which rendered the masque of the goddesses inadequate. Only through unconditional forgiveness and acceptance of human nature, after all that can be done to reform it, can an art be capable of comprehending and dealing with the realities, good and evil, of the world. Prospero, then, finds himself as an artist as well as a man. What he rejects in the "elves of hills" speech is not his art *in toto*, but his "rough magic": that aspect of his art by which he presumed to rise to a Jove-like stature over other men, refusing to forgive them or accept their kinship as fellow beings until he had made them over in the image of his own faulty moral perspective. In drowning his book he does away not with the essence of his art but with that same volume that he has prized above his dukedom-above the society of his fellows: his blind absorption in the ideal to the exclusion of the real and the human. Far from the end of his artistic powers, this marks the point at which his art truly begins to function effectively.

The ultimate end of his artistic project, the restoration of order and harmony to the real world, starts to materialize as he frees and formally forgives each of his enemies. The simple act of forgiveness might seem too pat a solution of the play's central problem if its difficulty were not made absolutely clear. As Prospero's confrontation with the evil in human nature was first represented by his alienation from his brother, his acceptance of that nature is affirmed in Antonio's pardoning:

Flesh and blood,
You, brother mine, . . .
. . . I do forgive thee,
Unnatural though thou art.
[V.i.74-75,78-79]

The words come haltingly. Prospero must force himself to forgive by sheer strength of will, repeating his pardon twice during the scene as if to convince himself, and emphasizing each time his detestation of the "unnatural" evil he accepts as "flesh and blood". Having done so, however, he can proceed toward the completion of his project by presenting his most successful single art-work: an image of moral perfection that is at once ideal and real. With a gesture of dramatic art, he draws aside the curtain to reveal Ferdinand and Miranda.

Thus order is restored to the world of the play. Prospero regains his dukedom, the reformed Alonso finds his son, and the perpetuation of order is insured by the betrothal of the lovers. But Prospero is now too wise to trust wholly in a "brave new world". He is aware that the preservation of order will continue to require the forgiveness of evil, and he affirms this on a broadly representative scale by reacknowledging his responsibility for, and even kinship with Caliban: "this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine". And even here, at the lowest level of human nature, forgiveness *sparks* hope as Caliban



resolves to "be wise hereafter And seek for grace". Antonio, of course, remains ominously silent, but it is the very presence of his unreformed evil that underlines the triumphant order which has been achieved in its spite. Each other character has found himself through Prospero's art "When no man was his own," and Prospero himself is no exception: his has been the last and greatest self-discovery.

V

The play, as we have seen, does not end here, and Prospero's project is as yet incomplete. The artistic and moral vision of the masque was invalidated by its irrelevance to the outside world, proved by the violent non-correspondence of the three rebels to the three goddesses. By the same token, the ultimate ratification of the vision which Prospero has discovered and Shakespeare developed-for certainly Shakespeare speaks with Prospero at this point-must come from outside the world of *The Tempest*. The art of Shakespeare as well as of Prospero will prove a vanity unless the audience assumes its validity by participating in a cognate act of the love and recognition which are the essence of that art. In the Epilogue, then, Prospero brings the spectators into the play in order to place them in circumstances exactly parallel to the moment of his own climactic decision, charging them with the same responsibility. As Ariel reminded him that the courtiers were "Confin'd together" and could not budge "till your release" (V.i.7, 11), so Prospero must be "confin'd" until the spectators "release" him (Epilogue.4,9). As he has "pardon'd the deceiver" (7), they must set him free by their "indulgence" (20).

The Epilogue thus serves as a bridge between play and audience: a transitional link between art and reality. By the use of overtly religious terms such as "prayer", "Mercy", and "indulgence" in the last five lines, Shakespeare links his artistic vision with the orthodox principle of Christian charity. If his audience will make his vision their own-and it is an unprecedented testament of faith in his art that he terms its success dependent on such total acceptance-they will be participating in an act of prayer, which will bring down mercy and redemption on both the prayer and the prayed-for. Thus he endows his play's vision of love with the universal validity associated by his contemporary audience with the theological framework of their cosmos. His art passes beyond the moral spectrum of his play and merges with that of the world surrounding it, as Prospero, Shakespeare, and the audience unite in a recognition, acceptance, and celebration of their shared humanity.



Critical Essay #3

Source: "Magic in the Last Plays: *The Tempest*," in *Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, pp. 85-106.

[In the following excerpt from a lecture originally delivered in 1974, Yates examines the nature of Prospero's magic in *The Tempest* by relating it to the writings of Henry Cornelius Agrippa, a Renaissance expert on the subject. She calls the magic "intellectual and virtuous," the kind that Agrippa described in his *De occulta philosophia*. According to Yates, Prospero's intentions with his magical powers are good and aimed at the moral reform of the individual in society. In addition, she hints at Prospero's role in foreshadowing the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century by noting his similarities to John Dee, an eminent mathematician and a contemporary of Shakespeare.]

To treat of magic, or the magical atmosphere, in Shakespeare one ought to include all the plays, for such an atmosphere is certainly present in his earlier periods. In the Last Plays this atmosphere becomes very strong indeed and, moreover, it becomes more clearly associated with the great traditions of Renaissance magic-magic as an intellectual system of the universe, foreshadowing science, magic as a moral and reforming movement, magic as the instrument for uniting opposing religious opinions in a general movement of Hermetic reform. . . .

[*The Tempest* is] the supreme expression of the magical philosophy of the Last Plays. . . .

First, let us consider the textual history of *The Tempest*. Like all Last Plays, except *Pericles* and *Henry VIII*, it seems to have had a first appearance around 1610-11, or at least a play called *The Tempest* was performed at court in 1611. Unlike *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* it was apparently not seen by Simon Forman at about that time, so we do not have his plot summary to compare with the play as we have it. Like *The Winter's Tale*, it was one of the plays by Shakespeare which were performed by the King's Men before Princess Elizabeth and her betrothed in 1612. Like all Last Plays except *Pericles* it was first printed in the First Folio of 1623 where it is the first play in that famous volume.

Thus the history of *The Tempest* follows the familiar pattern and there is room for an earlier version of the play to have been revised to suit performance before Princess Elizabeth and the Palatine. This has in fact been suggested in critical discussions of the play, summed up by Frank Kermode in his introduction to the Arden edition, where it is pointed out that the masque in the play, which is evidently a nuptial masque, was perhaps added to an earlier version to make it suitable for performance before the princely pair. Thus, *The Tempest*, as we have it, would enter that atmosphere of masque and pageantry surrounding the wedding of Princess Elizabeth which is central for the understanding of *Cymbeline* and which Foakes has detected in *Henry VIII*. I would further suggest that the emphasis on chastity before marriage in *The Tempest*,



where it is so marked a feature of Prospero's advice to the young prince, should be compared with the treatment of the same theme in *Philaster*, the play by Beaumont and Fletcher performed before Elizabeth and the Palatine at the same time, in which the overtures made before marriage to his betrothed by the Spanish prince, seem to be a mark of the impurity of a Spanish match. Prospero is perhaps emphasising that his daughter is *not* making a Spanish match.

The themes of *The Tempest* connect with the Last Play themes as a whole. There is a young generation, Ferdinand and Miranda, the very young princely pair, and an older generation, Prospero and his contemporaries, divided by bitter wrongs and quarrels but brought together at the end in the magical atmosphere of reconciliation. *The Tempest* fits very well into our general historical approach to the Last Plays with its argument that these 'reconciliation through a younger generation' themes belong into an actual historical situation in which Prince Henry and his sister were seen as hopeful figures of this kind. Prince Henry being now dead, only a daughter and her lover represent the young generation in *The Tempest*. Miranda has no brother. Nor indeed have Perdita or Marina. Only Imogen has brothers, and *Cymbeline* was not performed after the death of Prince Henry and before Frederick and Elizabeth, as were *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

We have now to think about magic in *The Tempest*.

What kind of magic is it? This is a problem which has been considerably discussed in recent years and I am not bringing forward any very new or startling discovery in observing that Prospero, as a magus, appears to work on the lines indicated in that well-known textbook of Renaissance magic, the *De occulta philosophia* of Henry Cornelius Agrippa. Frank Kermode was a pioneer in pointing to Agrippa as a power behind Prospero's art in his introduction to *The Tempest* in the Arden edition, first published in 1954. Prospero as a magus, says Kermode, exercises a discipline of virtuous knowledge; his art is the achievement of 'an intellect pure and conjoined with the powers of the gods without which [and this is direct quotation by Kermode from Agrippa] we shall never happily ascend to the scrutiny of secret things, and to the power of wonderful workings'. In short, Prospero has learned that 'occult philosophy' which Agrippa taught and knows how to put it into practice. Moreover, like Agrippa, Shakespeare makes very clear in *The Tempest* how utterly different is the high intellectual and virtuous magic of the true magus from low and filthy witchcraft and sorcery. Prospero is poles apart from the witch Sycorax and her evil son. Indeed, Prospero as the good magus has a reforming mission; he clears the world of his island from the evil magic of the witch; he rewards the good characters and punishes the wicked. He is a just judge, or a virtuous and reforming monarch, who uses his magico-scientific powers for good. The triumph of a liberal and Protestant Reformation in *Henry VIII* has its counterpart in *The Tempest* in the triumph of a reforming magus in the dream world of the magical island.

Prospero's magic is then a good magic, a reforming magic. But what exactly is the intellectual structure or system within which his magic works? Here we have to turn to Agrippa's definitions which can be simplified, rather drastically, as follows.



The universe is divided into three worlds: the elemental world of terrestrial nature; the celestial world of the stars; the supercelestial world of the spirits or intelligences or angels. Natural magic operates in the elemental world; celestial magic operates in the world of the stars; and there is a highest, religious, magic which operates in the supercelestial world. The lofty religious magus can conjure spirits or intelligences to his aid. The enemies of this kind of magic called it diabolical conjuring, and indeed the pious believers in it were always aware of the danger of conjuring up evil spirits, or demons, instead of angels. Prospero has the conjuring power, and he performs his operations through the spirit, Ariel, whom he conjures. Of the two branches, Magia and Cabala, set out in Agrippa's handbook of Renaissance magic, Prospero would seem to use mainly the Cabalistic conjuring magic, rather than the healing magic of Cerimon, or the profound natural magic which pervades *The Winter's Tale*.

It is inevitable and unavoidable in thinking of Prospero to bring in the name of John Dee, the great mathematical magus of whom Shakespeare must have known, the teacher of Philip Sidney, and deeply in the confidence of Queen Elizabeth I. In his famous preface to Euclid of 1570, which became the Bible of the rising generations of Elizabethan scientists and mathematicians, Dee sets out, following Agrippa, the theory of the three worlds, emphasising, as does Agrippa, that through all the three worlds there runs, as the connecting link, number. If I may paraphrase what I have myself said elsewhere, Dee was in his own right a brilliant mathematician, and he related his study of number to the three worlds of the Cabalists. In the lower elemental world, he studied number as technology and applied science. In the celestial world his study of number was related to astrology and alchemy. And in the super-celestial world, Dee believed that he had found the secret of conjuring spirits by numerical computations in the tradition of Trithemius and Agrippa. Dee's type of science can be classified as 'Rosicrucian', using this word, as I have suggested that it can be used, to designate a stage in the history of the magi co-scientific tradition which is intermediate between the Renaissance and the seventeenth century.

The commanding figure of Prospero represents precisely that Rosicrucian stage. We see him as a conjuror in the play, but the knowledge of such a Dee-like figure would have included mathematics developing into science, and particularly the science of navigation in which Dee was proficient and in which he instructed the great mariners of the Elizabethan age.

Now, if the first version of *The Tempest* appeared around 1611, the date at which Shakespeare chose to glorify a Dee-like magus is significant. For Dee had fallen into deep disfavour after his return from his mysterious continental mission in 1589, and he was completely cast off by James I after his accession. When the old Elizabethan magus appealed to James in 1604 for help in clearing his reputation from charges of conjuring devils, James would have nothing to do with him, in spite of his earnest protests that his art and science were good and virtuous and that he had no commerce with evil spirits. The old man to whose scientific learning the Elizabethan age had been so deeply indebted was disgraced in the reign of James and died in great poverty in 1608.



Seen in the context of these events, Shakespeare's presentation of a scientific magus in an extremely favourable light takes on a new significance. Prospero is far from diabolic; on the contrary, he is the virtuous opponent of evil sorcery, the noble and benevolent ruler who uses his magi co-scientific knowledge for good ends. Prospero might be a vindication of Dee, a reply to the censure of James. And the contemporary scientists and mathematicians who were working in the Dee tradition were to be found, not in the circle of the King, but in that of his son, Prince Henry. The Prince was eager to build up a navy, as Dee used to advise Elizabeth to do, and he patronised and encouraged scientific experts like William Petty who built for him his great ship, the *Royal Prince*. Mathematicians and navigators of the Elizabethan age, Walter Raleigh and his friend Thomas Hariot, were imprisoned by James in the Tower, but were encouraged by Prince Henry. Thus here the line of inquiry which seeks to establish that Shakespeare's Last Plays belong in the atmosphere and aspirations surrounding the younger royal generation makes contact with this other line of inquiry into the magico-philosophical influences in the plays. Prospero, the magus as scientist, would belong with Prince Henry and his interests, and not with those of his unscientific father with his superstitious dread of magic.

Thus I am suggesting new contexts in which to see *The Tempest*. This play is not an isolated phenomenon but one of the Last Plays, and other Last Plays breathe the atmosphere of learned magic, the medical magic of Cerimon in *Pericles*, the deep Hermetic magic of *The Winter's Tale*, the incantatory singing of *Henry VIII*. All such magics connect with one another and belong to the late period of Renaissance magic. *The Tempest* would be one of the supreme expressions of that vitally important phase in the history of the European mind, the phase which borders on, and presages, the so-called scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. Prospero is so clearly the magus as Scientist, able to operate scientifically within his world view, which includes areas of operation not recognised by science proper.

There is also, and this is very important, the element of moral reform in Prospero's outlook and aims, the element of Utopia, an essential feature of the scientific outlook of the Rosicrucian period, in which it was seen to be necessary to situate the developing magico-scientific knowledge within a reformed society, a society broadened by new moral insights to accept the broadening stream of knowledge. Prospero as scientist is also Prospero the moral reformer, bent on freeing the world of his island from evil influences.

Finally, we should see *The Tempest* in the context of *Henry VIII*, in which the reforming conciliatory themes of the Last Plays are presented through real historical personages. Henry VIII is seen as the monarch of the Tudor imperial reform, casting out vices in the person of Wolsey, and presenting a Reformation, originally Protestant, but in which the old hardness and intolerance has been done away in an atmosphere of love and reconciliation.

From these various lines of approach, *The Tempest* would now appear as the cornerstone of the total edifice of the Last Plays, the play presenting a philosophy which connects with all their themes and reflects a movement, or a phase, which can now be



more or less identified among the currents of European intellectual and religious history. It is the Rosicrucian movement, which was to be given open expression in the manifestos published in Germany in 1614 and 1615.

In my book, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, I have argued that this movement was connected with the currents stirring around the Elector Palatine and his wife. These were ostensibly Protestant, as befitted the head of the Union of German Protestant Princes, but drew on Paracelsist alchemy and other Hermetic influences for spiritual nourishment. The manifestos envisage a general moral and religious reform of the whole world. These strange hopes were to be extinguished in utter disaster, with the brief reign in Prague in 1619-20 of the 'Winter King and Queen' and the subsequent total defeat and exile of the unfortunate pair. Thus ended in ignominy and confusion the movement which had been building up around them in London, a movement very much weakened by the death of Prince Henry. Not only their own party in England but many in Europe had fixed their hopes on these two. And it would be wrong to say that all came to an end with the disaster, for the movement lived on, taking other forms, and leading eventually to important developments.

Shakespeare has often been derided for his absurd geographical error in giving a 'sea coast' to Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*, but may his object have been to provide a setting for the frightful storm in which the infant Princess arrives in Bohemia? Shakespeare took the name 'Bohemia' from Greene's novel, *Pandosto*, the plot of which he was adapting. Yet there is something strangely prophetic in his choice of a story about Bohemia, foreshadowing the terrible tempest of the Thirty Years' War which would break out in Bohemia following the shipwreck of the Winter King and Queen. Is it possible that Shakespeare may have known more of what was going on in Bohemia than do critics of his geographical ignorance? Might he, for example, have had some contact with Michael Maier, Paracelsist doctor and Rosicrucian, who was moving between Prague and London in the early years of the century, linking movements in England with movements in Germany and Bohemia?

A main feature of the 'new approach' to Shakespeare's Last Plays presented here has been the argument that the hopes of a younger generation which the plays seem to express may allude to hopes in relation to a real historical generation, Prince Henry, and, after his death, Princess Elizabeth and her husband. Taken at its face value, this argument would amount to yet another 'topical allusion' detected in the plays, a type of investigation which has been very much used and abused. Even if the topical allusion to the younger royal generation is fairly substantially based, what does it amount to in relation to Shakespeare's genius, to the understanding of his mind and art? Topical allusion hunting for its own sake is but an empty sport unless it can open doors to new approaches to matters more profound.

And it is precisely this, or so I believe, that this topical allusion can do. The other new approach attempted has been to the thought of the Last Plays, to the philosophy of nature with religious and reforming undercurrents, with association with scientific movements of the kind propagated by John Dee, with spiritual and mental enlightenment. And it is just such a movement as this which seems to have been



associated in German circles with the Elector Palatine and with his disastrous Bohemian enterprise.

The German Rosicrucian movement was certainly not newly invented in connection with the Elector Palatine and his wife. It was something already in existence with which they, or the movement associated with them, became somehow involved. There are various influences from England on the movement which I have tried to bring out in my book, influences from Philip Sidney's mission to Germany and to the imperial court, influences from visits of the Knights of the Garter, influences from John Dee's sojourn in Bohemia. The second Rosicrucian manifesto of 1615 has included in it a discourse on secret philosophy which is based on Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica*. The works of the Englishman, Robert Fludd, a leading exponent of Rosicrucian philosophy, were published at Oppenheim, a town in the territory of the Elector Palatine. And, most curious of all from the theatrical point of view, there appears to have been an influence of English actors, or of plays acted by travelling English actors in Germany, on the ideas and modes of expression of the Rosicrucian publications.

The man known to be behind the movement, Johann Valentin Andreae, states in his autobiography that in his youth, around 1604, he wrote plays in imitation of English comedians, and at about the same time he wrote the first version of his strange work, *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*, first published, in German, in 1616. This is a mystical romance reflecting ceremonial of orders of chivalry in a setting which I believe I have identified as the castle and gardens of the Elector Palatine at Heidelberg, reflecting his court there and the presence in it of his English wife, the Princess Elizabeth. Andreae's style in all his writings is dramatic, infused with theatrical influences. The story of Christian Rosencreutz and his Order, told in the manifestos (which were not actually written by Andreae though inspired by him), is said to be a fiction or a play. And the mysterious doings in the castle grounds in *The Chemical Wedding* include a play, the plot of which is given as follows (I quote from the resume of it in my book):

On the sea-shore, an old king found an infant in a chest washed up by the waves: an accompanying letter explained that the King of the Moors had seized the child's country. In the following acts, The Moor appeared and captured the infant, now grown into a young woman. She was rescued by the old king's son and betrothed to him, but fell again into the Moor's power. She was finally rescued again but a very wicked priest had to be got out of the way. . . . When his power was broken the wedding could take place. Bride and bridegroom appeared in great splendour and all joined in a Song of Love:

This time full of love
Does our joy much approve. . . .

The plot reminds one of the plots of Last Plays, with shipwrecked infants who grow up to have adventures in which evil influences are surmounted, stories reflecting a passage of time from an older generation to a younger, and ending in general love and reconciliation. And, if I am right in my suggestions, this play described in *The Chemical Wedding* is supposed to be enacted in a setting reflecting the court of the Elector



Palatine and the Princess Elizabeth at Heidelberg. It is as though Shakespearean dramatic influences in London at the time of their wedding were being reflected back to them through a mystical haze. The extremely simple plot of the comedy described in *The Chemical Wedding* is punctuated by Biblical allusions, as though the fiction had some reference to the religious problems of the day.

This is only one example of the curious reflections of plays, perhaps of plays staged by English players in Germany, in the German Rosicrucian literature. Was there some connection between players and Rosicrucian ideas? Ought we to look for light on Shakespeare in these directions? Did the Last Plays deliver a message the meaning of which we have lost? Are the connections between the Last Plays and the new generation of Prince Henry and his sister much more than topical allusions in the ordinary sense? Might they introduce us to ways of unravelling Shakespeare's position in the religious, intellectual, magical, political, theatrical movements of his time? Or, more than that, might they help us to penetrate to Shakespeare's inner religious experiences?

A French writer who has made a study of the Rosicrucian literature in relation to Shakespeare thinks that *The Chemical Wedding* reflects rituals of initiation through enactment of the mystery of death. He believes that some of Shakespeare's plays—he mentions particularly Imogen's death-like sleep and resurrection in *Cymbeline*—reflect such experiences, conveyed through esoteric allusion in the imagery. He sees influences of 'spiritual alchemy' in the imagery of *Cymbeline*. The Rosicrucian method of using the play or the fiction as the vehicle through which to indicate an esoteric meaning would also be Shakespeare's method. I mention Arnold's book here not because I think it reliable as a whole, or in detail (it is not), but because the general drift of his comparative study of Rosicrucian literature and of Shakespeare may not be altogether wide of the mark.

Shakespeare died in 1616 and so did not live to hear the news of the events of 1620, the defeat at the Battle of the White Mountain, the flight of the Winter King and Queen of Bohemia, the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War. Perhaps that was the terrible storm which he prophetically dreaded.



Critical Essay #4

Perhaps the most important critical observation in regard to *The Tempest's* structure is that of its adherence to the classical principles of unity. The entire movement of the play is supposed to occur over the course of just a few hours-probably not much longer than the drama would actually take to perform on or near the small tropical island that has been Prospero's and Miranda's home for the past twelve years. In 1710 Charles Gildon was one of the first to comment on this (for Shakespeare) unusual observance of the unities of action and time. Critics have since noted that this was the dramatist's first and only use of strict adherence to the unities; yet why he choose to form his final play in this manner remains somewhat of a mystery. Ernest Gohn argues that Shakespeare's adoption of these principles is reflected in the theme of urgency that sets the tone for the play. In contrast, Rose Zimbardo concerns herself with the struggle between order and chaos in the work. Her interpretation privileges Prospero as an artist who seeks to impose form on the universe through his art. Less concerned with unity than with the overall structure of the play, Burton Weber sees in the work a strong symmetry in which one character or set of characters balances and comments upon the other. The result is the creation of a microcosm of society within the bounds of a piece of art, which allows Shakespeare to explore the interplay of good and evil and the equilibrium that modern civilization achieves between the two.

Source: "*The Tempest: Theme and Structure*," in *English Studies*, Vol. 45, No- 2, pp. 116-25.

[In the following essay, Gohn discusses Shakespeare's use-hitherto unprecedented in his plays-of the classical Unities of time and place in The Tempest. He argues that the work's structural Unity, with action occurring as it does over the course of approximately three hours, is reflected in a thematic emphasis on the present. Gohn's analysis continues by relating this dramatic sense of urgency and preoccupation with the "now" in the play to its themes of hoped-for redemption and reconciliation.]

Critics have spent so much time on character-analysis-and upon possible biographical, allegorical, and symbolic implications of *The Tempest-that* they have overlooked the great emphasis put on the sense of the present in the play. But it is an emphasis which we cannot ignore: such words and phrases as 'now', 'at this moment', 'at this instant' echo and reinforce one another throughout the play. Furthermore, the episodes of the play are usually conceived in a present which is a crucial nexus uniting the past to the future: the past is relevant only as it affects the present, the future only as it grows out of the present. The past is defined as that which occurred years ago in Milan, the future as that which will take place after the characters leave the island.

Shakespeare no sooner finishes his brief opening shipwreck scene than he begins to emphasize the crucial quality of the present. Prospero assures Miranda, who has been moved to pity by the sight of the wreck, that all he has done in raising the storm has been done in care of her, who is ignorant of what she and her father are. But now "'Tis time', says Prospero, 'I should inform thee farther' (I, ii, 22-23). Prospero's care for his



daughter, which has led him to raise the storm, is, then, intimately related to the time at which Miranda must learn of her past: he repeats, 'For thou must now know farther' (I, ii, 33). Prospero has at times in the past started to tell his history to her, but in the past he has always stopped, 'Concluding, "Stay, not yet" , (I, ii, 36). At this moment, however, 'the hour', 'the very minute' (I, ii, 36-37) has come. Miranda must know of her origins before she can take her place in Prospero's present scheme. As he assures her later in the midst of his narrative:

Hear a little further,
And then I'll bring thee to the present
business
Which now's upon's, without the which
this story
Were most impertinent.
(I, ii, 135-38)

To Miranda, the 'present business' which is 'now' upon them must refer to the storm she has just witnessed. To Prospero, also, the shipwreck seems to be the 'present business'; but he evidently has more in mind, for when Miranda asks him his reason for raising the tempest, he replies in most general terms, terms which neither she nor the audience can understand until the play is over:

Know thus far forth.
By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune, Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore. And by my prescience I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop Here cease more
questions.
(I, ii, 177-84)

Prospero's storm is merely the first phase of a larger sense of the moment which he 'now' courts, a sense which includes everything in the play. It is, one supposes, to keep his larger scheme secret that he carefully sends Miranda to sleep before he calls for Ariel: 'I am ready now' (I, ii, 187).

Ariel's interview with Prospero is, of course, mainly further exposition: we learn how Ariel has acted as Prospero's agent in creating the shipwreck and in disposing the various groups about the isle; we also learn of Ariel's imprisonment by Sycorax (the preProspero history of the island). But between these two bits of exposition, we are again recalled to the sense of the present, made vivid by the pressure of time: 'The time 'twixt six and now / Must by us both be spent most precious' (I, ii, 240-41). In this instance, Prospero's 'now' is that moment at least 'two glasses' after noon. But in Ariel's slight attempt at rebellion and in its happy resolution ('That's my noble master! / What shall I do? Say what. What shall I do?'-I, ii, 299-300), we realize that for Ariel, as for Prospero, the 'present business' is 'now' in another sense. Having performed his duties in this scheme of Prospero, he will be free. He had asked for his liberty 'Before the time



be out' (I, ii, 246), but in his glad acceptance of Prospero's promise, we cannot help but think for Ariel the present is the larger action in which he must play his part.

Having been sent off by Prospero's whispered command, Ariel returns, leading Ferdinand onstage. Ferdinand's passion has been allayed by Ariel's song, which, he recognizes, is 'no mortal business' (I, ii, 406). Prospero has thus prepared Ferdinand for the transcendent experience which he is now to have. Ferdinand 'now' (I, ii, 407) hears the music above him, and Prospero immediately directs Miranda to look at what she first thinks is a spirit. That Shakespeare's young lovers love at first sight is certainly no news, but in no other play is the event revealed so dramatically in the present, in a moment so pregnant. Miranda thinks that Ferdinand must be something divine, Ferdinand that Miranda must be a goddess.

They have, as Prospero recognizes, changed eyes 'at first sight' (I, ii, 440), but the intensity of the present is revealed most fully in their mutual wonder. As they recognize their humanity, Miranda reveals that this is the 'first' (I, ii, 445) man that she ever sighed for; Ferdinand ignores Prospero's ungentle tone to propose marriage immediately. It is a 'swift business' (I, ii, 450) which causes Prospero to impose the test on Ferdinand. As the scene ends, Miranda comforts Ferdinand by assuring him that her father's nature is gentler than it has just appeared: 'This is unwonted / Which now came from him' (I, ii, 497-98). Something about *this* occasion makes him act in a manner unusual to him.

As Shakespeare turns to the shipwrecked crew in Act II, we soon discover that for them, too, the present is of peculiar significance. Gonzalo immediately recognizes the miraculous quality of their preservation and, joined by Adrian though ridiculed by Antonio and Sebastian, extols the idyllic quality of the island. He is most amazed, however, that their clothes are 'now' (II, i, 68, 97) still as fresh as when they first put them on in Africa for the marriage of Claribel who 'now' (II, i, 98) is Queen at Tunis. Gonzalo's moralizing does not ease the sorrow of Alonso; rather, it stimulates lamentation for what he had done in the past that has occasioned the sorrow of the present.

(Ironically, he does not realize how right he is, in a sense of which he is yet ignorant.) After Gonzalo's description of the ideal commonwealth—the possibilities of their present predicament now so obviously contrary to what they had known in the past in Milan and Naples—Ariel sends them all, except Sebastian and Antonio, to sleep.

For these men, left awake to do the wicked plotting which so explicitly reproduces the earlier plot against Prospero, the memory of the past stimulates the action of the present. Like Prospero, they see an occasion not to be missed. As Antonio begins to prod Sebastian:

The occasion speaks thee, and
My strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head.
(II, i, 207-9)



Sebastian is 'standing water', but Antonio will teach him 'how to flow' (II, i, 221-22). As Antonio proceeds to be more explicit, he says 'what's past is prologue, what to come, / In yours and my discharge' (II, i, 253-54). This murder must be performed now.

If it were death that 'now' (II, 1, 261) had seized the sleepers, they would be no worse off than they are 'now' (II, i, 262). In the past Prospero's servants were Antonio's fellows; 'now' (II, i, 274) they are Antonio's men. Alonzo would be no better than the earth he lies upon, 'If he were that which now he's like, that's dead' (II, i, 282). Ready to carry out their treachery, they draw their swords, when Ariel enters to sing in Gonzalo's ear. If the sleepers are not kept living, Prospero's 'project' will not succeed (IT, i, 299). In his song Ariel warns Gonzalo that conspiracy has taken this opportunity ('His time'-II, i, 303). The conspirators are about to 'be sudden' (IT, i, 306) but Gonzalo awakes, saying 'Now good angels / Preserve the King!' (II, i, 306-7). Even Sebastian's lying explanation for their drawn swords stresses the present. Even now we heard a hollow burst... ' (II, i, 311). In this episode we again see the overwhelming relevance of action in the present. For Antonio and Sebastian, the present moment (not before or later) is the occasion to carry out their evil purposes. They are stopped only by the timely appearance of Ariel. The Antonio-Sebastian-Alonzo subplot is thus intimately a part of Prospero's larger project- his conduct of the 'present business' which is the major concern of the play. Were the conspirators to succeed now, Prospero's unique opportunity for reconciliation with Alonzo would be lost. A lesser, evil instant would destroy the larger, good instant.

When we next see the court party, they are weary from their fruitless search for Ferdinand, and, stopping to rest, Alonzo will 'no longer' (III, lii, 8) keep hope for his flatterer. Antonio and Sebastian see in the abandonment of hope and in the weariness the possibility of another attempt on the king's life. They agree to take the 'next advantage' (III, iii, 13), which will be 'tonight, / For now they are oppressed with travel' (III, iii, 14-15). But at this moment Prospero again intervenes, this time with the dumb-show banquet. Sebastian will 'now' (III, iii, 21) believe in unicorns and in the phoenix; Gonzalo recognizes that if the reported this 'now' (III, iii, 28) in Naples, he would scarce be credited, although stories which had seemed unbelievable in his youth are 'now' (III, iii, 47) vouched for by travellers. As they approach the table to eat, Ariel appears in the guise of a harpy, the banquet suddenly vanishes, and Ariel delivers the speech which Prospero has commanded. In this speech Alonzo and his followers are first accused of evil, then reminded of their powerlessness ('Your swords are now too massy for your strengths'-III, iii, 67). But Ariel's most important business is to recall their treachery to Prospero in the past, again bringing the past into the context of the crucial present. The powers have delayed, not forgotten (III, iii, 73). Alonzo is promised punishment in the future, a punishment to be avoided only by repentance. Prospero compliments Ariel on his performance and observes that his enemies are 'now' (III, iii, 90) in his power. As Prospero goes off to join Miranda and Ferdinand, Alonzo recalls his early sin. For him, Ariel's speech, with its references to Providence, Fate, Prospero, and foul deeds is the moment of moral awakening, although at this point it drives him to despair instead of repentance.

As Gonzalo observes, after Alonzo and the others have run off:



Their great guilt,
Like poison given to work a great time after,
Now 'gins to bite the spirits.
(III, iii, 104-6)

They must be stopped from the suicide to which they are 'now' (III, iii, 109) provoked.

Following his formal gift of Miranda to Ferdinand (in the course of which Ferdinand promises not to violate her chastity, as he hopes for long life with 'such love as 'tis now'- IV, i, 25), Prospero calls for Ariel so that he can present the masque. Ariel asks, 'Presently?' and Prospero replies, 'Aye, with a twink' (IV, i, 42-43). Ariel promises to fulfill the task

Before you can say, 'come', and 'go',
Breathe twice and cry, 'so, so'.
(IV, i, 44-45)

Ariel is not to approach until Prospero calls for him, but it is after only six lines that Prospero bids, 'Now come, my Ariel!' (IV, i, 57). As the masque ends with a dance, Prospero suddenly recalls the Caliban-Stephano-Trinculo conspiracy, the 'minute' (IV, i, 141) of whose plot has come. Again, that is, Prospero recalls the importance of the moment: there is a minute for Alonso, for Ferdinand, and even for Caliban. We recall that from his first meeting with Stephano and Trinculo, Caliban, having discovered that they were not plaguing spirits, had perceived them as agents through whom to effect his own liberation. As Prospero breaks up the entertainment, the revels 'now' (IV, i, 148) are ended. When Caliban approaches the cell, he, too, is aware of the precious quality of the moment: 'We are now near his cell' (IV, i, 195). Caliban's urgency can only be increased as Stephano and Trinculo are beguiled by the trumpery; Caliban will have none of it, for 'we shall lose our time' (IV, i, 248). The plotters being chased away, Prospero knows he is in absolute control:

At this hour
Lie at my mercy an mine enemies.
Shortly shan my labors end. . .
(IV, i, 263-65)

The enemies are in Prospero's power, but as Shakespeare approaches his fifth-act denouement [the final explanation or outcome of the plot] he maintains the emphasis on the present. The act opens with Prospero's assertion that 'Now' his project gathers 'to a head' (V, i, 1). He asks Ariel the time and learns that it is the sixth hour, 'at which time' (V, i, 4) Prospero had promised their work would cease. Ariel tells Prospero how he had left the court party mourning if Prospero 'now' (V, i, 18) beheld them, he would be moved. While Ariel goes to release Alonso and the others, Prospero abjures his rough magic; he will break his staff as soon as he has commanded some heavenly music, which 'even now' (V, i, 52) he does. Ariel brings in the distracted party, whose charms are dissolving 'apace' (V, i, 64); as Prospero reminds them of their past sins, their understanding grows. It will 'shortly' be clear that 'now' (V, i, 81-82) is muddy. Ariel is



asked to fetch Prospero's Milanese garments 'quickly' (V, i, 86). Knowing that he will 'ere long' (V, i, 87) be free, Ariel can sing that he will live merrily 'now' (V, i, 93); he is then sent to bring the boatswain and the master to Prospero 'presently' (V, i, 101). Prospero, clad in his ducal robes, then reveals himself to the others, reassuring them that a living prince does 'now' (V, i, 109) speak to them. Alonzo immediately resigns the dukedom and entreats pardon, and Prospero embraces Gonzalo. Prospero could cause the disgrace of Sebastian and Antonio, but 'at this time' (V, i, 128) he will remain silent. Alonzo, thinking that the loss of his son is irreparable, laments, and Prospero reveals the living presence of Ferdinand, whom Alonzo greets, 'Now all the blessings / Of a glad father compass thee about' (V, i, 17980). Miranda's response to the brave new world now revealed to her echoes the immediacy of her response to Ferdinand. Learning that Miranda is Prospero's daughter, Alonzo would ask her pardon, but Prospero, his purpose now accomplished, has no more use for the past:

Let us not burden our remembrance with
A heaviness that's gone.
(V, I, 199-200)

As we approach the end of the play, we find that even the minor characters have experienced the suddenness of events. The master and boatswain had 'even now' (V, i, 232) been awaked and had been brought from the ship 'on a trice' (V, i, 238). Sent to free Caliban and his companions, Ariel drives them in only three lines later. Stephano (who is drunk 'now', V, i, 278) and Trinculo are recognized by the court party, and Prospero acknowledges Caliban as his; the three are ordered to trim the cell, as a condition of their pardon. From the events of the day, even Caliban seems to have learned something: he immediately assents to Prospero's command (instead of cursing) and promises to be wise 'hereafter' (V, i, 294). The play ends with Prospero's promise to tell the others his story and with his final command to Ariel. The auspicious gales provided, Ariel will then be free. . . .

When Prospero reveals his identity to Alonzo, Sebastian, and the others, he does not tell them, though they ask, how he came to be lord of the isle,

For 'tis a chronicle of day by day, Not a relation for a breakfast, nor Befitting this first meeting.
(V, i, 162-64)

The play that Shakespeare has usually written is a chronicle of day by day: an event happening at a particular time causes another event at some subsequent time. *The Tempest* is not such a play. Except for the few details which he has told Miranda in the first act-and the added hints we get from the scenes with Ariel and Caliban-we in the audience know no more of the story of Prospero than does Alonzo. At the end of other plays, notably *Hamlet*, Shakespeare has one character promise to tell the ignorant and amazed auditory what has happened-as Prospero promises at the end of *The Tempest*. The difference is that we in the audience already know what Horatio will tell the others-in fact, we now some things about Hamlet of which Horatio is probably ignorant. In *The Tempest* we do not know. We can assume that Shakespeare considered such



knowledge irrelevant to his play, that the tale of Prospero on the island is nonessential; for Shakespeare is here not interested in the sequence of day by day, but in the now which can redeem the past.

If this reading of *The Tempest* is correct, we can find a reason for Shakespeare's use of unity in this play, a reason which is, moreover, essential for our understanding of the play. What we perceived in the foregoing discussion is the great emphasis which Shakespeare puts on the idea of the present in *The Tempest*. In this play is, like the other romances, about reconciliation, it is about reconciliation *now*, within the few hours which Prospero must seize. Unlike Leontes, Prospero does not need time to repent. Rather, he needs to grasp the moment in which he can offer money, can stay his fury, can effect the awakening of Alonzo's conscience, can restore his daughter to her proper place among mankind. To tell this story, incorporating such themes, Shakespeare used the form most likely to create this sense of the urgency of the moment. He wrote a unified play.



Critical Essay #5

Source: "The Ordering of *The Tempest*," in *Wasca na Review*, Vol. 10, No.1, Spring, 1977, pp. 3-20.

[In the following essay, Weber outlines the "elaborate and symmetrical structure" of The Tempest, contending that characters, both in groups and as individuals, are contrasted with one another in order to dramatize Shakespeare's theme of civilization's effects on human beings. In this scheme, Weber explains, Ariel and Caliban represent aspects of human behavior outside the bounds of civilized society. They are in turn compared to the human characters in the play who represent the virtues and Vices of civilized man. Thus, Prospero personifies intellectual Virtue; Sebastian and Antonio intellectual evil; Gonzago embodies emotional goodness; Stephano and Trinculo demonstrate emotional vice. These symmetries are likewise played out in the drama's minor characters, including Miranda and Ferdinand, who represent potential for good among the young in society.]

Friends and foes of *The Tempest* agree on its stylized characterization. The richness of the play lies more in the arrangement than in the fullness of its characters, and through the play's elaborate and symmetrical structure Shakespeare makes a coherent and systematic statement about civilization. The characters of *The Tempest* are repeatedly dichotomized. Nonhuman characters are contrasted with human ones, virtuous secondary characters with evil ones, central characters who are tested with central characters who are reformed. These dichotomies focus on the question of how the virtues of civilization may be attained and its evils rejected. Not only are characters divided into groups, however, but within the groups characters are systematically contrasted-Ariel with Caliban, Prospero with Gonzalo, Antonio and Sebastian with Stephano and Trinculo, Ferdinand with Miranda, and even Alonso with the boatswain. These contrasts analyze the effects of civilization in terms of man's two constituents, mind and body.

The fact that Ariel and Caliban are not human beings makes them easy symbols for the faculties divorced from society's nurture, and Shakespeare heightens this symbolic potentiality by suggesting the imperviousness of the pair to training: Ariel is forgetful (1.2.260-263) and "nurture" cannot "stick" on Caliban (4.1. 188-190). That the pair represent spirit and body is an obvious enough conclusion. Ariel, airy thought, is devoid of feelings. He knows how Prospero would react to a moving sight but is not himself moved his "affections/Would become tender. . . were [he] human" (5.1. 17-20)-and when he imitates Ferdinand's mourning gestures and likens the sighing Ferdinand to a man blowing on porridge (1.2.221-224), his behaviour, which would be callous in a human being, shows his incapacity to feel. Caliban, the earthy body, is devoid of mind. For convenience' sake he is given the capacity of speaking, but that capacity is distinguished from human rationality by Caliban's inability to know good from evil (1.2.353-355, 360-362).



These characters reveal the natural strengths and weaknesses of the faculties. The mind loves to range-Ariel's songs are all symbolic, and the one he sings about himself deals with roaming (5.1.88-94)-but the mind's chief asset is formal morality. Ariel possesses principles, for he voluntarily opposes Caliban and voluntarily defends Prospero (3.2.43, 113); his contractual relationship with Prospero (1.2.245-250) suggests his sense of legal obligation. Ariel's morality makes it appropriate that he take, as he does, the role of moral expositor and agent: in the wedding masque he announces Ferdinand's test of chastity (4.1.88-101) and in "full fathom five" the regeneration of Alonso (1.2.399-407); he descends like a harpy to punish the noble conspirators (3.3.53ff) and runs in a dog-pack to punish the base ones (4.1.255ff). The body's parallel to the mind's joy in knowing is the delight of the senses. Caliban shows this delight not only in his taste for filberts and scamels (2.2.167-172) but in that touching responsiveness to music (3.2.133-141) which makes it impossible to view him as simply an embodiment of evil. As to the mind's morality, the body's parallel is what could be called love, the instinctive desire to serve. Caliban is likened to a dog in this respect: he was at first the pet of Prospero, who "strok[ed]" him (1.2.333-335), and finding a new master, he licks his shoes (3.2.22).

The faculties' potentialities for evil are treated through the parallel desires of Ariel and Caliban for an illegitimate freedom. Ariel's desire to break his contract (1.2.242-246) represents the mind's proud desire to be free of its recognized obligations. Caliban's sexual (1.2.348-352) and wrathful (3.2.86-89) yearnings represent the lust of the flesh, and the fact that liquor produces Caliban's cry of freedom (2.2.178-185) reinforces the idea that the body longs for a release from inhibitions. That these two evils are distinct is suggested by Ariel's inability to perform Caliban-like deeds: he was "too delicate/To act her [Sycorax's] earthy and abhorrd commands" (1.2.272-273). The inherent tendency to evil accords with conventional theology, and Shakespeare evokes this theology in his parallel early histories of Ariel and Caliban-stories which are not formal allegories but factual details carrying analogical overtones. Prospero's release of Ariel from the spell which Sycorax had cast but which she herself could not undo (1.2.274-293) recalls Christ's ability to free men from otherwise-inevitable damnation. Ariel's grumbling, then, is like a proud man's refusal to acknowledge God's gift, an act like Satan's initial refusal to serve. Caliban's parentage-the fact that he is the offspring of a wicked woman and a devil (1.2.263-270)-recalls the inherited curse upon man's flesh.

Ariel and Caliban, by defining man's natural endowment, serve as bases for measuring society's influence on men. The virtuous secondary characters show what perfection civilization can bring men to. Prospero clearly stands at the top of the play's moral ladder, and Prospero's endorsement places Gonzalo there with him: Prospero's initial praise (1.2.160-168), repeated to and by Ariel (5.1.15,) is summed up in his address to Gonzalo, "Holy Gonzalo, honourable man" (5.1.62). Shakespeare makes religion the source of civilization's perfecting power; both the virtuous characters are notably pious. Prospero conquers the pride natural to the mind by meditating on the *de contemptu* theme-that is of course the point of "Our revels now are ended" (4.1.148-158). His religion is-as befits his significance-formal and intellectual: religious meditation figures in the plans he makes for his life in Milan (5.1.310-311). Gonzalo's piety is shown early in his trusting but resigned prayer, "The wills above be done! but I would fain die a dry



death" (1.1.66-67). In his final summarizing tribute to the providence which has brought good out of evil (5.1.201-213), Gonzalo, though admirably reverent, is factually inaccurate: Sebastian and Antonio have "found. . . [them]selves" in a way which ironically undercuts Gonzalo's optimism. Gonzalo's religiousness is emotional rather than rational.

Prospero embodies intellectual, Gonzalo emotional virtue. Prospero does not lack feeling, and Shakespeare is careful to distinguish him from the men of intellectual evil, the callous Antonio and Sebastian; his harsh treatment of the mourning Ferdinand is accounted for in an aside (1.2.453-455), lest it be mistaken for such coldness as the courtiers display toward the mourning Alonso. But Prospero is clearly a man in whom mind pre-dominates. At the important moment when, having his "enemies" at his "mercy" (4.1.262-263), he pardons them, he is shamed into pity by the hypothetical pity of a creature inherently incapable of emotion (5.1.21-24), and then he acts not by feeling but by a rational ethical principle (5.1.27-30). As Prospero is not devoid of feeling, so Gonzalo is not empty of mind. So much attention has been paid to Shakespeare's source for Gonzalo's utopia (2.1.139-165) that its nature has been neglected: Gonzalo is giving a gentlemanly dissertation on a classical theme. He has a gentleman's [sic] learning, then, but that learning is contrasted with intellectual accomplishment. Gonzalo knows poetry and fabling Plato-imaginative and therefore emotional writing. The difference between this learning and rational knowledge is suggested by the difference between the rule of the island which Gonzalo imagines and the conscious control and learned means of Prospero's actual governance. Gonzalo's strength is emotional, and in this he is the complement of Prospero: at the moment when he is mastered by Prospero's learned magic, Gonzalo is Prospero's instructor, teaching him with his tears how to weep for pity (5.1.62-64).

The virtuous secondary characters indicate that civilization can develop the natural strengths of the faculties. Prospero's esoteric knowledge is the development of the mind's delight in learning, but Prospero's knowledge is less important than his ethical perfection. The point of his control of the island is not that he allegorically represents God but that as an ethical man he models his rule on God's, with of course such qualifications as distinguish human from divine prerogatives. Like God, he teaches and tries, he imposes reformatory punishments, and he controls the unreformable. Gonzalo has Caliban's sensory perceptiveness: he is accurate (1.2.218-219) when he says that the courtiers' garments are unstained by the storm (2.1.55-68), and therefore his praise of the green island (2.1.51) can be trusted. But in Gonzalo, perceptiveness is enriched by a religious sense of gratitude: his praise of the island is part of his tribute to God's mercy (2.1.1-8). The desire to serve which Caliban displays reaches full development in Gonzalo's love for Alonso. Gonzalo empathizes with his master's suffering (2.1. 137-138), humbly babbles about utopia in order to distract him (2.1.138, 165), and disinterestedly persists in the face of rebukes (2.1.9, 102-103, 166). That Gonzalo saves Alonso through a dreamed warning (2.1.295-302) is symbolically appropriate: the non-rational imagination does the protecting, rather than the reason which would cause an intellectual man to stand guard.



The virtuous characters also prove that civilization can overcome men's natural weaknesses. Prospero triumphs over pride when he gives up his magical power and forgives the enemies he has conquered. In the first he contrasts with the ambitious Antonio and Sebastian; in the second he does more than simply subdue wrong feeling, for the echoes of a revenger's tragedy make Prospero a potential scourge, tyrannical avenger of an ambitious tyrant. Gonzalo's moral triumph comes when he, like Prospero, has his enemies within his power; he overcomes the lust of the flesh by loving rather than hating them. By their mockery, Antonio and Sebastian do succeed in angering Gonzalo, for though he is not overcome by wrath (2.183-184), he must be angry since Antonio does try to mollify him (2.1.181). Yet when Alonso and the courtiers go mad, Gonzalo protects his enemies equally with the master he loves (3.3.104-109).

The aristocratic and the base plotters sit at the foot of the ladder which Prospero and Gonzalo have climbed. Shakespeare indicates that the four belong in the same moral class by paralleling their stories. By attributing irreligiousness to them, he marks their distance from the men whom civilization has perfected. In the place of Prospero's intellectual belief, Antonio has a philosophic atheism which he successfully teaches to Sebastian (2.1.270-275). In place of Gonzalo's pious feelings, Stephano and Trinculo have a reverence for sack: their bottle is the bible they swear on, kiss, and reinterpret (2.2.121, 131, 143-144; the image occurs to Stephano independently of Caliban's belief that sack is "celestial" [2.2.117-127]). The twin actions which involve these two pairs of plotters fall into four sections: and exposition, a fatal error, a climactic reversal of fortune, and a denouement. The expositions prove that civilization can aggravate the natural weaknesses of men and deprive them of even their natural strengths. The rest of the actions-tragedies of purgation without the morally triumphant close-prove that civilization's destructiveness can be irreversible and therefore absolute.

Sebastian and Antonio embody intellectual evil. In the expository scene in which they greet the island, they reveal the desiccation of the feelings which are not their dominant attribute. At the point at which Gonzalo demonstrates his loving empathy for Alonso ("It is foul weather in us all, good sir,/When you are cloudy"), Sebastian and Antonio demonstrate their callousness in puns and pantomime ("Fowl weather"-looking up; "Very foul"-wiping away an imaginary dropping) (2.1.137-138). When Alonso in his grief rebukes Gonzalo, "Prithee, peace," Sebastian's punning simile, "He receives comfort like cold porridge" (2.1.9-10), recalls Ariel's metaphor for the sighing Ferdinand: the courtiers have made themselves as unfeeling as a creature inherently emotionless. The pair also show that they have lost the mind's natural insight and morality. The sneers which they direct at Gonzalo's reference to the *Aeneid* (2.1.71-84) expose their shallow learning. Modernists, they have only heard about the *Aeneid*, not studied or even read it, and therefore they do not know where Carthage was, and do not know that Aeneas and Dido had both been literally widowed (they ignorantly suppose that by "widow" Gonzalo alludes to Dido's desertion, and they refer to the jocular use of "widower" for a deserting husband). The courtiers reveal their depravity by their disgust at Gonzalo's supposed euphemism ("Good Lord, how you take it!"): they think Aeneas a knave and Dido a whore, and scorn anyone who believes in heroism or tragedy. The faults of the pair are acquired, not natural: they have been hardened by courtly nonchalance and stultified by courtly Machiavellianism. Gonzalo's reference to their boredom points to the



former (2.1.177-179), and the courtiers' unsavory similes for the island (2.1.41-47) suggest that cultivated aloofness has cost them their responsiveness to beauty. Doctrinaire materialism accounts for the sneers which they direct at Gonzalo's belief in natural innocence (2.1. 150-162). That accepting the fashionable doctrine has impoverished their minds is suggested by the fact that in laughing at the word "innocent," Sebastian simple-mindedly restricts its meaning to physical virginity ("No marrying 'mong his subjects?"), and that in laughing at the word "idle" ("all idle; whores and knaves"), Antonio blindly refuses to believe in a goodness which is as evidently present in Gonzalo as it is evidently absent in himself.

Stephano and Trinculo embody emotional evil. In the expository episode in which they greet the island, they reveal the dullness of the wits which are not their chief attribute. The pair ridicule Caliban for his credulity concerning them (2.2.137-146), but both of them cling stubbornly to a credulous first impression of him. Trinculo, having concluded that Caliban is a fish, decides upon second glance that he is an odd fish, "Legg'd like a man! and his fins like arms!" (2.2.24-35). Stephano, having concluded that Caliban (with Trinculo) is a monster, decides upon further contact that he is an odd monster, "a most delicate monster" with "Four legs and two voices" (2.2.58-96). The commoners also reveal that they have lost the body's natural strengths, sensitivity and love. In the sights of the island Trinculo can find only reminders of city ugliness: "yond same black cloud. . . looks like a foul bombard that would shed his liquor," "I will here shroud till the dregs of the storm be past" (2.2.20-22, 41-42). For music, Stephano has only the tavern songs he rightly calls "scurvy" (2.2. 43-56). As for the desire to serve, that quality has given way to self-assertion. Both Trinculo and Stephano dream of the independence they can gain by displaying Caliban (2.2.28-34, 69-72), and Trinculo soon proceeds to a more direct assertiveness: "A most scurvy monster! I could find in my heart to beat him,-" (2.2.155-156). The pair's faults are of course acquired; dullness and self-assertion are the proverbial results of drinking, and the pair's degraded taste is directly linked with the tavern. The commoners' drunkenness typifies lower-class life in the city in the way that the courtly code typifies the aristocracy: Stephano and Trinculo are, like Antonio and Sebastian, representatives of civilization.

The plotters' fatal errors take the form of decisive yieldings to their characteristic weaknesses. The courtiers' plot is an act of pride, a violation of "conscience," the mind's inherent morality (2.1.270-275), in the interest of ambition (2.1.285-289). The act is significant for Sebastian because it is his first deadly sin, for Antonio because it repeats and propagates his earlier crime. The difference between the two is suggested not only in the temptation scene itself, where Antonio persuades Sebastian, but at the beginning of the episode, when Ariel's music brings sleep to the company. At that point Sebastian speaks comfortingly to Alonso (2.1.188-191)-not out of duty, for he has disrespectfully berated him (2.1.124-131), nor out of love, for he has callously blamed Ferdinand's death on him (2.1.119-123), but out of politeness: lacking virtue and love, Sebastian is at least conventional. Antonio, on the other hand, soothes Gonzalo and Alonso (2.1.181, 191-193) because he has just thought of murdering them in their sleep: he is already a criminal. The commoners' plot contrasts with the aristocrats' in its motivation. Stephano desires Miranda (3.2.101-105), and his willingness to beat Trinculo (3.2.74-75) suggests that he approves of Caliban's cruel wrath: the commoners yield to the lust of the flesh.



The distinction between Antonio and Sebastian is mirrored in the distinction between Stephano and Trinculo. Stephano is the leader, passing upon the plot and inducing Trinculo to follow him (2.2. 104110). He is analogous to Antonio, who is the most devout materialist and the first to practise the creed; Stephano is the bearer of the butt and the first and greatest imbibor (2.2.115-125, 3.2.1-3).

The next stages in the actions, the reversals of fortune, are presented in parallel symbolic scenes. The banquet and the line-tree episode allegorically show the moral consequences of the plotters' fatal errors. The banquet symbolizes the mind's fulfillments (the communion table is the probable source of the symbol), the garments on the line-tree the fulfillments for the body (clothes make the body splendid). The way in which Sebastian and Antonio approach the banquet typifies their crime. When the magical servants vanish, Sebastian says, "No matter, since/They have left their viands behind; for we have stomachs.-/ Will't please you taste of what is here?" (3.3.40-42).

Men interest Sebastian only in so far as they are of service to him; he is glad not to have to share with others even what is theirs; and his virtuous words are only hollow gestures of politeness (he offers the banquet only in order that he himself may eat). The immorality, self-interest, and virtuous facade characterize the courtiers' pride. Similarly, the way in which Trinculo and Stephano approach the clothing symbolizes passionate sinning: covetousness is suggested by Trinculo's "we know what belongs to a frippery," gluttony by his "put some lime upon your fingers"(the image is drawn from bird-catching), wrath by Stephano's "by this hand, I'll have that gown," and lust by his "Mistress line, is this not my jerkin?" (that "line" and "jerkin" are obscene is clear from the subsequent joke about loss of hair) (4.1.225-226,245-246, 227-8, 235-238). These sins are tied to the plot against Prospero by the repeated references to matters associated with kingdom: royal robes, exploration, patronage, banishment (4.1.222-223, 236-238, 241-244, 250-252). The snatching of the banquet and driving away of the looters thus indicate that because of their plots, the plotters have lost those fulfillments appropriate for their natures.

The purgative punishments [sic] visited upon the sinners are also richly symbolic. First of all, the agents of punishment serve to distinguish kinds of evil. Ariel's guise as a harpy, here reminiscent of a Fury, characterizes the aristocratic plotters: the airy soul receives an airborne and divine avenger. The spirits' guise as hunting dogs fits the base plotters: the earthy body receives a mundane retribution. Furthermore, the agents of punishment are tied to the preceding episodes of judgment. Harpies, of course, snatch banquets, and hunting dogs pursue foxes, which symbolize theft and therefore typify the looters. The linking suggests that the connection between sin and suffering is not casual but intrinsic. As to the punishments themselves, the madness visited upon the aristocrats is both abstractly appropriate as a punishment for spiritual Sin (it is a mental torment) and concretely appropriate as the revenge which conscience takes for its violation. The commoners' cramps and "pinchspot[s]" are also abstractly appropriate, physical punishments for sins of the flesh, and they are concretely appropriate, symptoms of the diseases that result from the abuse of the body. Prospero connects the two kinds of punishment when, having seen the commoners "pinch-spotted" (4.1. 260-



261), he refers to the courtiers' madness as "inward pinches" (5.1. 77). The linking suggests that the two sorts of punishment are parallel and alike in purpose.

The expositions in the two actions define civilized evil. The middle sections pose the question of whether this evil can be cured. The answer which the endings give has already been foreshadowed. The mania of Antonio and Sebastian is contrasted with Alonso's melancholia: Alonso blames himself (3.3. 95-102), but Sebastian and Antonio attack the avenging spirits, taking them for persecuting "friend[s]" (3.3.102-103). Apparently suffering is not going to cause the two courtiers to question and change themselves. The obliviousness of Stephano and Trinculo is contrasted with the anxiety of Caliban. Caliban fears that he and his companions will be changed to geese or to apes "With foreheads villainous low" -to animals emblematic of stupidity; and he foresees and fears Prospero's pinches (4.1.247-248, 232-234). He thus shows an awareness of the superiority of mind and susceptibility to correction which are lacking in the two greedy commoners. They, apparently, are beyond redeeming.

The denouements show, then, that civilized evil can be unreformable. It is true that Sebastian reproves Stephano's thievery, and that he calls the restoration of Ferdinand "A most high miracle" (5.1.298-299, 177). The rest of his behaviour, however, proves that the former statement is not a sign of reborn morality; and the latter is not a sign of empathy towards Alonso, for Sebastian is contrasted with Gonzalo, who at this point is too choked with emotion to speak (5.1.200-201). Both statements are like Sebastian's unfelt words of comfort earlier, simply politeness. The comments which Antonio and Sebastian make about Caliban (5.1.263-266), reminiscent of their earlier jokes about the island, prove that the pair have not abandoned their courtly nonchalance. More important, they have not gained in insight or morality. Sebastian is dumbfounded at being caught by Prospero: "The devil speaks in him" (5.1.129). His surprise shows that he has no truer estimate of his intellectual place than he had when he sneered at Gonzalo's supposed errors. The reference to the devil also recalls Sebastian's attitude to the avenging spirits; it proves that he feels no guilt. Antonio's responses are the same as Sebastian's; he is both too surprised and too resentful to speak. When Prospero says, "I do forgive/Thy rankest fault,-all of them," he comments on Antonio's surprise, stressing the fact that Antonio has been found out; when he "require[s]" the dukedom, he comments on Antonio's resentment, chastizing his immorality. The commoners emerge no better than the aristocrats. Punishment has not made Stephano and Trinculo any wiser, and since the mind is not their dominant attribute, it is only fitting that they should prove even duller than the stultified courtiers. When Prospero accuses Stephano, "You 'ld be King O' the isle, sirrah?" Stephano replies, "I should have been a sore one, then" (5.1.187-288). He is not alert enough to be startled by Prospero's knowledge, and his joke shows that not only does he feel no guilt, but he does not even recognize the seriousness of the charge. Punishment has not restored the commoners' sensitivity or love, either. The pair moan about pickled meat and cramps (5.1.282-286), their minds as confined to the tavern as ever. Stephano enters attacking his betters, and though Trinculo realizes that there has been a hitch ("here's a goodly sight." 5.1. 259-260), he does not recognize his master. The failure to love is as central for the commoners as the failure to be moral for the aristocrats, and that failure is epitomized in the drunken battle address which opens the episode: "Every man shift for all the rest,



and let no man take care for himself; for all is but fortune" (5.1.255-257). The opening clauses tell what Trinculo and Stephano should have learned; the misplacings show that they have not learned it; and the last clause proves that the pair do not blame themselves for their pains, and therefore cannot change (it is parallel, thus, to Sebastian's refusal of guilt, "The devil speaks in him").

In the denouements the four representatives of civilized evil are contrasted with the characters who represent the natural faculties. While Antonio and Sebastian show their irremediable pride, Ariel completes his service (5.1.20-242), and while Stephano and Trinculo demonstrate their incurable lust, Caliban learns to love: he is awed by his master, and he comes to serve him willingly (5.1. 262-263, 294-295). Furthermore, Ariel recognizes and honors a moving situation when polite Sebastian and silent Antonio are not touched by Ferdinand's restoration, and Caliban overcomes his credulous worship of Stephano (5.1.295-297) when the besotted Stephano cannot see the difference between Prospero's mind and his: the depraved men have less emotion than an unfeeling spirit and less thought than an unreasoning animal. Because they cannot be reformed, the plotters become prisoners: Antonio and Sebastian are held in mental bonds, restrained by Prospero's threats to reveal their plot (5.1.126-129), and Stephano and Trinculo are put in the custody of Caliban (5.1.291-292), placed in physical restraint. Meanwhile the non-human characters are freed. Ariel of course is released (5.1. 317-318), and Caliban in the end ceases to be a slave, becoming, like Gonzalo, a willing servant. The contrasts emphasize that civilized vices are more pernicious than man's natural limitations, and more dangerous.

By showing the contrary potentialities in civilization, the secondary characters raise the question of how its positive results may be attained and its negative ones avoided. The central characters provide the answers. The first set of these characters are Ferdinand and Miranda. In pairing them, Shakespeare utilizes an old idea about the difference between men and women, though he does not apply this idea systematically or even refer to it symbolically. The difference between the two lovers is allegorized in their wedding masque, in which the motif of the union of the sky and the earth appears twice: the sky is represented by Juno and by the nymphs who symbolize the water evaporated from the springs, the earth by Ceres and by the reapers who symbolize the land which receives the rain (4.1.60-86, 128-138). The lovers contrast like airy Ariel and earthy Caliban. The two of them prove that education can set men climbing toward the rung reached by Prospero and Gonzalo.

Ferdinand needs a corrective education. His primary danger-Prospero's treatment suggests-is aristocratic pride. Prospero charges Ferdinand with attempted usurpation (1.2.455-459), and he captures him in a way which anticipates the arraignment of the proud nobles in the banquet episode. Prospero disarms Ferdinand with a spell (1.2.475-476) in the way that Antonio and Sebastian are later disarmed (3.3.66-68), and he accuses him of a guilt (1.2.472-474) which is like that of the melancholy Alonso. Since, as the aside indicates, Prospero's words are not to be taken at face value, what is suggested is what is later made explicit, that as an intellectual courtier Ferdinand is liable to the sin of pride, but that he has not yet embraced that sin: Prospero is trying rather than punishing him (4.1.5-7). Desiccation is Ferdinand's secondary danger. When



he tells Miranda that though he has "ey'd" many women "with best regard" and listened to them with "too diligent ear," he has never loved any with "full soul" (3.1.39-46), Ferdinand shows that he has been practicing Sebastian's courtly formality and detachment.

Miranda needs maturing rather than correcting. A woman of feeling, she is already like Gonzalo and unlike Caliban: her reaction to the shipwreck proves the first ("O, I have suffered/With those that I saw suffer!" 1.2.1-15), and her indignation at Caliban's attempted rape suggests the second (1.2.353-364). She needs, however, a proper object for her love. Her child-like devotion to her father shows in her sighing response to his description of their exile, "Alack, what trouble/Was I then to you!" (1.2.151-152). Prospero's desire to transfer her affections accounts for the magician's formula with which he enhances her first glimpse of Ferdinand: "The fringed curtains of thine eye advance/And say that thou seest yond" (1.2.411-412). Miranda's immaturity of mind-it is not her dominant attribute-is suggested by her passiveness to Prospero's teachings ("More to know/Did never meddle with my thoughts," 1.2.21-22).

The trial which strengthens Ferdinand against his pride is the central part of his education. As anti do de to the ambition which leads Antonio and Sebastian to seek kingship, Prospero humbles Ferdinand to the antithetical rank of slave: Ferdinand notes the antithesis (3.1.59-63). In accepting the humiliation willingly (3.1.1-15) Ferdinand matches Prospero's voluntary surrender of power. The importance of the trial is proved by the fact that through it Ferdinand wins Miranda's hand (4.1.1-8); Ferdinand's emotional education, though more complicated, is less important. Prospero's first task there is to rouse Ferdinand's quiescent feelings. He awakens him as he awakens Alonso, with grief, then turns grief to consolation (1.2.390-396) and consolation to love (1.2.488-496): the sequence is a natural one, though magic speeds the pace. The new emotions enable Ferdinand to distinguish his love for Miranda from his previous courtly dallying (3.1.37-48), but Prospero is then careful to see that Ferdinand does not give way to excess. The Anacreontic portion of the wedding masque (4.1.88-101) repeats the lesson Prospero gives in his curse ("If thou dost break her virgin-knot. . ." 4.1.1323). There Prospero elaborates Ferdinand's own oath to Miranda ("O heaven, O earth. . . if [I speak] hollowly, invert/What best is boded me . . ." 3.1.68-73); he distinguishes sacramental sexuality from animal lust, giving specific meanings to the cherishing and honorable love which Ferdinand has sworn.

The central part of Miranda's education is the trial which teaches her to leave her father and cleave to the husband who is her rightful master. Prospero tries Miranda by commanding her to cleave to her father and leave her lover (not speak to him); he commands childishness in order that Miranda may outgrow it by disobeying, and this of course she does (3.1.36-37, 57-59). At the same time, she takes the proper reverent attitude toward Ferdinand, refusing at first meeting the place of goddess (1.2. 424-431), and taking thereafter the place of servant: she tries to carry Ferdinand's logs (3.1.23-25), she pledges to "be [his] servant" (3.1.83-86). Prospero also strengthens Miranda's judgment. Having told her about Antonio's treachery and usurpation, Prospero then accuses Ferdinand of like crimes. The accusations have moral significance, but not as descriptions of Ferdinand's present moral state; and the purpose of Prospero's repeated



injunctions, "Speak not you for him: he's a traitor" and "What!/ An advocate for an impostor!" (1.2.463, 479-480), must be to force Miranda to judge Ferdinand on her own. By her Platonic defence of him, her rejection of Prospero's rebuttal, and her trust in her own decision (1.2.460-462, 481-486; 3.1.48-57), Miranda achieves the independence of mind which Prospero intends.

The four evocative lines (5.1.172-175) which are their contribution to the play's climactic discovery summarize the lovers' state. Miranda's "you play me false" is a reminder-unintentional on her part-of the attempt of Stephano to play her false, and Ferdinand's "not for the world" is a parallel and equally unintentional reminder of Antonio's desire for kingdom. The reminders point up the lovers' goodness. The opposite of Stephano's wrath and sensuality is Miranda's declaration of forgiving love: "Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle,! And I would call it fair play." Ferdinand's principled "I would not for the world" is the opposite of Antonio's immoral ambition. That the pledges are contained in teasing and banter makes the virtue sound effortless: the lovers' education has started them well. But the reminders also suggest the youthful innocence of the pair: as they do not know of the incidents to which they accidentally refer, so they do not see the evils in the world around them. Education prepares them for struggles in a world which as yet seems new and brave.

Alonso is given more weight than Ferdinand and Miranda. In the discovery to which *The Tempest* builds, the focus is on the joyful discoverer, not on the objects discovered. Furthermore, Ferdinand and Miranda must share attention with one another, while Alonso is paired with a figure who does not demand equal attention, the boatswain. King and boatswain constitute the second set of central characters. They prove that when a man has fallen off the ladder and landed with Antonio or Stephano, repentance can start him upward again. By the prominence given to Alonso, Shakespeare implies that of the two means whereby civilization's potentiality for good may be realized, repentance is the more important. He thus forestalls the optimistic conclusion that education can eliminate man's frailty and render penitence unnecessary.

Alonso's story contains no exposition. His nature is defined by his partnership with Antonio in the overthrow of Prospero, and the introduction of Antonio and Sebastian serves to suggest what Alonso was like before the shipwreck. Alonso's action falls into three sections, a change of heart which contrasts with the fatal error of Antonio and Sebastian, a change of mind which contrasts with the courtiers' reversal of fortune, and a denouement in which Alonso's redemption[sic] is demonstrated.

Alonso's reactions to the supposed death of Ferdinand constitute the first stage of his development. The loss of his son is retribution for Alonso's callousness to Miranda (3.3.71-72) and gives him an opportunity for the reawakening of the feelings which are not his dominant capacity. He responds properly, resembling the emotional Gonzalo in his cry of grief, "O thou mine heir/Of Naples and of Milan, what strange fish/Hath made his meal on thee?" (2.1.107-109). The next stage is more important, for it involves the king's main flaw. The madness visited upon Alonso punishes his deposition of Prospero (3.3.68-70, 72-75), and it offers him the opportunity to cure his pride. Alonso accepts, showing the "heart-sorrow" which Ariel recommends (3.3. 75-82) by admitting his sin:



"the thunder. . . pronouc'd/The name of Prosper; it did bass my tresspass" (3.3.95-102). In both these stages, Alonso is contrasted with Antonio and Sebastian in a way which demonstrates the resonance of contrite acts—a resonance by which Shakespeare validates the religious views he assigns to Prospero and Gonzalo. In the first episode, it is suggested that Alonso might not have grieved for his son, for Sebastian is not moved either by the loss or by the grief of his kindred. That Alonso does grieve is only a small step toward virtue, for callousness is the lesser of his faults; yet the behaviour of Antonio and Sebastian suggests that this act averts further and serious sin. Ferdinand's loss and Alonso's grief give the two courtiers the chance to soften their hearts (Antonio has as much reason to feel compassion as Gonzalo does, and Sebastian has more); once they refuse the opportunity, they fall into a fatal worsening of their major weakness, pride. In the second episode, Alonso's wonder at the gestures of the magical servants (3.3.36-39) connects him with the admiring Gonzalo (3.3.28-34) and shows that his affections have been reawakened. His hesitancy to eat (3.3.42) indicates that if he is not a man of clean conscience, he is no longer a man of pride: his hesitancy is contrasted with Gonzalo's innocent confidence (3.3.43-49), but it is also contrasted with the aggressive selfishness of Sebastian. That there is a connection between the awakening of feeling and the cessation of pride is suggested by Alonso's final gloomy pronouncement,

"I feel/The best is past" (3.3. 49-52). Moved by the loss of his son, Alonso sees the vanity of seeking kingdoms, and is thus diverted from his former ends. In this progress, Alonso is contrasted with Antonio and Sebastian. The courtiers, having refused earlier to be moved, greet the banquet with cold wit ("A living drollery," 3.3.21-27), and they approach it with proud possessiveness. At the end of the episode the three men are accused together (3.3.53-58), but Antonio and Sebastian, not having made the preparatory changes, reject the accusation; only Alonso, prepared, accepts and is reformed. Virtue, Shakespeare suggests, is cumulative [sic].

The denouement shows Alonso's restoration. By voluntarily returning Prospero's dukedom and by begging Miranda's pardon (5.1.118-119, 196-198), Alonso repents and cures his two weaknesses. The less important of these weaknesses is given an extended treatment, a treatment reminiscent of the emotional education of Ferdinand. Having awakened Ferdinand's feelings, Prospero cautions him against an excess, sensuality; so, having softened Alonso, Prospero warns against an excess of grief, the excess the king displays when he moans that his sorrow is beyond the cure of patience. Prospero recommends a religious patience to Alonso (5.1.141-144) as earlier he extols the "sanctimonious ceremonies" of marriage, and as he tries Ferdinand's purity, so he makes a brief trial of Alonso's empathy, not restoring Ferdinand until Alonso has grieved for Prospero's "lost" daughter (5.1.144-152). In his final regenerate state, Alonso is likened through his piety to the men of virtue. The events which Sebastian attributes to diabolic power Alonso thinks an "oracle" must explain (5.1.242-245); and he says "Amen" (5.1.204) to Gonzalo's praise of providence. Alonso is contrasted with the men of intellectual evil. His return of Prospero's dukedom is of course the opposite of the courtiers' reluctance, and when the king expresses his love for Ferdinand and Miranda, "Let grief and sorrow still embrace his heart/ That doth not wish you joy!" (5.1.214-215), his curse falls upon the unmoved courtiers.



If Alonso's story is compressed by the omission of its beginning, the boatswain's is compressed by the omission of its middle. It contains a beginning which likens the boatswain to Stephano and Trinculo, and an end which shows his redemption. When the other mariners think of praying, the boatswain thinks of drinking (1.1.51-52), and in this he is like the bottleworshipping commoners. His bawling, repeatedly chastized (1.1.15, 40-41, 43-45), identifies him as a man of emotional excess, and the rebellion which constitutes the fatal error of Stephano and Trinculo has its parallel in the boatswain's lack of devotion to the king: "Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard," says Gonzalo, and the boatswain replies, "None that I love more than myself" (1.1. 19-20).

Shakespeare takes pains to make the boatswain memorable, tagging him with Gonzalo's many-times-repeated joke about the drowning mark (1.1.28-33, 46-48, 58-60); the tag recalls him four acts later (5.1.216-218). When he re-enters, he is a changed man. His precise speech is antithetical to his earlier bawling, and his reverence for the court is the reverse of his earlier lack of love: "The best news is, that we have safely found/Our King, and company" (5.1.221-222). His new piety associates him with the virtuous characters and dissociates him from the base plotters; as Gonzalo notes, the boatswain is no longer a "blasphemy" who "swear[s] grace overboard" (5.1.218-220).

The explanation for his transformation-the middle of the boatswain's story-is only narrated (5.1.230-240), but that narration connects the boatswain's punishment with the punishment of Stephano and Trinculo in the same way that the king is connected with Antonio and Sebastian. The boatswain was "clapp'd under hatches" -trapped, as the commoners are hunted; and he was subjected to roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains,/ And no diversity of sounds, all horrible" -to the delirium of disease as the commoners are subjected to its cramps and pustules.

As an example of penitence, the physical boatswain contributes one final touch to the play's systematic explanation of how the virtues of civilization may be attained. As a balance to the intellectual Alonso, he fills the final place in the symmetrical structure of *The Tempest*.



Critical Essay #6

Many critics have commented that music and spectacle inform *The Tempest* to an extent unequalled in any of Shakespeare's earlier plays. Related to the magical atmosphere in the play, music foregrounds the work, setting its mood and reiterating many of its themes. On this point, Theresa Coletti observes that music is an "evocative symbol of magic in the play" and argues that it structures the work and its meaning. For Coletti this meaning is rooted in harmony and feeds into the play's reconciliation theme. David Lindley makes a similar assertion about the importance of order and harmony in the work, but (in keeping with a recent critical trend of looking for grim meaning in the drama) examines the problematic nature of music in *The Tempest*—seeing it as a means of deception and a source of dramatic tension. Lindley relates music and the masques, in addition, to the darker aspects of theme in the play. Both masques—one for the betrothal of Miranda and Ferdinand, and one the banquet laid out for Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio—prove illusory. While the first is brought abruptly to an end by the conspiracy of Caliban, the second is designed from the outset to frustrate. Lindley thus notes Shakespeare's tendency to turn what is ostensibly celebratory into something dark and malignant. Clifford Davidson likewise discusses the darker overtones of Prospero's masques, seeing their surface splendor as only a thin veneer that fails to hide bleaker realities.

Source: "Music and *The Tempest*," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: Essays in Honor of Charles Crow*, edited by Richard C. Tobias and Paul G. Zolbrod, Ohio University Press, 1974, pp. 185-99.

[In the following essay, Coletti analyzes music as "the medium through which order emerges from chaos" in *The Tempest*. *Perhaps more pervasive in this work than in any other of Shakespeare's plays, music is, according to Coletti, a structural principle that suggests the thematic struggle between harmony and disorder and the difficulty of achieving the former over the latter. By comparing Shakespeare's use of music in *The Tempest* with that in an earlier work, *As You Like It*, Coletti explains how music sets both tone and theme, and maintains that the play represents Shakespeare's most extensive use of the medium to highlight themes of freedom, forgiveness, and human redemption.*]

The vital center of *The Tempest* is its music. Pervading and informing the action of the play, music is always sounding, always affecting and shaping the lives of the characters. Often directionless and ambiguous in its meaning, the music of *The Tempest* provides a context for Prospero's magical machinations and becomes, through the course of the play, a powerfully evocative symbol of this magic. In *The Tempest* music is the medium through which order emerges from chaos; it is the agent of suffering, learning, growth, and freedom.

Critics who have noted the pervasiveness of music, songs, and musical allusions in Shakespeare's drama have often attempted to extrapolate from the canon of his work and posit a distinct philosophy of music which they insist he was trying to communicate



in his plays. This is most easily accomplished by rather vague references to Renaissance Ideas of divine harmony and the "music of the spheres," that macrocosmic heavenly order of which this worldly microcosm was thought to be a reflection. It has also been pointed out that during the Renaissance, music came more and more to be associated with a "rhetoric of emotion," a kind of language of the heart in which man could express his inmost feelings and communicate them to others. Though neither of these notions can account for our experience of a play as musically rich as *The Tempest*, together they can provide us with helpful tools for understanding how Shakespeare employed music in his drama. For from ideas of order we can derive principles of structure, and if there is a providential design in *The Tempest*, it is certainly an artistic and a musical one. Furthermore, this design manifests itself in the manner in which it speaks to deep human feelings; it is meaningful in the extent to which it can express the "language of the heart." In *The Tempest* these two modes of interpretation form a unity from which music emerges as an emotional and philosophical idea. . . .

If we want to examine music as an informing idea in *The Tempest*, we can begin by looking at a play with which it has many affinities, *As You Like It*. One can view *The Tempest* and *As You Like It* as companion plays in more than one sense. In terms of plot they share many common elements. Each begins *in medias res* [in the middle of the story's action]; Duke Senior and Prospero have both been deposed before the plays' actions begin. Each drama presents a principal figure whose machinations orchestrate events to bring about a desired end; Rosalind wishes to win Orlando and Prospero to recover his dukedom. Both plays juxtapose groups of good and bad characters; there are the evil-doers and the victims of evil. The primary actions of *The Tempest* and *As You Like It* unfold in artificial worlds where the old exigencies of court life do not obtain. Prospero's island and the Forest of Arden become places of self-discovery where new standards of behavior are learned. Each play's deepest concern is with the process of recognition of error and regeneration, and finally, each abundantly employs music as a vehicle for commenting upon this process or for helping to bring it into being.

As You Like It is richer in music than the plays that preceded it. From his experience with the earliest comedies Shakespeare had probably learned the value of music as an important dramatic device. Here the songs are more carefully integrated, reinforcing and illuminating the themes of the play. The first song, "Under the greenwood tree" (II, v. 1), portrays the life of the exiles in the Forest of Arden and focuses their dramatic situation. Cast from their position of security at court, the new inhabitants of Arden are learning that nature supplies a home that is in many ways far superior to the one they have left behind: "Here shall he see no enemy / But winter and rough weather" (II, v. 6-7). A musical statement of one of the themes of the play, the beneficent effect of nature on man, the song also reveals the character of its two singers, Amiens, the cheerful exile, and Jaques, the melancholy cynic. This is a fine instance of music as dramatic economy. Simultaneously fulfilling two functions, the song delineates the import of the play's action and displays antithetical responses to it.

The placement of the songs in *As You Like It* also intensifies the play's dramatic movement. "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" (II, vii, 174) repeats the theme of the first song, but it is more caustic, more explicit in its comment. The implications of this song,



which contrasts winter's natural violence with the violence that human beings inflict upon each other, are undercut by its dramatic position. Coming directly after Orlando carries in his faithful but debilitated servant Adam, the song becomes an ironic comment upon itself, for we have just seen an example of friendship that is not "feigning," of loving that is not mere "folly." We have also discovered that Duke Senior's attachment to Orlando's father survives in his kindness to the son. Like Jaques' misanthropic speech on the ultimate insignificance of human life, the song makes a point which the events of the play qualify, and the agent of this qualification is the very benignity of nature itself.

One final instance of the use of music in *As You Like It* is worth nothing. While perhaps bearing no explicit relationship to the progress of the plot or the nature of character, the song "It was a lover and his lass" (V, iii, 5) has an evocative power that imbues the entire conclusion of the play. Celebrating a life of love and springtime, the song by contrast reminds us of the winter of exile and misfortune that has just passed. It looks ahead to the marriages that are about to take place and brings a sense of freshness to inform the repentance that Duke Frederick and Oliver experience. More atmospheric than thematic, this song suggests a new order of living and being; it transcends the events of the play to provide a context that expresses their fullest meaning. In this sense it comes closer than any other song in the play to the use of music that Shakespeare employs in *The Tempest*.

This brief discussion of *As You Like It* illustrates how important to a drama music and song can be. Taken together, the songs of *As You Like It* form more than a decorative enhancement of the action. Amiens' simplicity and energetic gaiety are so closely connected to its progress that it is very difficult to imagine the play without him or his songs. The music of *As You Like It* moves with the play as an analogous structure of mood and motive. It does not, however, become the structural principle of the play itself. This is where

The Tempest takes its crucial departure from a play with which it otherwise shares many similarities.

The difference between the two plays is, of course, the chronological fact of twelve or thirteen years. Historical considerations of dramatic presentation—the acquisition by the King's Men of the Blackfriars Theatre—can, in part, account for the unique use to which music was put in *The Tempest*. But the deepest distinctions between *The Tempest* and *As You Like It* are those that point to profounder questions of ethics and the nature of freedom and responsibility. The answers supplied by *As You Like It* are essentially those of the comic vision—that human nature is susceptible to goodness and that man, if not perfectible, is at least reformable. But Shakespeare's romances follow the writing of the tragedies, and they are caught in a delicate balance between the affirmation of the earlier plays and the dark and ponderous probings of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. And if they are able to sustain or even suggest a positive vision, it is only after an excess of suffering and the painful passage of time.

The divergent attitudes toward time that *As You Like It* and *The Tempest* reveal are perhaps a key to understanding the very different roles that music takes in each of



these plays. In one sense, time seems to be of little significance in *As You Like It*. Duke Senior and his company regret their unfortunate exile, but the Forest of Arden has a medicinal effect that tempers the burden of the past and makes the present livable, even enjoyable. The future, too, looms in their consciousness as neither a promise nor a threat. There is in the play, however, the repeated appearance of what I call "the salutary moment," those unique instants when men and women fall in love and when wrongdoers recognize their errors and seek forgiveness. This is the "love at first sight" of Rosalind and Orlando, of Celia and Oliver. It is also the instantaneous conversion of Duke Frederick by his encounter with a religious hermit and the quick reformation of Oliver when saved from the devouring jaws of a lion by the intervention of his brother. Time, then, in *As You Like It* is fragmented and dispersed; it is important insofar as it coincides with certain significant incidents. Helen Gardner, speaking of the "unmeasured time" of this play, points out that comedy by its very nature makes use of changes and chances which are not really events but "happenings." Comedy exploits adaptability; it tests a character's willingness to grasp the proper moment and fashion it to his own end. Briefly, it dramatizes Rosalind's advice to Phoebe: "Sell when you can, you are not for all markets" (III, v, 60). This *carpe diem* attitude toward living, which depends on the coincidence of situation and desire, posits a sense of time that locates value in the particular moment. Time's effect, then, is not cumulative but instantaneous; it is not the fulfillment of destiny but life lived "as you like it."

I stated earlier that the music of *As You Like It* formed a structure analogous to the movement of the play, and I think my point is reinforced if we notice that the songs tend to embody this special "momentary" quality as well. They either occur in relatively short scenes devoted to the consciousness of "having a song" (II, v; IV, ii; V, iii), or they exploit a significant movement by providing an ironic or thematic comment (II, vii; V, iv). The possible exception is "It was a lover and his lass" (V, iii), the import of which has already been discussed.

If the musical instances in *As You Like It* parallel in theme and tone the movement of the play, the music of *The Tempest* orchestrates its developing action at every point. The songs of *As You Like It* are largely situational; for the most part, they do not require a comprehensive view of the drama to render them meaningful. They do not depend upon time as a moving force that brings events and feelings to a certain issue. Time, however, is of utmost importance in *The Tempest*. Prospero has four hours to complete his magic revels; this sense of time (and timing) thus makes every moment meaningful. An intuition of urgency, a recognition of catastrophe just barely avoided, imbues our experience of *The Tempest*. Our perception of time in the play includes both a sense of the "proper moment" and a feeling of necessary duration. Ariel saves Gonzalo and Alonso from the swords of Antonio and Sebastian in "the nick of time," but Alonso saves himself by enduring a period of suffering. And I think, too, we can see how the shape of time in *The Tempest* is largely coextensive with its music. For music informs the play not only as an agent of the "proper moment"; it also directs and integrates all of the play's moments into the total vision that is the play. *The Tempest* could not exist without its music, whether it is the strange and solemn airs that accompany the magic banquet, the sprightly singing of Ariel, or the drunken cavorting of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo. All of these bear an intimate relationship to each other; all relate to Prospero's one



significant action-his effort to recover his dukedom and to bring his enemies to a recognition of their past and their errors.

Ultimately one's view of the importance of music in *The Tempest* will depend upon what one thinks the play's dramatic import finally is. If one believes that Prospero's island is an harmonious one where redemptive grace allays and triumphs over evil, one is apt to find its music symbolic of a celestial concord which will eventually obtain on earth. It is true that *The Tempest's* music revolves around the opposition of concord and discord and that the agents of these two modes of being respond (or do not respond) to it in their respective ways. But rather than seeing the play as the victory of harmony over disorder, I think *The Tempest* suggests how very difficult it is to bring order into being and that order, once achieved, is indeed a fragile thing, precariously balanced between the violent past from which it has emerged and the threatening future which may consume it. Music, then, assists at the birth of this tentative order, and Prospero's music must be considered in terms of both the extensions and limitations of his art.

The first song of the play is Ariel's "Come unto these yellow sands" (I, ii, 375), which he sings to a grieving Ferdinand. The tempest has finally subsided, and Ariel's song celebrates the simplicity of the calm earth into which Ferdinand has been transported. As an invitation to the dance, "then take hands," the song looks ahead to that moment at the end of the play when all of its characters are joined inside Prospero's magic circle. The magic which Prospero had used to invoke the tempest now enchants Ferdinand, drawing him further into the island and toward Miranda. This is the first crucial step toward their marriage, which will in part resolve the parental strife that had been Prospero's cause for raising the tempest. One critic has suggested that this song is the musical counterpart of the sweet-singing Sirens' invitation. "The island has all the magical charms of Circe's island: strangers from afar have been lured to it and Prospero provides a magical banquet and charms his visitors by music's powers, so that they are no longer able to obey their reasoning powers." Here Prospero's more benevolent powers replace the lust and destruction of the Sirens, and the music leads Ferdinand, not to an easy satisfaction, but to a test of discipline and faithfulness. Ferdinand's response to the song, "Where should this music be? I' th' air or th' earth?" (I, ii, 388), establishes the magical quality of this island, where the very air is music. W. H. Auden has written that "the song comes to him as an utter surprise, and its effect is not to feed or please his grief, not to encourage him to sit brooding, but to allay his passion, so that he gets to his feet and follows the music. The song opens his present to expectation at a moment when he is in danger of closing it to all but recollection."

As Ferdinand follows this elusive music, Ariel begins his second song, "Full fathom five thy father lies" (I, ii, 397). Probably no song of *The Tempest* is so well remembered and perhaps no other is thematically so important. Ferdinand is made to believe that his father is dead; similarly, Alonso will believe that Ferdinand is dead, and in that belief he will undergo the madness, the "sea change" of grief and humility, from which he will emerge transformed. The poetry of the song transports Alonso from the world of mutability and flux to a kind of permanence. His bones and eyes become coral and pearls; the "sea" gives form to what was subject to decay. Thus the song reminds us that the life of Milan-the disordered world of usurpation and potential tyranny-is now



under the shaping influence of Prospero's art. Ferdinand reacts to the song not with grief but with awe: "This is no mortal business, nor no sound / That the earth owes" (I, ii, 407408). The music, in the play's first triumph over history, moves Ferdinand to accept his past and leads him to the future-and Miranda.

The swift agent of Prospero's well-timed music, Ariel plays a "solemn strain" (II, i, 178) that lulls the Milan travelers to sleep. Gonzalo, in his simplicity and warm-heartedness, submits most easily, but Alonso soon follows. Sebastian and Antonio, however, are significantly exempted from the effect of the music. Prospero's magic has no power over them. Their own Imperviousness to this music, their inability to hear it, contrasts sharply with Caliban, who, even in his vile earthiness, is subject to the music's seduction. "The isle is full of noises," he tells Stephano and Trinculo, "Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not" (III, ii, 132-133). When Sebastian and Antonio plot to take the lives of Alonso and Gonzalo, Prospero's music urgently intervenes. Ariel sings a warning song, "While you here do snoring lie" (II, i, 290), into Gonzalo's ear, and the sleepers awake. The music that had induced their slumber becomes the agent of their deliverance; Alonso and Gonzalo escape catastrophe.

One of the primary distinctions to be made about music in *The Tempest* is, of course, that there is Ariel's music and there is Caliban's music. And while there is that moment when Caliban seems to come close to understanding both of these musical languages, he remains, for the most part, on the side of the raucous and the bawdy. This is the music of Stephano and Trinculo as well. Stephano's first two songs,

"I shall no more to sea" (II, ii, 41) and "The master, the swabber, the boatswain, and I" (II, ii, 45), are indeed the "scurvy tunes" that he calls them. The songs are a kind of comic diversion and an introduction to the buffoonery of the three that is to follow. Their lustiness and earthiness offers a clear antithesis to the obedient chastity of Ferdinand and Miranda, who are learning that fulfillment must be by desert and not demand.

Caliban, now under the influence of his new god "sack," raises his own voice in song. His "Farewell master" (II, ii, 173) and "No more dams I'll make for fish" (II, ii, 175) signalize his revolt from Prospero. The latter song ends with a call for freedom, reminding us, perhaps, of Ariel's behest early in the play that Prospero release him. Ariel must work for his freedom; Caliban expects his to fall into his lap. It is important, too, I think, and perhaps Ironically significant that the only two characters in the play who ask for freedom are the non-human ones, while all the other characters are very much involved in a struggle to be free from history, from each other, and from themselves. Caliban's "scurvy song" heralds the delusion he is about to come under in thinking Stephano and Trinculo the vehicle through which his freedom may be realized. Together the comrades plot to kill Prospero and take the island, and they seal their bargain with their song "Flout 'em and scout 'em" (III, ii, 118). Caliban remarks, "That's not the tune" (121), and Ariel enters with his tabor and pipe and a wholly different kind of music. This evokes different responses from the three; Stephano thinks it the dev11, Trinculo expresses penitence, but Caliban counsels them not to fear this intervention. Curiously, the two scenes of the drunken songs frame the scene of log-bearing Ferdinand, engaged in his trial to prove to Prospero his fitness for Miranda. Ferdinand's sobriety in



performing his task and his willingness to accept control and responsibility-his efforts to bring about his own freedom-are thrown into relief by this contrast with desire run wild. This reminds us that Prospero's attempt to bring a new order into being is threatened on all sides by strongly motivated self-satisfaction and potential anarchy.

Ariel's music, then, has intervened a second time to hinder the enactment of a plot hatched to assassinate a ruler. Similarly, shortly after the maneuvers of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban to do away with Prospero, we see Antonio and Sebastian once again involved in machinations to kill their king. Again Ariel interrupts, this time with "solemn and strange music" (III, iii, 18), and he produces the dance of the strange shapes and their banquet. Alonso and Gonzalo admire the apparition, calling it "harmony" and "sweet music." Antonio and Sebastian, still beyond the pale of the island's music, can only relate the phenomenon to mundanities of geography and travelers' tales. Gonzalo thinks the shapes' "manners" more gentle than human kind, while Sebastian wants to eat the food they have placed in front of him. Like Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban, his earthly-mindedness has no access to the beauty that affects Gonzalo and Alonso.

Ariel enters again, this time disguised as a harpy, and the banquet disappears. He explains to them the initial effect and purpose of his music: "you 'mongst men / Being most unfit to live, I have made you mad" (III, iii, 57-58). Ariel reminds them of their deposition of Prospero and promises them "lingering perdition" unless they are able to experience "heart's sorrow / And a clear life ensuing" (82). Ariel is telling the representatives of Milan that they must submit to the music of the island and endure the pain that the achievement of freedom involves or continue to be agents of chaos and evil. This is the point where the powers and limitations of Prospero's art merge. While it is true that the play has revealed that there are those amenable to order and those that are not, Prospero can only use his music to bring his captives to a consciousness of their own disordered, threatening behavior. His music cannot perform that transformation by itself. As Ferdinand had to choose whether or not he would undergo the ordeal of log-bearing, Alonso must choose whether or not he will repent. In doing so he must experience a depth of despair as a necessary prelude to his recovery: "My son i' th' ooze is bedded; and / I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded / And with him there lie mudded"

(III, 111, 100-102).

Perhaps the most magnificent use of music in *The Tempest* is that which introduces and informs the masque that Prospero produces as a wedding blessing for Ferdinand and Miranda. The song "Honour, riches, marriage, blessing" (IV, i, 106) looks forward to the happy union of the couple. Yet while the song of Juno and Ceres bespeaks a life of plenty, this is not the same kind of richness that Gonzalo had envisioned when he dreamed of his ideal commonwealth: "Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none; / . . . all men idle, all" (II, i, 148, 150). Juno and Ceres sing of the bounty that is the result of cultivation: "Barns and garners never empty, / Vines with clust'ring bunches growing" (111-112). This copiousness is the result of dedicated work, of nature and nurture, and the dance which concludes the masque is one of nymphs and "August-weary" reapers.



We should remember, too, that Prospero's magic is also the outcome of his hard "labours." If we would chide Gonzalo for his innocent simplicity in imagining a golden world, the masque song balances his dream with one that must admit the necessity of the human work that brings work that brings fruitfulness and bounty.

This masque is perhaps revelatory of Prospero's imaginative desire to see order and goodness, but it expresses this goodness as the result of meaningful human effort. The frailty of this vision, however, shows itself by rapidly dissolving as Prospero remembers Caliban's "foul conspiracy" against his life. Jan Kott has called this play "the great Renaissance tragedy of lost illusions," and while one may hesitate to see it as the dark and murky drama which he thinks it is, one must, I think, give credence to the sense of incompleteness that emerges as the play comes to a close.

For there are gaps, empty spaces in our perception of the human lives we have seen portrayed, which we suspect even Prospero's finest magic and greatest music cannot touch. His famous "Our revels now are ended" speech (IV, i, 148) seems, in fact, to point to the limitations of the musically enchanted spectacle he has produced. Just how fragile it really is is evidenced by its ambiguous effect on Prospero himself. For he has yet to be reminded by Ariel that "the rarer action" is one of loving forgiveness, and there is that crucial moment when it seems as if his "nobler reason" will be as baseless as the fabric of his vision. When "the insubstantial pageant" fades, what is left is Prospero and his beating mind.

His labors however, are not without positive issue. Prospero's music had made Alonso and his company mad, yet that madness was a necessary prelude to their recognition of guilt and repentance. If Prospero's music led the shipwrecked travelers to an awareness of their own history, it also provided a vehicle through which this awareness-this madness-could be healed. They enter Prospero's magic circle to a "solemn air . . . the best comforter / To an unsettled fancy. . ." (V, i, 58-59). Yet if they have attained a freedom from madness, it is a freedom that must accept the burden of responsibility for its past and future. In this context, Ariel's final song, "Where the bee sucks, there suck I" (V, i, 87), is significant. One critic has suggested that this song, which is about Ariel's freedom, is really a lyric coda to the entire play, celebrating the attainment of freedom on the part of all who have been involved. I think the song has a different and greater function. As it suggests Ariel's approaching happiness, it points to the world beyond the play, the world which must remain that of our imaginings. And in going beyond the world of the play, we must inevitably consider not only the "cowslip's bell" and the merry summer that Ariel looks forward to with delight, but also Milan and the world to which the reinstated Prospero must return. Ariel's song most poignantly reminds us that his freedom is not the freedom of a Prospero or an Alonso, that only a spirit can be free to the four elements. For the court of Milan freedom must now reside in responsible action emerging from the recognition of the pain of history.

Throughout *The Tempest* Prospero's art-his music-had been the measure of the shaping influence he had on the lives of other people. Its power finally, I think, must be as tentative as the conclusion to which it brings us. It has united Ferdinand and Miranda and created a new future for Alonso, but Antonio is still trapped in vile self-seeking, and



the cases of Sebastian and Caliban are questionable. Music has helped to bring about some order in what had been chaos, some concord from what had been discord. But Prospero breaks his staff and drowns his book, and thus he abandons his music as well. There is the suggestion, I think, that from now on the attainment and preservation of freedom and forgiveness will be a thoroughly human effort in which music can no longer intervene.



Critical Essay #7

While Prospero is clearly the central figure in *The Tempest* and orchestrates much of its action, the question of whether he should be viewed with sympathy has divided critics. In the nineteenth century, Charles Cowden Clarke contended that Prospero is by nature "a selfish aristocrat" whose rule of the island "stops only short of absolute unmitigated tyranny." Denton J. Snider focused on Prospero more as an allegorical figure, a symbol of "creative Imagination" and a poet, or possibly Shakespeare himself, "grasping and arranging the pure forms of his own poetic art." This view foreshadows many of the critical concerns regarding Prospero in the twentieth century. E. K. Chambers's perception reflects Snider's and that of other biographical commentators who interpret Prospero's surrender of his magic at the end of *The Tempest* with Shakespeare's farewell to dramatic art. Colin Still's 1921 assessment of the play highlights its allegorical aspects, and places Prospero in the role of God as punisher and redeemer of humanity. Dover Wilson complicates this reading by describing the darker elements in Prospero's character, including his overall irascibility. The latter half of the twentieth century has witnessed a continuation of a broad range of interpretation of Prospero's character. He has often been associated with the themes of reconciliation and enlightenment (both spiritual and political) by such critics as Robert Speaight, Stephen Orgel, and D. G. James. According to Speaight, Prospero plays a quasi-priestly role in reconciling spiritual and temporal values in *The Tempest*. Orgel focuses on Prospero's magical guise as a deceiver and manipulator, arguing that by relinquishing his power to mislead he acknowledges his kinship with humanity. In James's assessment, Prospero represents a conflict of interest between public and private lives and stresses the interdependency of the spiritual and temporal realms. A similar line of interpretation appears in the criticism of Neil Wright, who explores Prospero's role as a poet who uses his art to elevate the human soul. Karol Berger has noted that Prospero's use of magic figures prominently in the play's development of the theme of the dangers, both to oneself and to others, of retreating into oneself. Prospero's characterization as mirrored in his relations with Ariel and Caliban has been the subject of a recent study by Ian Ferguson.

Source: "Contradictory Natures: The Function of Prospero, His Agent and His Slave in *The Tempest*," in *Unisa English Studies*, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, September, 1990, pp. 1-9.

[In the following essay, Ferguson investigates the contradictory qualities of Prospero's character as they are borne out by his interaction with the other characters in The Tempest, especially with Caliban and Ariel. According to Ferguson, Prospero is essentially a ruler, now dressed as an artist and a director, who has abdicated his power without fully accepting moral responsibility for his actions. Prospero's endeavors throughout the play are bent on revenge and the restoration of his lost worldly power. His activities are thrown into dramatic relief, however, by his subjects Ariel and Caliban. These two characters, contends Ferguson, are symbolic of the "wild man," a figure common in medieval literature, who personifies the "inescapable irrationality inherent in civilized man." Prospero's subjugation of these two almost ironically results in his own



education, as he learns the value of forgiveness, compassion, and freedom from those to whom he has so long failed to grant mercy.]

The generally accepted belief that *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's last complete play has led to numerous ingenious (and frequently sentimental) readings of the text. It is widely regarded as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage with Prospero's famous speech on mutability as the center-piece to support such an interpretation. Yet, it is seldom that artists consciously sum up their careers in so obvious a way. Even Kurosawa's *Dreams*, while focusing on images and incidents that have stimulated that director's films, can hardly be regarded as his farewell to the medium. As an artist matures and grows older the themes and images that inform his earlier work are frequently revised and transformed. I do not believe that the energy that generates works of art is simply cut off in a conscious decision to write (or paint) no more. Artists are too tenacious and hardy to be so easily persuaded by mortality to sum up their art in a final, complete and irrevocable statement. In the case of Shakespeare his concern with the nature and function of kingship, his use of the masque elements in, for example, the final scene of *As You Like It*, as well as his exploration of the relationships between generations are gathered together in the last five plays. Just as Kurosawa in our time has set out to examine the images and thoughts that have inspired his films, so Shakespeare has taken images and ideas from earlier plays and transmuted them into a vision made richer by a lifetime's experience.

Scholarly research has established the strong influence of the masque form on *The Tempest* and this has stimulated the critical desire to give the characters a fixed allegorical meaning. What that allegory is, however, is frequently disputed. Prospero has, in different interpretations, been equated with Shakespeare, God and the Spirit of the Renaissance. Similarly Ariel has been called the spirit of Imagination or the Poetic Inspiration.

Not surprisingly such 'definitive' readings are unsatisfactory and perhaps the most significant point about *The Tempest* is that it is singularly enigmatic and eludes the critical urge to apply fixed didactic meanings to it. As Marsh has pertinently observed [in *The Recurring Miracle*, 1962]:

. . . I find it the most puzzling of all Shakespeare's plays, and the one about which generalizations are least satisfactory.

The richness of the text is beyond dispute. It has provoked readings that satisfy our contemporary views of society and, although these may not be reconcilable with Jacobean sensibility, they are in our terms all of a piece. Recently, for instance, a critic [Neil Viljoen, in *Ear: The English Academy of Southern Africa Review* 5 (1988)] has asserted:

I believe that Caliban must be seen as a victim of imperialism, as a victim of a rapist society and in establishing a socio-political framework for *The Tempest* I have shown that the play deliberately makes a social and political statement, that that is part of its intention, in so far as intentionality can be established.



The problem here is that in Shakespeare's age imperialism was not the bogey that it has become in the dying years of the twentieth century. That Shakespeare's plays are for all time need not be disputed here but it is, I believe, essential that we should not apply political codes that do not accord with seventeenth-century perceptions, for example:

Alonso's daughter, Ferdinand's sister, Claribel, was married to (I use the phrase deliberately) the King of Tunis. Europe is married to Africa, suggestive of the Old World married to the New. Claribel, light, has been married to a King of darkness. There is comment to this effect in the play. It was, I think quite obviously, a politically motivated marriage. And I wonder if that is not a kind of rape.

This observation misses the point that Tunis is, in *The Tempest*, closely associated with the ancient city of Carthage. Far from being part of the New World, Tunis is, in the minds of the characters and the contemporary playgoer, associated with the Classical Age. The New World for Shakespeare was the Bermudas and the Americas. Furthermore the comparison of Claribel with 'the widow Dido' suggests the instability of love, the fragility of vows of constancy and the nature of betrayal. Although this theme is but lightly touched on in *The Tempest* it remains a potent undercurrent. Prospero excludes Venus and Cupid from participation in the masque, and the discovery of Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess is accompanied by accusations of cheating. Although the charge is delivered jocularly and with affection, it contains a note of dissonance:

MIR. Sweet lord, you play me false.
FER No, my dearest love,
I would not for the world.
MIR. Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should
wrangle,
And I would call it fair play.
(V.i. 172-5)

One senses that the return to Naples and Milan will not automatically confer a permanent and ideal happiness on the young couple. The political world demands recognition, and idealism can cruelly deceive.

In proposing a reading, however tentative, of *The Tempest* it is perhaps wisest to begin at a point at which most critics are in agreement, namely, that Prospero is central to the play. He is, as Frank Kermode notes in his introduction to the Arden edition of the play, 'a masque presenter'. Furthermore, an examination of the structure of the play reveals that Prospero (and his familiar Ariel) are the only two characters who are aware of all the events of the afternoon's business. The others are only allowed knowledge of their particular dilemma and until the last scene do not know that they are not the sole survivors.

Prospero is the director of the action, a character within the play and also the 'presenter' of the masque. The text of the play is studded with reminders that Prospero manipulates



the action of the play and that the present moment we are watching blurs the boundaries between our time and the fictional time of the play:

The hour's now come,
The very minute bids thee open thine ear
(I.ii.36-37)
Now does my project gather to a head:
My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and
time
Goes upright with his carriage.
(V.i. 1-3)

The play concludes when the 'time' of the action dissolves into the time of the play's completion and the audience releases the characters and is, in turn, released from the spell of the masque play:

Now my charms are all o'erthrown
And what strength I have's my own.
Which is most faint now, 'tis true
I must be here confin'd by you,
Or sent to Naples.
Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant. . . .
(*Epilogue* 77.1-5 and 13-14)

The reiteration of the word 'now' reinforces the fact that the action of the play and the length of performance are the same and that we, the audience, are an essential part of the meaning of the play. In this the play observes the form and function of a masque. It is important that we should examine the nature, not merely the form of the masque. The masque element of the play is present, partly, in the elaborate stage directions that suggest the need to ensure that the play is performed with the elaborate effects that are typical of the seventeenth-century masque.

The masque is a complex and sophisticated form of theatre and, although in the Caroline period it became essentially spectacle, in Shakespeare's day it was an intricate structure as reliant on text as it was on ingenious theatrical devices. *The Tempest* was written when the architect Inigo Jones and the writers Jonson and Daniel held equal sway in the creation of court entertainment. The content and form of the masque have been admirably researched by Stephen Kogan who states [in *The Hieroglyphic King*, 1986]:

. . . the entire form seems poised between the extremes of harmony and conflict. Shakespeare reflects this tension in his masque-like play *The Tempest*, which similarly moves between the language of ethereal visions and the language of politics and struggle.



The political element found in the masques of the period is dramatically presented in the juxtaposition of usurpation and inheritance on the island, as well as in the account of events some sixteen years earlier. Prospero's desire for revenge for the wrongs he has endured in the past also serves to introduce a sense of mutability, the insubstantiality of our world in relation to eternity, and the transitory nature of performance is directly associated with human life:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous
palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.
(IV.I.148-S6)

The insubstantiality is stressed by the use of 'were all spirits and this insubstantial pageant faded'. Even as he speaks, Prospero's conjuring and the actions of the world dissolve and pass. 'The great globe itself is a common iconic image for the world and was frequently used by Shakespeare in plays as different in End as *King Lear* and *As You Like It*:

This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene Wherein we play.
(*As You Like It* II.vii.137-9)

While in *King Lear* man's existence is seen as a part in a play:

When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools.
(IV.vi.183-4)

Throughout *The Tempest* the association of audience and performer is stressed through the insistence on our time and that of the players being one.

It is, however, the dichotomy evident in the language and themes of the play, that is largely responsible for the puzzling (and fascinating) spell that the play has cast on both literary critics and theatre directors who all struggle to make complete sense of the play. These conflicting elements are also strongly reflected in the characterizations of Prospero, Ariel and Caliban.

The Tempest opens with a vividly dramatic stage effect, a storm at its height. The language reveals, with Shakespeare's characteristic economy, aspects of character; the King and Ferdinand are at prayer, whereas the 'villains' of the play respond with violence and inappropriate pride:



SEB A pox O' your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, uncharitable dog!
(I.i.40)

and,.

ANT. Hang, curl hang, you whoreson,
insolent noisemaker.
We are less afraid to be drowned than thou
art
(I.i.43-S)

It remains for that 'noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo' to attempt to introduce a note of optimism and uneasy jocularity:

I have great comfort from this fellow:
methinks
he hath no drowning mark upon him; his
complexion is perfect gallows.
(I.i.28-30)

The desperation of the drowning mortals is followed immediately by our first sight of Prospero and Miranda on 'the uninhabited Island' that is Prospera's small kingdom. Coleridge's observation is dramatically very pertinent:

Exquisite judgement-first the noise and confusion-then the silence of a deserted Island-and Prospero and Miranda.

Apart from establishing Miranda's compassion and her horror at the probable fate of those aboard the threatened galleon, Shakespeare reveals that this Tempest initially registered by the play-goer as a realistic storm-the diction of the mariners is an accurate response to a violent hurricane at sea-is the product of Prospero's thought and not the actual predicament of 'mortality set among the terrors of natural existence'. The action of *The Tempest* is determined and governed by the 'beating' of Prospero's mind. Herein lies the richness and sophistication of Shakespeare's concept and it is in accord with the particular demands of the masque form. Robert Uphaus has asserted [in *Beyond Tragedy*, 1981]:

Because Prospera is, *among other things*, an artist who has staged a tempest within a play called *The Tempest*, it seems fair to assume that the play is also a kind of psychodrama with the characters and events of the playacting out facets of Prospera's mind (my emphasis)

While this view is couched in contemporary terms that would have had little meaning for Shakespeare, it does accord with one of the functions of the masque, the assertion of the power and function of kingship.

In the reign of James I great emphasis was placed upon the function and obligations of the king. James expressed the moral duties of the ruler in his treatise *The Basilican*



Doron, the 'kingly gift' is in effect a testament of royal doctrine for the instruction of the young Prince Henry. The duty of obligation is clearly a matter of prime consideration:

But as yee are clothed with two callings, so must ye be alike careful! for the discharge of them both: that as ye are a good Christian, so ye may be a good King, discharging your office. . . in the poynts of justice and acquitie: which in two sundry waies ye must do: the one, In establishing, and executing (which is the life of the lawe) good lawes among your people: the other, by your behavior in your owne person. . . consider first the true difference betwixt a lawful! good King, & an usurping Tyrant: . . . The one acknowlegeth himself ordeined for h,S people, having received form God a burthen of government whereof he must be countable. The other thinketh his people ordeyned for him a praye to h,S appetites, as the fruites of his magnanimitie; and therefore, as their endes are directly contrarie, so ar their whole actions. . . .

In King James's political speeches this moral and godly function of the ruler is stressed and he spoke constantly of the necessity for the king to abide by 'the fundamental laws of the kingdom'.

The concern for the principles of kingship and the relationship between God's justice and earthly law inform the masques of the Stuart court and also find expression in the poems of state, most particularly Jonson's *Panegyre on the Happie Entrance of James*. . . *To His first high Session of Parliament*:

. . . reverend Themis did descend
Upon his state; let downe in that rich chaine
That fasteneth heavenly power to earthly
raigne.
(11.20-2)

In keeping with Shakespeare's concern for the function and purpose of kingship which formed a major theme not only in the history plays but also in the great tragedies, *The Tempest* deals, although more obliquely, with the moral function of kingship. Prospera is not an ideal king although he is a magus, a man of learning. His deposition and exile at the hands of his brother, Antonio, are the result of his own abdication from responsibility:

I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To closeness and the bettering of my mind
With that which, but by being so retir'd,
O' er-priz' d all popular rate, in my false
brother
Awak'd an eVil nature; and my trust,
Like a good parent, did beget of him
A falsehood in its contrary, as great
As my trust was. . . .
(I.il.89-96)



Here Prospero indicates that his sense of injury is great, but fails to acknowledge his own abdication from responsibility. One of the chief characteristics that marks Prospero is a sense of resentment for injury to his authority. As the Duke of Milan he should not have 'neglected worldly ends'. Furthermore, his wounded self-esteem is reflected in his previous speech when he refers to his brother's 'parasitic' theft of power:

. . . he was
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,
And suck'd my verdure out on't.
(I.ii.85-7)

The image conveys the draining of power and vitality of which his brother, Antonio, is undoubtedly guilty. However, the image would have suggested more to Shakespeare's audience drawing as it does on a picture, epigram and moral published in *Theater of Fine Devices*. Within the iconological meaning of the ivy sapping the strength of the oak is a secondary meaning which stresses Prospero's almost petulant sense of the personal injustice dealt him by the usurper. The motto attached reads:

Ungratefull men breed great offence
As persons voyd of wit or sence.
This moral is amplified by the verse that follows the simple woodcut illustration:
The Oke doth suffer the yang Yvy wind
Up by his sides till it be got on by,
But being got aloft it so doth bind
It kills the stocke that it was raised by;
So some proves so unthankfull and unkind,
To those on whom they chiefly do rely
By whom they first were called to their
state
They be the first (I say) give them the
mate.

Although Antonio is culpable as a usurper who has broken the bonds of duty between king and subject as well as flouted the ties of blood (as Macbeth had also done), it is significant that Prospero feels indignation and injury when he has himself undervalued the high office to which he is divinely appointed. Earlier in the same scene he comes closer to a recognition of his abrogation of duty:

The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being
transported
And rapt in secret studies.
(I.i.1.75-77)

His use of the verb 'cast' suggests a degree of careless disregard for the divinely imposed responsibilities of kingship. Disturbingly in the final lines of the play it appears



that Prospero has still not acquired the understanding of the duties owed, in Jacobean terms, by the ruler:

. . . in the morn
I'll bring you to your ship, and so to
Naples.
Where I have hope to see the nuptial
Of these our dear-belov'd solemnized;
And thence retire me to my Milan, where
Every third thought shall be my grave.
(V.I.306-311)

Prospero's search for knowledge would have been regarded in the seventeenth century as laudable and proper, but his failure to act as the 'political father of his people' planning their 'careful education' would have been seen as a dereliction of duty. Prospero shows little inclination for this responsibility of government and the playgoer realizes that he has mistaken the defeat of Antonio and Sebastian for penance.

However, Prospero does advance in moral understanding if not in political acumen. Initially, and for the greater part of the play, he is afflicted with a 'nausea' for the human condition. This affects even his tenderness for Miranda, who although he tells her she was 'a cherubin', he also sees as burdened with human emotions, most specifically that of love:

Poor worm, thou art infected!
This visitation shows it.

(III.1.31-2)

Prospero's character vacillates between affection and disgust with the human condition. Finally, it is this 'nausea' that Prospero conquers and through the Christian virtues stressed by King James (as well as by the writers of court masques) he achieves a common humanity, one which accepts the limitations of that humanity:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck
to th' quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being
penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further.
(V i.25-30)

Recognition of virtue leads him to abjure his magic powers thus placing himself once more within the structure of human society. Finally, in the Epilogue he accepts the need for Divine Providence:



Now I want
Spirits to enforce, Art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be reliev'd by prayer,
Which pierces so, that It assaults
Mercy Itself, and frees all faults.
(*Epilogue*. 77.13-18)

The growth of understanding is most palpably demonstrated in his recognition of the 'hag-seed "on whose nature/ Nuture can never stick':

. . . this thing of darkness I Acknowledge mine.
(V.I.275-6)

The contradictory elements that Prospero embodies are also evident in Shakespeare's portrayal of Ariel and the slave, Caliban. Both of these figures are, I believe, derived from the same source, the medieval icon of the 'wild man'. This is more evidently true in Shakespeare's portrayal of the 'salvage and deformed slave' Caliban, who has been bewitched by Prospero's initial kindness into abdicating his own position on the island:

When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me and made much of me;
would'st give me
Water with berries in't; and teach me how
To name the bigger light and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I
lov'd thee,
And show'd thee aU the qualities o'th'isle.
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place
and fertile:
Curs'd be I that did so!
(I.i.334-41)

Caliban demonstrates a naive susceptibility to the attentions of men which he mistakes for affection not once, but twice, on both occasions disastrously in terms of his own well-being. His infatuation with Stephano leads him to betray once again the secrets of the island and to seek revenge on Prospero through a man of lower order:

I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee
berries;
I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.
A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!
I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,
Thou wondrous man.
(II.ii.160-64)



Caliban is not governed by any understanding of social codes and his nature responds purely to the pleasure principle and the desire to possess his own kingdom:

PROS. . . . thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.
CAL. O ho, O ho! would't had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans.
(I.ii.349-53)

In his definitive study of the wild man in art and literature [*The Wild Man; Medieval Maths and Symbolism*, 1980], Timothy Husband has observed:

The wild man, a purely mythic creature, was a literary and artistic invention of the medieval imagination. . . . By every account the wild man's behaviour matched his primitive surroundings. Strong enough to uproot trees, he was violent and aggressive, not only against wild animals but also against his own kind.

The figure of the wild man arises from the need to explain and define an inescapable irrationality inherent in civilized man:

The wild man. . . served to counterpoise the accepted standards of conduct in society in general. If the average man could not articulate what he meant by 'civilized' in positive terms, he could readily do so in negative terms by pointing to the wild man.

By the sixteenth century the iconographic image of the wild man was a commonplace in English literature and plays a significant role in both poetry and drama. The portrayal of the wild man is fairly constant in his appearance which gives us, in Spenser's description, a strange figure devoid of the niceties and refinements of civilized living:

His wast was with a wreath of yuie greene Engirt about, ne other garment wore:
For all his haire was like a garment seene;
And in his hand a tall young oake he bore, whose knottle snags were sharpened all
afore.
And beath' d in fire for steele to be insted.
But whence he was, or of wombe ybore,
Of beasts, or of the earth, I have not red
But certes was with milke of Wolves and
Tygres fed.
(Spenser: *The Faerie Queene*, Book IV, Cant. VII.7)

The figure of the wild man appears in theatre as early as 1515 in the masqye-type play *The Place Perilous*. The most important early use of this figure occurs, however, in the dumb show prologue to *Gorbuduc* (1561):

Firste the Musicke of violenze began to play, duryng which came vppon stage Sixe
wllde men clothed in leaves.



He also serves a vital function in Spenser's highly emblematic poem, *The Faerie Queene*, where the two distinct personalities of the wild man are portrayed. Initially the view is one akin to the Caliban figure:

It was to weet a wilde and saluage man,
Yet was no man, but onely like in shape and eke in stature higher by a span,
All ouergrowne with haire, that could
awhape
An hardy hart, and his wide mouth did
gape
With huge great teeth, like to a tusked Bore
For he liv'd all on raUin and on rape
Of men and beasts; and fed on fleshly gore,
The signe whereof yet stain'd his bloody llps
afore
His neather lip was not Ilke man nor beast,
But like a wide deepe poke, downe hanging
low,
In which he wont the relickes of his feast,
and cruellspoyle, which he hadspard, to
stow:
And ouer It his huge great nose did grow,
Full dreadfully empurpled all with blood;
And downe both sides two wide long ears
did glow,
And raught downe to his waste, when vp
he stood,
More great then th' eares of Elephants by
Indus flood.

(Spenser: *The Faerie Queene*, Book IV, Cant. VII. 5-6)

Significantly, it is only Caliban who truly appreciates the beauty of the island. Prospero regards it merely as a place of exile in which he practises his 'rough magic' and longs for a return to Milan. Gonzalo's description of an ideal commonwealth is little more than an optimistic attempt to come to terms with the fickleness of Fortune. Nonetheless, his view that 'Nature should bring forth, / Of its own kind, all foison, all abundances' is echoed in the masque that Prospero conjures up to express his hope for a fruitful and blessed future for Miranda and Ferdinand:

Earth's increase, foison plenty,
Barns and garners never empty;
Vines with clust'ring bunches growing;
Plants with goodly burthen bowing;
Spring come to you at the farthest
In the very end of harvest!
(IV .i.ii 0-115)



Although the magic figures of Juno, Ceres and Iris give their benediction, we realize that it is an ideal vision that can at best be only fleetingly achieved in the 'real' world of politics and social structures. Very few of the characters are conscious of the magical harmony of the island and most concentrate on the disagreeable qualities of mires and foul-smelling pools. However contradictory the idea may appear, the 'salvage' is the one figure who is most conscious of the 'qualities' of the island. Caliban hears the music and dimly perceives a beauty and meaning beyond his reach:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and
hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime
voices,
That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in
dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and
show riches ready to drop upon me; that, when
I wak'd I cried to dream again.
(III.ii.133-41)

In these lines we are reminded of Bottom and his confused perception of beauty that will forever be beyond his comprehension:

I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound the dream. . . . The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was! (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* IV.i.198-204)

Importantly, however, the difference between Bottom and the island 'salvage', lies in the way Caliban is manipulated by the beauty that can make him 'sleep again' or weep 'to dream again' While Bottom, a 'hardhanded' man 'of Athens', confuses the various senses the 'salvage and deformed' Caliban perceives the magic in terms of a harmony and order that his nature cannot possess. That the supernatural element is divine is suggested in Shakespeare's use of the conventional emblem, common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of the cloud that parts to reveal God's generosity symbolized in the hand offering assistance or in the gift of a cornucopia of plenty. In his portrayal of Caliban, Shakespeare perceives the violence and the anarchic nature of the wild man, but he also allows him a perception of beauty from which civilized man is partly excluded. The dichotomy, striking in that it echoes the civilized Prospero's own contradictions, embodies the dual image of the wild man as perceived in late medieval and post-medieval myth and symbol:

As both myth and symbol. . . the wadman could be at once savage and sublime, evoke fear and admiration, and represent man's antithesis and ideal.



One characteristic of the wild man that is most fully portrayed in Caliban is his passionate response to music. It is, perhaps, this capacity for appreciation that allows us to accept Caliban's 'repentance' and belated recognition of degree in human society:

. . I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,
And worship this dull fool
(V.i.294-97)

That he should 'seek for grace' allows the possibility of redemption and endorses the view held by St Augustine and subsequent religious writers:

What is true for a Christian beyond the shadow of a doubt is that every real man, that is, every mortal animal that is rational, however unusual to us may be the shape of his body, or the color of his skin or the way he walks, or the sound of his voice, and whatever the strength, portion or quality of his natural endowments, is descended from the single first-created man. . . . God is the Creator of all; He knows best where and when and what is, or was, best for Him to create, since He deliberately fashioned the beauty of the whole out of both the similarity and dissimilarity of its parts.

The promise of salvation, or at least the hope of redemption through a search for spiritual grace, is not confined to Caliban but embraces mercy and redemption for Prospero in the religious sense. The disturbing element of his political naiveté remains constant by the end of the play. For Caliban the conclusion of the play offers the potential of salvation for a different order of creation than that of human society, the 'spawn' of the witch Sycorax. It is the belief in salvation that is the play's chief concern, similar to that expressed by the medieval poet, Heinrich von Hesler in *Apokalypse*:

Werden sulle, daz sie genesen Order sie suln vorlorn wesen
Oder mit dem Tuvele hin gen
Daz muz an Goter guaden sten.
(Whether they wil1 be saved or lost and go with the devil, that will have to be left to the mercy of God.)

Although the portrayal of Caliban owes much to the emblem of the Wild Man it is also important that we should remember that he is the child of the witch Sycorax who, like Prospero, was initially cast away on the island where she died leaving her son the island inheritance:

This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me.
(I.ii.333-4)

The conflicting elements of personality that are evident in Prospero are also revealed in the commentary on the 'foul witch' whose life was spared 'for one thing she did'. The information that even a creature dedicated to evil-as surely as Prospero is a devotee of



'white' magic-hints at the mercy that must be extended to any creature that acts for the good of man rather than for his downfall.

The most important completely supernatural creature on the island is Ariel who, like Caliban, exhibits characteristics typical of the wild man concept. Ariel is protean and his appearances are calculated to inspire delight (the 'water nymph') or, alternatively, terror (the figure of the 'harpy'). Although he possesses magical powers, he is nonetheless only an agent and was initially subject to the powers of Sycorax who confined him in 'a cloven pine'. He is similarly and most unwillingly the agent of Prospero who keeps him in thrall by the memory of his 'dozen years' of imprisonment and by the threat of further confinement:

If thou more murmur'st, I
Will rend an oak,
And peg thee in his knotty entrails, till
Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters.
(I.ii.294-6)

Prospero rules his agent and his slave most tyrannically, threatening Caliban with physical pain and Ariel with imprisonment. Each is terrorized by what he most fears and in this respect Prospero is ruthlessly efficient.

Ariel's inability to initiate magic in spite of his supernatural powers of transformation is akin to the wild man's capacity to alter his appearance while exhibiting no further power:

In early medieval times the wild man was universally thought of as a giant, but as gigantisms became equated with irredeemable stupidity, the wild man's scale reduced as a matter of self-preservation. . . . By the late Middle Ages, many depictions show the wild man reduced to Lilliputian scale, disporting among the leaves and tendrils of plants.

By the sixteenth century we find the converse of the Caliban-type wild man existing side-by-side with the ogre-like representation. The violent and deformed 'salvage' who threatens Britomart in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* has an opposite manifestation in Book VI of that poem:

O what an easie thing is to descry
The gentle bloud, how euer It be wrapt
In sad misfortunes foule deformity,
And wretched sorrowes, which haue often
hapt'
For howsoeuer it may grow mis-shapt,
Like this wyld man, being vndisciplynd,
That to all vertue it may seeme unapt,
Yet it will shew some sparkes of gentle
mynd,
And at the last breake forth in his owne
proper kynd.



That plainely may in this wyld man be red,
Who though he were Still in this desert
wood,
Mongst saluage beasts, both rudely borne
and bred,
N e euer saw faire guize, nelearned good,
Yet shewd some token of his gentle blood,
By gentle vsage of that wretched Dame.
For certes he was borne of noble blood,
How euer by hard hap he hether came;
As ye may know, when time shall be to tell
the same.
(Spenser: *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI Cant. V. 1-2)

The delicacy and 'gentle blood' of the wild man is also a trait of Ariel which is contradicted by that spirit's coldness. If Caliban represents uncontrolled emotions Ariel is detached from human concerns, although he is capable of objectively reminding Prospera of his human responses:

ARI. . . . Your charm so strongly works 'em

That if you now beheld them, your affection would become tender.
PROS. Dost thou think so, spirit?
ARI Mine would, Sir, were I human.
PROS. And mine shall
Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a
feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou
art?
(V.i.17-24)

It is Ariel's relationship with air which has provoked the critical view that equates him with the imaginative qualities of man. In *The Recurring Miracle* Derek Marsh cautiously states that Ariel represents 'something like the imagination of man'. However, there is an element that is disturbingly hedonistic and self-centred in Ariel. The use he intends to make of his freedom from servitude is entirely governed by pleasure and a search for a permanent summer:

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



Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.
(V.I.88-94)

In this he exhibits a kinship with the gentle wildman of the late medieval period:

J e viz cellon que ma aprins nature
sans soucy nul tousJours joyeusement
En (ce) croux ci fois moy ebergement
Quant a viandes soueves nullement
ne en fort breuvages nen prond point
deplesance
De froiz fruitage me repes seulement
Et ainsy ai, Dleu mercy, souffisance.
(I live according to what Nature has taught
me
Free from worry, always joyously.
In a hollow tree I make my home.
I do not delight in fancy food
Or in strong drink.
I live upon fresh fruit alone,
And so I have, thank God, enough.)

The function of both Ariel and Caliban lies in their ability to instruct the human Prospero to express worthy emotions and demonstrate a capacity for generosity and forgiveness. In so doing they achieve their freedom and allow Prospero to return to worldly concerns conscious of the need for forgiveness and mercy if man is to be more, and express more, than brutish appetite. It is a lesson as appropriate for the twentieth century as it was for the seventeenth.



Critical Essay #8

Commentary on Ariel has tended to speculate about his nature and to suggest possible sources for his original and unique characterization. In 1811 August Wilhelm Schlegel was the first to identify Ariel with the element of air, contrasting him with Caliban, who is linked with the lower element of earth. And, while Schlegel was careful not to reduce Ariel or any other characters in the play to simple allegory, symbolic studies of this creature have abounded in modern criticism. John Ruskin looked at the political and social aspects of Ariel's character in 1862, maintaining that the spirit's freely-rendered labor is the source of his contentment and eventual freedom. E. K. Chambers continues the allegorical tradition in the twentieth century, locating Ariel as "the spirit of poetry" in his interpretation of the play. Likewise, Ariel is sometimes seen as a personification 'of human consciousness. His continual pleading with Prospero for his freedom, in this reading, helps bring about the magician's realization of the need for mercy and forgiveness. Several commentators, however, have found these and other allegorical explanations of Ariel's character unconvincing and instead have focused on uncovering Shakespeare's sources for Ariel. W. Stacy Johnson, for example, locates the origins of the creature in a variety of contexts, favoring one which places him in a Neo-platonic conception of reality, which allows for the existence of benevolent spirits in the natural world. This possibility simplifies the character by avoiding any spiritual complications associated with either divine or demonic realms. By contrast, Clifford Davidson emphasizes that Ariel is not a purely benevolent creature and that his motivation is Prospero's threats of punishment more than a yearning for freedom. For further analysis of Ariel's character, see the essay by Robert Egan in the MAGIC section; and the essay by Ian Ferguson in the PROSPERO section.

Source: "The Genesis of Ariel," in *Shakespeare*

Quarterly, Vol. 11, No.3, July, 1951, pp. 205-10.

[In the following essay, Johnson surveys the many possible sources for the character of Ariel, including the Bible, books of Renaissance magic, and works on demonology. From these he arrives at a definition of the creature that synthesizes both medieval and Neo-platonic conceptions of spirits, but favors the latter by placing Ariel in the category of a spirit-agent that draws power from natural elements (in this case the air), rather than labeling him as a demonic or angelic being. Thus, Ariel has powers over natural forces, allowing him to conjure the tempest that brings Alonso, Antonio, Ferdinand, and the others to the island. In terms of his motivation, Ariel also appears to be more a fantastic creature from folklore bent on achieving his personal freedom than an abstract being with religious overtones and purely good or evil intentions.]

As the sole agent of Prospero's magic in *The Tempest*, the spirit Ariel is a crucial figure for any analysis of the play. He has been called a personification of fancy, of art, of the airy element in which he exists; but each of these interpretations derives from an allegorical reading which is not yet convincingly established on grounds of plain evidence. What kind of spirit is Ariel, and how would Shakespeare's audience see a



character functioning as he does? In answering these questions on the basis of the Renaissance background, the scholar may begin to grasp the magic concept which is basic to Shakespeare's drama.

The Renaissance background of any occult or supernatural manifestation is a complex one. In general the various attitudes of Shakespeare's contemporaries toward the spirit world can be reduced to two main traditions: the medieval orthodox one, largely embodied in popular witch lore, which holds that all magical and miraculous powers are due directly either to God's or to Satan's hand; and the one involved in Neo-Platonic philosophy and in such occult pursuits as alchemy and cabalism, holding that magic may properly be practiced as an incidental means of the wise man ascending toward spiritual unity with the divine. These two concepts modify each other to some extent and are often blurred, particularly in popular writings; but the basic difference remains. The esoteric works of scholarly occultists exalt a magic in harmony with divine and natural law, but the popular works of priests and controversialists-like the *Malleus Maleficarum* and King James's *Daemonologie-condemn* all magic as either spurious or inspired by Satan. Even Wierus and Reginald Scot, skeptical of witches' and sorcerers' powers, make little distinction between scholar-magician and black witch. For a follower of the Neo-Platonist Iamblichus, or for such a learned spirit-raiser as the famous Dr. John Dee (who was a favorite of Elizabeth) there might be neutral and even rational spirits, useful in good faith. But for King James the magician-conjured spirit is diabolical.

Ariel functions primarily as a benevolent rather than a diabolical spirit, although he is capable of chastising the evil and rebellious: he appears in thunder to Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio, and he frustrates poor Caliban's scheme for revenge. But he has served the witch Sycorax as a familiar, and it may be that he is a neutral agent of the magician who controls him. The problem as to whether he is a demon, angel, or symbolic creation can best be approached not according to his motivation, since he is represented as being subordinate to Prospero's will, but according to his name, manner of performance, and status as an elemental servant. The first possible key is the spirit's name, and this leads directly into the other aspects of his nature.

The name's form is that of an angelic epithet, with the *.el* (God) ending. Emile Grillo de Givry remarks that the sorcerer's black books, which took on particular interest for learned men of the Renaissance, are filled with invocations of angels and of God by various words, of which there are "seventy-two divine names, all ending in *el*." The use of these names by sorcerers and occultists probably derives from medieval Jewish demonology, in which Ariel is a spirit of the waters. This name, as well as other similar ones, may have come into Renaissance magic through the cabala; and while *Ariel* is not commonly mentioned in spirit invocations, the variant *Uriel* is often used: Uriel was the favorite spirit of Dr. Dee, about whom Shakespeare-like all England-undoubtedly knew. Abel Lefranc, in his "L' origine d' Ariel," reports having found Shakespeare's very figure in a book written for magicians of the highest order, the *Steganographia* of Trithemius. This work, according to Lefranc, names the seven angels who control the seven planets of astrology and, subordinate to these angels, twenty-one "spiritus subjecti per quos nunciantur arcana." The idea that magic works through the controlling of spirits who direct natural phenomena (in the cabala, angels who animate both celestial and earthly



elements) is in Renaissance occultism a commonplace. But Lefranc emphasizes the fact that in that order of spirits which is said by Trithemius to serve the magician ("per quos intentionis nostrae operamur effectum") appears a spirit called Ariel, one of the three placed under Zachariel, governor of Jupiter; and he goes so far as to suggest that the *Steganographia* is the direct source for Shakespeare's character.

The argument for Ariel as this kind of agent could agree with W. C. Curry's idea of the spirit as a rational Platonic demon, able to carry out general commands through his own devisings, but not such evil commands as those of Sycorax. This idea would place Ariel essentially outside the orthodox perspective of Christian ange and devil. The fact is that this play, like those with classical settings, has no explicit Christian elements, referring only to the gods and spirits of classicism and folklore; but, intended or not, this omission of the Christian trimmings is appropriate in a play about a hero-magician on a fantastic island, written during the reign of a king who abhorred magic. At any rate, even if Shakespeare did not read Trithemius, as one may reasonably doubt, the concept of *natural* "angels" or spirits who control the elements and can be in turn controlled by man, who are Neo-Platonic demons partly translated into Hebrew-Christian terms (their names ending in *-el*), certainly bears a relationship to the Shakespearian concept.

Another suggestion is that Ariel's name comes from the Bible, Isaiah xxix. The Geneva Bible (London, 1594) uses the term *altar* in the chapter, but it adds this prominent gloss:

The Ebrewe word Anel signifieth the Lyon of God and it signifieth the Altar, because y Altar seemed to devour the Sacrifice that was offered to God... .

And *Ariel* rather than *altar* is employed in the Bishops' Bible. This chapter contains, along with the name, several curiously suggestive phrases. To Ariel it is said (I quote the Geneva text), "thou. . . shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be as out of the dust: thy voice also shaH be out of the ground like him that hath a spirit of divination." There is something here reminiscent of the strange voices and spirits on Prospero's island, although this parallel alone must seem far-fetched. But again, "thou shalt bee visited of the Lorde of hostes with thunder, and shaking, and a great noyse, a whirlwind, and a tempest, and a flame of devouring fire." The impression of this is strikingly like that made by Ariel's tempestraising, when the spirit "flam'd amazement," appeared as "lightnings. . . dreadful thunder-claps. . . fire and cracks / Of sulphurous roaring" (I.ii. 198-204), as well as of his later manifestation in thunder (III.ii.53 ff.). This same chapter speaks of hungry and thirsty men who dream they eat and drink and awake to find their viands gone (8), just as Alonso's company is amazed to see its magic banquet disappear; and finally there is a "spirite of slumber" which "shuts up your eyes" (10), reminding the reader of Prospero's causing Miranda to sleep and Ariel's making all of Alonso's party, save Sebastian and Antonio, drowsy. There is of course no parallel of meaning between this chapter and the play, but the similarity in imagery and incident makes some relationship-perhaps even a sub-conscious one on Shakespeare's part-quite possible.

Whatever its direct source, the appropriateness of the name certainly dictates its choice for this creature of air. According to the Neo-Platonism of Iamblichus the airy spirit is not



only rational but is "composed of a 'spiritual matter' . . . merely an organic part of the universe." The aerial as contrasted with the celestial spirit is sublunar, and thus corruptible; he is an administrant of natural processes, and he can be controlled by a wise man. But sub lunar spirits may be further subdivided, and the aerial spirit made only a particular elemental kind. In general the fourfold division of the elements—fire, water, earth and air—is accepted in magical writings. Agrippa holds that there are four such elements, that each has three manifestations, and that each element in its pure manifestation is unmixed and incorruptible; no magician can succeed without grasping this elemental nature. However, Thomas Vaughan insists that there are only two elements, earth and water, and that air is "a certain miraculous hermaproditic, the cement of two worlds and the medley of extremes," where all of nature is represented in "innumerable magic forms," in which the invisible species of all things are contained; he quotes Agrippa in calling air "corpus vitae spiritus nostri sensitivi," "The body of life of our sensitive spirit," and he says mysteriously, "I should amaze the reader if I did relate the several offices of this body, but it is the magician's back door and none but friends come in at it." Both these views, particularly Vaughan's, suggest possible bases for Shakespeare's use of a spirit whose element is air.

A contemporary of Shakespeare who is particularly concerned with the subject of spirits, Randall Hutchins, holds that

We who are formed in nature are sometimes lords over nature, and we effect operations so marvelous, so unexpected, and so difficult, that even the very Manes obey them, the stars are disturbed, the divine powers are won over, the elements become our servants.

Since this is true, he argues, it is likely that immortal spirits can perform greater works. And he believes that such spirits may be evoked by magic means. Evil forces in particular, may be either controlled or diabolically willful; the spirits of the air are among these.

Nor certainly should it be otherwise thought than that evil demons agitate the very bowels of the earth and arouse resounding tempests in the air, since in it some of them have their seat, as is by all means the case and obviously apparent. Witnesses to this are: Hermis Trismegistus, in *Ad Asclepium* near the beginning, and Peucer in his book on divination by dreams, where he declares that demons form various phantoms and portents like meteors in the air, portray representations of armies in conflict, reproduce blares of trumpets, clashes of arms, sounds of blows, cries of wailing, and applause of the victors, make forms of animals in the air from the confluence of gathered clouds and passage of light scattered from the sky.

The aptness of this and similar passages in giving a background for Ariel's exploit is apparent. Hutchins' work, the *Tractatus de spectris*, attempting to refute both the Roman Catholic view that specters are spirits of the dead and the "atheistic" one that they are hallucinations only, shows respect for the opinions of Neo-Platonic philosophers and of magicians. But Hutchins identifies elemental demons as exclusively bad specters. Dealing explicitly with "aerial spirits," he says



Such can descend to lower regions quicker than thought and, having taken on bodies from the denser air, appear visibly at times. . . . These spirits often disturb the air, stir up tempests and thunders. They do not retain one form, but take on various forms, and change these according to the manifold variety of attitudes they encounter, when either evoked by the incantations of witches or impelled by seditious influences to do harm.

And the association of aerial beings with tempest-raising and with such "influences" is not peculiar to this treatise. Robert Burton, in his "Digression of the Nature of Spirits," not only distinguishes between aetherial (celestial or angelic) and sublunary or natural spirits, but definitely divides the latter according to elements. He calls these devils, reflecting the orthodox translation of demons into Christian imps.

His "aerial spirits. . . are such as keep quarter most part in the aire, cause many tempests, thunder, and lightnings, tear Oakes. . . Counterfeit Armies in the air, strange noyses . . . and cause whirlwindes on a sudden, and tempestuous stormes. . . ." Like Bodin, Burton believes that the tempests of the sea are usually brought about by such spirits rather than by natural means. The fact that the main function of aerial spirits in this long passage and in Hutchins is the raising of tempests, resulting in "shipwracks" (and since they are spoken of as devils, their work is parallel to that of tempest-raising witches), is surely significant, particularly in conjunction with Burton's statement that these aerial creatures are those "that serve Magicians," the very spirits who performed the behests of magicians Agrippa, Paracelsus, Simon Magus, Iamblichus, and Trithemius! Thomas Heywood, who, incidentally, uses the name Ariel to designate a prime elemental angel ("the Earth's great Lord"), also refers to "Spirits of th' Aire" who "Have the cleare subtil aire to worke upon, / By causing thunders and Tempestuous Show'rs. . . ." He says, too, that Zoroaster "Who of Art Magicke was the first Art-master," commanded "such spirits." While both Burton and Heywood are writing some years after Shakespeare, the corroboration of Hutchins (writing in 1593 or thereabout) and Burton's reference to other authors holding parallel notions suggest that they are reporting a genuinely widespread belief. Here at last is a definite link between the esoteric-magic and popular traditions, as well as a new key to Ariel's conception; the tempest-raising aerial spirits which in Christian demonology are fallen angels are related to the great and dignified magi, to whom Prospero is certainly a brother in learning, dignity, benevolence, and nobility of mind.

Ariel, though, is not simply an idea. Use of folklore traditions, here as in the case of Prospero himself, gives a richness to Shakespeare's magic which the undramatic works of philosophy and occultism could not give. Ariel is generally understandable as being like the familiar spirit of witchcraft; he is always available and at Prospero's disposal (although he comes into his own as something more than a will-less slave in his speech which moves Prospero to mercy-V.i.7-19). And he has previously been under the command of a witch, Sycorax, who shut him up in the tree. The hiding of familiar spirits in such a manner is not uncommon; George Gifford tells of a witch who "had a spirite which did abide in a hollow tree," and his editor, Beatrice White, points out the similarity between this and Ariel's imprisonment, calling Sycorax "the typical malignant witch" and Prospero a kind of sorcerer, "Dr. Dee translated to the sphere of poetry." The synthesis of esoteric magic and witchcraft beliefs produces a dignified and even heroic magic



possessing the pyrotechnic attractiveness of the diabolical; and this synthesis is represented in Ariel, a being with the reality and verve of a familiar spirit or demon, appearing in thunder and lightning, and yet one who is the pure elemental spirit of higher magic, rather than a devil, and is essentially-like his element-free.

Shakespeare's Ariel-conjuring magic is fantastic; it is a different kind of synthesis from those appearing in the witchcraft writers or occultists, who conceive magic in one theoretical way or another, either ignoring its frightening dramatic manifestations in popular lore or rejecting its mysterious appeal and making it perverse and criminal. If Shakespeare used some source (perhaps Italian) from which Ayrer's *Die SchOne Sidea* and Antonio de Esclava's parallel tale in *Noches de Invierno* also derived, it seems likely that the magical incidents added to the story (of a deposed wizard-king whose daughter marries the usurper's son) are the dramatist's own work. Possibly the choice of Ariel's name from among those commonly used by occultists was largely prompted by a knowledge that aerial spirits were thought of as magicians' servants; and the use of such a spirit would apparently be consistent with the work of causing a tempest. The name itself may, in turn, be associated in memory with the Bible passage concerning voices from the earth, thunder, and a tempest. The last suggestion, at least, is highly conjectural. But it is interesting to see how all these possibilities are included as a complex of overtones in the name and nature of Ariel. While it is impossible to succeed with Shakespeare in the kind of psychological method which Lowes uses with Coleridge, it is important to realize the probability that the several *kinds* of source-concepts considered here are drawn upon by the playwright.

Finally, then, we have a picture of Ariel as primarily *elemental*, associated directly with the spirit-operated phenomenal world of Neo-Platonism, but maintaining the peculiar personality of a true familiar; the personality which saves him from being a perfectly inhuman thing. The superb combination of a philosopher's attractive formulation with a folk tale's palpable humanity is typical of Shakespeare. *The Tempest* unifies such various elements in a work of art which remains rich in the way no simply veiled abstraction or superstitious lore could be. And thus Ariel is the appropriate embodiment of what is, in a double sense, Shakespeare's magic.



Critical Essay #9

Source: "Ariel and the Magic of Prospero in *The Tempest*," in *Susquehanna University Studies*, 1978, pp. 229-37.

[In the following essay, Davidson explores the nature of the spirit Ariel and the tensions that this character represents. He maintains that Ariel is not purely a benevolent creature, and that he is more driven by the promise of freedom and by Prospero's threats of punishment than by any devotion to his master. Davidson also notes that Prospero's magic as a whole, in contrast to the contentions of earlier critics such as Frances Yates, is not simply good or white magic, but contains elements of so-called black magic, drawn from vindictiveness and selfishness as much as it is from the desire for human redemption.]

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a play that is dominated by the figure of the magus, who appears in the character of Prospero. In the early seventeenth century when Shakespeare wrote this play, scientific positivism had not yet smothered the occultism spawned by the Neo-Platonism revived in Italy more than a century earlier. This interest in the occult has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention by Frances Yates, who has recently suggested that Prospero's magic represents "a good magic" capable of being linked with a broad European tradition still very much alive in the first decades of the seventeenth century. But very careful attention to the iconography of magic within the play is needed, and we must remember that, in spite of the contemporary interest in the subject, the very idea of magic during this period could sound at once not only exciting but also dangerous. We will see that Shakespeare drew upon the conceptions of this art to build tensions which have their basis in the paradox of Renaissance magic itself, and in this manner he could set dramatic harmony and dissonance together before the spectators at the play. The result was not "unified" art, but a drama grounded in polarities and oppositions.

Ariel is, of course, the central figure of Prospero's magic, for through him he links himself with vast numbers of other lesser spirits who of necessity must obey his will. As a spirit of the air, Ariel is apparently one of the elemental daemons identified by Products and given their classic Renaissance description by Cornelius Agrippa in his *De Occulta Philosophia*. Indeed, Ariel is even listed by Agrippa as an elemental daemon, but of earth rather than air; according to Agrippa, such a spirit as Ariel would have power "over many legions" of lower spirits. Hence the occult lore of the Renaissance provides an explanation for the presence of the lesser ministers assigned to this marvellous creature of the air.

But we must not forget that magic, as Dr. Yates admits, was a very controversial topic in the Renaissance, and that opinions often varied widely concerning its essentials. It is thus that we discover a much darker side to Ariel than would at first appear. Is his agreement with Prospero of the kind that would classify him as "a *Pamillier Divell*" of which Le Loyer speaks with such horror? Even as an elemental spirit he would by many commentators have been associated with the fallen angels. Robert Burton calls them



"aerial devils that corrupt the air and cause plagues, thunders, fires, etc.; spoken of in the Apocalypse, and Paul to the Ephesians names them the princes of the air. . . ." These are able to cause "tempests," to "fire steeples, houses, strike men and beasts," and to "counterfeit armies in the air, strange noises, swords, etc." He cites Cardanus, whose father possessed "an aerial devil, bound to him for twenty and eight years." These details indeed do remind us directly of Prospero's spirit, bound to him for a certain length of time. Ariel causes the tempest which, with its wind, thunder, and lightning, gives its name to the play, and reportedly appears in the course of the storm as a ghostlike apparition burning in the rigging and in the cabins of the ship. Ferdinand, his hair standing on end, concludes: "Hell is empty, / And all the devils are here" (I.ii.214-15). Even more ominous is the fact that some books of Renaissance magic such as *The Key of Solomon* and the *Magia Naturalis et Innaturalis* attributed to "Faust" give the name of Ariel as indeed a demon or fallen angel. In some texts of the latter, Ariel is, along with Mephistophil, one of the seven Electors. He is a mercurial spirit who "like quicksilver. . . is difficult to constrain, hates to be tied and therefore dislikes pacts." Shakespeare's Ariel too is not only very quick but is thoroughly devoted to his own liberty.

The promise of freedom, to which is added threat of severe punishment, surely provides Ariel with a motive for outward obedience to Prospero. For the same reason, we can know very little with certainty concerning his character and can hardly make judgments about the degree of beneficence we should attribute to him. He has done "worthy service" to Prospero, has "Told [him] no lies, made no mistakings, serv'd / Without grudge or grumblings" (I.ii.247-49). Yet this passionless slave is not inwardly devoted to his master, as the servant Adam had been to Orlando in *As You Like It*. Even his lecturing of the apparently vengeful Prospero at V.i.17-20 could be merely an intellectual explanation of how human feelings ought to be engaged in a particular situation, though neither should Prospero's observation in Ariel of "a touch, a feeling / Of [his enemies'] afflictions" (V.i.2122) be entirely disregarded. Clearly, Shakespeare at this point wishes to humanize his little spirit, perhaps even at the expense of consistency. Like the fairy of folk tales, Ariel not only is a singer of fairy music, but also can act on the side of good when it suits him.

Ariel has also earlier given some solid evidence that he is not totally evil: he has refused the bidding of the "damn'd witch Sycorax" whom he once served. Presumably, though he gave her aid in some of the "mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible" at Argier before her banishment (I.ii.263-66), he would not assist her in carrying out the most terrible of her orders. As Prospero notes, Ariel was "a spirit too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorr'd commands, / Refusing her grand hests" (I.ii.272-74). Ariel has limits beyond which he will not trespass. Renaissance experts on magic appear to feel that aerial spirits most often are a mixture of good and evil, yet tend to discover more good in them than malice.

For his rebellion against the foul hag, Ariel had been confined in "a cloven pine; within which rift /



Imprison'd [he did] painfully remain / A dozen years" (I.ii.277-79). Sycorax was terribly enraged at her servant's refusal to do evil deeds of magnitude, and hence, aided by "her more potent ministers" (I.ii.275), she imprisoned him in such a way that, even long after her death, he continued suffering the most terrible pain and venting "groans / As fast as mill-wheels strike" (I.ii.280-81). Such pain seems curious in a bodiless creature of air who presumably does not eat, sleep, or have "such senses / As we have" (I.ii.41516). Walter Clyde Curry, however, cites Porphyry's assertion that daemons are not devoid of affections and feelings of pain. Agrippa is quite explicit: daemons, unlike angels, have bodies "in a manner materiall, as shadows, and subject to passion, that they being struck are pained. . . ." They are "spirituall" bodies, yet "most sensible" and capable of pain. In any case, Sycorax's punishment of her servant was to Ariel "a torment to lay upon the damn'd," nor could the witch with her limited power thereafter set him free. But upon his arrival on the island, Prospero, with his higher art of magic, "made gape / The pine, and let [Anel] out" (I.ii.289-93). The magus does not set the spirit free merely out of good will, however; he utilizes him for his own purposes and indeed even threatens him with worse punishment if he is not totally compliant with his commands:

If thou murmur'st, I will rend an oak,
And peg thee in his knotty entrails, till
Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters.
(I.ii.294-96)

For the present, Prospero requires absolute obedience so that his ambiguous schemes may move toward their conclusion.

Ariel and the lesser spirits act as Prospero's instruments by which he is able to extend his control over his enemies, who through the same magic have been brought to the island. Prospero is observed almost always thinking in terms of power, not of contemplation. The masque in IV.i is the major exception to the above statement, for otherwise he ordinarily appears to use his art for more practical ends than the achievement of understanding, illumination of mind, gnosis. He will send Ariel forth attired "like a nymph o'th' sea" and yet "invisible" at I.ii.301-06 partly in order that his noble antagonists might be led to the point of ultimate despair, which they will reach by the end of Act III. In II.i, Ariel may act the role of a guardian angel preserving Alonzo's life, but later he takes a more vengeful shape when he assists in the urchin show that will taunt the visitors with the table of food. For this latter episode, Ariel, his appearance changed to the visible "figure of [a] Harpy" (III.iii.83), will speak words of vengeance to the "three men of sin" after he has caused the food to disappear "*with a quaint device*" at the moment when he "*claps his Wings upon the table.*" He tells them that "Destiny" has caused "the never-surfeited sea. . . to belch up you" (III.iii.53-56). Swords cannot destroy him or his "fellow-ministers," though the spirits' invulnerability would not guarantee them against pain or "hurt" in the eventuality of being wounded. Ariel, speaking allegedly for "the powers" -i.e., Providence-pronounces a qualified curse upon Prospero's enemies: "Ling'ring perdition-worse than any death / Can be at once-shall step by step attend / You and your ways. . ." (III.iii.76-79). Here the mood of the masque which will be seen in the next scene almost breaks in upon the play, for Ariel in his most



terrible shape of vengeance will promise some hope if these enemies will feel sincere "heart-sorrow" and thereafter live "a clear life" (III.iii.81-82). The movement of the action toward a terrifying vindictiveness seems fortunately abated, and foreshadowed is the exchange of the romance pattern, with its eliciting of wonder, for the tragic pattern of woe.

The description of the banquet in the stage direction at III.iii.52 has been called a translation of a passage in the *Aeneid* in which harpies come "from downe the hills, with grisly fall the syght" to spoil a table laid out with food. But in Virgil there are no little ministers appearing as "*strange Shapes*" who first set up the banquet with gestures of invitation, nor is there a table from which, when a harpy "*claps his wings*" on its top, the food magically will be snatched up in an instant. The gimmick of having food instantaneously vanish is clearly what Reginald Scot would have called "juggling"; the trick itself was probably not unrelated to one trick "*which the jugglers call the decollation of John Baptist.*" In this instance, a special table with a sliding top is used to make a boy's head appear as if it has been cut off and placed in a platter. In *The Tempest*, the food laid out on a similar table top could well have been made to disappear when the mechanism was triggered by a boy under the table. It might be hard to believe that such a trick could utterly convince an audience of the power and success of Prospero's "high charms" (III.iii.88), but the total effect of his art is, admittedly, far more grandiose than these mere spectacles designed to deceive the eyes of his enemies.

Ariel also assists Prospero, of course, in the matter of handling the not so noble characters in the sub-plot. Here the spirit again leads men with music and helps (at IV.i.255) to put them to confusion by setting the inferior "goblins" upon them "*in shape of dogs and hounds, hunting them about.*" Such transformations of spirits under Prospero's control seem a far cry from the high goals, ideals, and methods professed by, for instance, the early Dr. John Dee, whose *Monas Hieroglypica* has been said to be mainly concerned with the

Idea of "the gnostic ascent to the One, to God." If it were not for the evidence of the masque, we would say that Shakespeare's magician has no more than worldly goals-goals which, to be sure, a popular audience might understand more readily than the highly complex and often suspect theories of Renaissance Neo-Platonism. Prospero is very .correct when he labels his art "this rough magic" (v.i.50).

For in practice his magic is indeed often "rough," rude, violent, and uncivil. He hardly merits the extravagant praise reserved by Paracelsus for only the most illuminate magus. Since he seems not to be a holy man comparable to the legendary occult master Hermes Trismegistus-the figure whose fame in the

Renaissance most closely identified him with the ideal-or the wise men who followed the star to Bethlehem, Prospero is not among that very highest order of magicians. Yet his occult wisdom gives him immense power on his island-and it is a power over nature which extends very far beyond any normal limits. Prospero has caused a solar eclipse, has raised storms at sea, has set loose thunder and lightning (V.i.41-46). There is even cursed necromancy, for "graves at [his] command / Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and



let 'em forth / By [his] so potent art" (V.i,48-50). Shakespeare thus does not allow his Prospero to be free from some practices of sorcery, which involve lower and less pure forms of magic.

Of course, as critics have noted, the catalogue of Prospero's magical feats in V.i.41-50 is part of Shakespeare's borrowing from Medea's prayer in Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* VII.265ff. But, as Prospero here is free to follow his source in linking his lesser spirits or "demi-puppets" with English fairy lore (V.i.34-40), so also he picks out from Medea's prayer those details which describe his own art. These details thus should be taken more seriously than sometimes has been the case. The Renaissance dramatist has chosen from Ovid some effects of magic that are, first, verifiably Prospero's; then he has added the manipulation of thunder and lightning; and finally, he has borrowed from Ovid's Medea her ability to cause earthquakes and to "call up dead men from their graves." Sandys' commentary on this passage finds Medea's necromantic magic which raises "the dead from their graves" to be "more credible" than her other acts, for there is biblical precedent in the case of "the witch of Endor: although whether done by divine permission, or diabolical Illusion, as yet is in controversy." The whole practice of necromancy, incidentally, is set forth by "one T.R." in a treatise on magic written about 1570 and printed by the skeptical Reginald Scot. According to tradition, Dr. Dee himself stooped to this art in collaboration with Edward Kelley, who functioned as his medium: together they are said to have raised a corpse in the churchyard of Walton-le-Dale Park. There is no reason that Prospero should not have the power likewise to call up dead men with his "so potent Art."

At very least, Shakespeare wanted his audience to be thoroughly impressed with the efficacy of Prospero's magic: he is indeed much more powerful than the vile witch Sycorax whose sorceries nevertheless could affect the tides. As her son Caliban comments, "his Art is of such pow'r / It would control my dam's god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of him" (I.ii.37476). Sycorax, since she was a witch, was a servant of her demon; Prospero, a conjurer or magician, is in command over his spirit Ariel. Further, as an emblem of her *submission* to the demonic, the hag had become linked sexually with an incubus who fathered Caliban (I.ii.321-22). It perhaps matters little in this play whether we see this perverse son as actually, like Merlin, the offspring of a devil, or as the result of conception from stolen semen taken from another source by a sterile incubus. English Renaissance incubi, lacking vital heat, are often reported to feel very cold to the women with whom they have intercourse. There may nevertheless have been good sport at Caliban's making, but, whatever he is, he surely stands in striking contrast to Prospero's issue. Miranda is in every way an almost miraculous child of a wise man: how utterly different is she from the witch's son!

Prospero's commanding position with regard to the spirit world is, however, dependent upon the books of learning with which Gonzalo graciously provided him at the time of his expulsion from Milan. Even Caliban recognizes that without his books, Prospero as a magus would be powerless (III.ii.90-93). In no sense is Prospero to be identified as a precursor of the idea of the modern autonomous man, for his books contain truths which must have been passed down faithfully by generations of learned men since the time of Hermes Trismegistus and Moses. He is dependent on the past, on the learning of the



Egyptians, the Greeks, the writers of the *Cabala*. Among his books there is one, of course, that is more important than the others. This is his conjuring book which we see him holding and to which he refers at V.i.57. It is a text which Prospero perhaps has prepared for himself out of older treatises on magic, for such a book is allegedly most effective if written out in the hand of the operator. The book is black.

The conjurer's staff and robes are also carefully made and are marked with talismanic symbols such as appear profusely, for example, among the illustrations in A.E. Waite's *The Book of Ceremonial Magic*. The rod would seem to be, along with the book, of particular importance in Shakespeare's play, for in his promise to abjure his magic he vows not only to "drown my book" but also to "break my staff" (V.i.54, 57). Prospero's "magic garment" is being worn by him, of course, when we first see him in the play, for he has apparently clothed himself in it initially in order that he might stir up the tempest. According to Scot's text, the exorcist "must be cloathed in cleane white cloathes"; elsewhere, linen cloth is specified. The Solomonic cycle even indicates that the linen thread, of which the garment is made, must have been spun by a maid. The breast of the finished garment should have talismanic characters embroidered on it, and the operator must also be protected by pentacles. *The Key of Solomon* says: "for the safety both of soul and of body, the Master and the Companions should have the Pentacles before their breasts, consecrated, and covered with a silken veil, and perfumed with the proper fumigations."

At the opening of Act V, Prospero exhibits himself in his long "*magic robes*" for the final time. The "King and's followers" are now effectively imprisoned by the magic which has been practiced: "They cannot budge till [Prospero's] release" sets them free (V.i.811). As the magician prepares to meet these enemies, he most likely makes his circle with chalk on the stage. The circle then will be occupied by Prospero at V.I.33ff as he launches into his conjuring, while at V.i.58 he will be joined in the circle by his frantic enemies. This circle must be marked with fantastic symbols of the kind that hardly would find their way into the text of a play in an age which took such matters seriously. Examples of possible designs may be seen in Pseudo-Agrrippa, Scot, and other works on magic. To King James I, the use of such "cirkles and art of Magie" could not fail to involve the operator in "an horrible defection from God."

The magic practiced by Prospero, however, has been called white magic, *theurgia*, by one of the most astute critics of *The Tempest*, and Frances Yates insists that it is "a good magic, a reforming magic." Nevertheless, the vengeful Prospero surely seems to practice an art that is neither purely white nor absolutely black: It is an art characterized by its ambiguity. Like the weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, Prospero is more effective as a character in this play because he fits no easily pre-conceived categories of either a moral or metaphysical nature. Of course, despite the clear theoretical distinctions claimed by Pico della Mirandola and others between white and black magic, in practice these distinctions tended to break down. And it would appear that Shakespeare set out deliberately to draw elements of Prospero's art from both kinds of magic. Hence the safest suggestion would appear to be that Prospero's art is *theurgia-goetia*, which in the Solomonic cycle is the term applied to magic that controls aerial spirits.



If the masque presents a quiet center within the structure of the play, a good deal of the action surrounding it in *The Tempest* is thus demon-ridden and turbulent. Yet even through the tempestuousness comes the sound of sweet music which strikes the senses mightily and which elicits from the spectator a feeling of wonder. Music, which Baif's Academy had really expected to function as a source of political concord in troubled France, is balanced against storm as forgiveness is balanced against vindictiveness, romance against tragedy. Prospero stands on both sides of this division, since in the action of the play he is responsible for both good and evil, order and chaos. As an operator working his magic on those around him, Prospero in a sense "projects" his own ambivalent spirit "into the enchanted thing, so as to constrain or direct it." Hence Alonso, feeling the force of the enchantment, hears "The name of Prosper" pronounced by the winds and billows and thunder (III.iii.97-99); magically present in the swirling tempest is the former Duke of Milan. From Prospero flow both tempest and sweet music-sounds that without doubt are pervasive in the play.



Critical Essay #10

Caliban has remained one of the most compelling characters in *The Tempest*, and has elicited a large portion of the critical interest in the play. Early commentators were often drawn to Caliban. In 1679 John Dryden cited this figure as an example of Shakespeare's genius for creating distinctive and consistent characters, and he remarked on the creature's malice, ignorance, and sinful nature. Dryden's emphasis on Caliban's negative qualities was not the rule, however, and later criticism has demonstrated the complexity of his character. In the eighteenth century, Joseph Warton remarked on the lyrical quality of Caliban's speeches. August Wilhelm Schlegel commented further on Caliban's dual nature, and, though he acknowledged that Caliban is base and cowardly, called him poetic "in his way." Partially because of his quasi-human status, Caliban has, like his counterpart, Ariel, been the subject of allegorical speculation. The nineteenth-century German critic Hermann Ulrici, for example, contended that Caliban exemplifies humanity's irrational inclination toward evil conduct. In 1873, Daniel Wilson offered a view of the character that was somewhat more sympathetic in arguing that the creature is amoral rather than instinctively evil and emphasizing his innate kinship with "the sounds and scenes of living nature." The play's exploration of human redemption through compassion and forgiveness intersects with Caliban as its limiting factor, according to J. Middleton Murry, for he is "the Nature on which Nurture will never stick." Still, critics have noted that by the end of the play Caliban does seem to have made some inroads toward understanding the connection between freedom, service, and loyalty, even if they are only tentative. The question of Caliban's nature and his potential for improvement in society was further explored by Frank Kermode, whose 1954 analysis of the play describes Caliban as a natural man against whom "civility and the Art which improves Nature may be measured." The fact that he compares favorably with the treacherous, if civilized, Antonio demonstrates that Caliban is not purely evil or even the most evil character in the play. More recently, commentators have again begun to reexamine Caliban's equivocal character with interest. Some, like John E. Hankins, have explored the sources-especially accounts of primitive peoples-that Shakespeare may have turned to for information in fashioning Caliban's character. D. G. James is representative in his remarks on Caliban's capacity to apprehend beauty and spirituality, tempered by a caution that his worldly nature reflects lasciviousness, treachery, and anarchism.

Source: "Caliban the Bestial Man," in *PMLA*, Vol. LXII, No.3, September, 1947, pp. 793-801.

[In the following essay, Hankins searches for the origins of Caliban in accounts of primitive peoples that were available to Shakespeare. Beginning with the likelihood that the name Caliban is a metathesis of the word "cambal" Hankins gives evidence from records of man-eating peoples that bear a resemblance to Caliban's character. Further extrapolation allows him to identify Caliban as a type of the "bestial man," a term derived from the writings of Aristotle that signifies an individual who is unable to perceive the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. This assessment



permits a greater understanding of the savage's character with respect to his lack of moral sense and almost total inability to demonstrate moral improvement in the play.]

The character of Caliban continues to be a source of speculation to readers of *The Tempest*, but gradually we are learning those elements of sixteenth-century thought which suggested him to Shakespeare. Some years ago Mr. Morton Luce pointed out that Caliban can be viewed in three separate ways: 1) as a hag-born monstrosity, 2) as a slave, and 3) as a savage, or dispossessed Indian. The second of these ways may be explained by the third, since the English could read many accounts of the manner in which the Spaniards had reduced the Indians to slavery. But, while Caliban worships a Patagonian god, he is the child of an African witch from Algier (Algiers). This would seem to indicate that Shakespeare is not trying to represent primarily a red Indian from the New World but has broadened the conception to represent primitive man as a type. The name *Caliban*, a metathesis [metathesis refers to the transposing of letters, syllables, or sounds in a word] of *cambal*, supports this view, for contemporary voyagers, as well as early travelers from Homer and Herodotus to Mandeville, had found cannibals in many different quarters of the world.

Caliban's birth furnishes an explanation of his appearance and character. He was "got by the devil himself" upon the witch Sycorax, and Prospero refers to him as "hag-seed," "demi-devil," and "a born devil." These references stamp him as the offspring of an incubus. In sixteenth-century demonology the incubus is sometimes *the* devil, sometimes a devil, who takes the form of a man in order to seduce women to illicit sexual relations. When he takes the form of a woman in order to seduce men, he is known as a succubus.

The offspring born to such unnatural unions are usually deformed in shape or possess some other singularity which makes them unlike normal human beings. Professor Cawley quotes evidence to this effect from Sir John Mandeville, Pierre Le Loyer, and Reginald Scot. Caliban's parentage would thus account for his monstrous appearance. It is also possible that Shakespeare thought of such parentage as explaining the more debased tribes of savages. The fact that Caliban "didst gabble like A thing most brutish" before learning Prospero's language is highly suggestive of a passage added to the 1665 edition of Reginald Scot's *A Discourse concerning Devils and Spirits* (II.iv):

Another sort are the Incubi, and Succubi, of whom It is reported that the Hunns have the original, being begotten betwixt the Incubi, and certain Magical women whom *Phillmer* the King of the *Goths* banished into the deserts, whence arose that savage and untamed Nation, whose speech seemed rather the mute attempts of brute Beasts, than any articulate sound and well distinguished words.

While Shakespeare could not have read this passage, he may have read its original or its equivalent in some earlier source which has remained undetected. It would account very neatly for his having combined into one individual the incubus-begotten monster and the debased savage or type of primitive man.



While Caliban's deformity makes him look like a fish, he is not like the ordinary conception of a merman, for he is "legged like a man! and his fins like arms!" (II.ii.34). Some monster of this kind had clearly been in Shakespeare's mind for a considerable period before he wrote *The Tempest*, as we gather from Thersites' jesting characterization of Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida*, III.iii.265: "He's grown a very land-fish, language-less, a monster." Caliban is a fishlike monster who dwells on land and was language-less until Prospero taught him speech.

It is entirely probable that Caliban's physical appearance is derived from some freak of nature brought back or described by returning voyagers. The early travelers give many descriptions of curious creatures, and Shakespeare shows a strong interest in them. Professor Cunliffe has noted a passage in Purchas, describing the voyage of Friar Joanno dos Sanctos in 1597. As the passage seems to have escaped general notice, I include it here:

Heere I may mention also a Sea monster, which we saw neere the River Tendanculo, killed by the Cafres, found by Fisher-men on the Shoalds. Hee was ash-coloured on the backe, and white on the belly, hayne like an Oxe but rougher: his head and mouth lyke a Tygre, with great teeth, white Mustachos a span long, as bigge as bristles which Shoo-makers use. He was ten spans long, thicker then a man; his tayle thick, a span long, *eares of a Dog, armes like a Man without haire, and at the elbowes great Finnes like a fish*; two short feet nigh his tayle, plaine like a great Apes, without legs, With five fingers a span long on each foot and hand, covered with skin like a Goose foot, the hinder feet having clawes like a Tygres; neere his tayle were the signes of a Male, his Liver, Lights and Guts like a Hogs. The Cafres seeing our Slaves slay him, fell upon hlm and eate him; which they which spare nothing had not done before, because they thought him (they said) *the sonne of the Devill* (having never seene the like) the rather, because *hee made a noyse which might be heard halfe a league off*.

The monster here described has certain features in common with Caliban. He is thought to be a son of the devil, he is found in the country of the cannibals, he has fins on his arms, he has dog's ears like "puppy-headed Caliban," he has a roaring voice. Shakespeare could not have read Purchas, but he may have read this account in manuscript, since the voyage took place thirteen years before the composition of *The Tempest*.

The influence of the voyagers is evident, not only in Caliban's appearance, but in the "un-inhabited island" where he dwells. While the island is supposedly in the Mediterranean, it draws certain features from accounts of the New World. Caliban's deity is Setebos, the "great devil" of the Patagonians. The storm is brewed with dew brought by Ariel from "the stillvex'd Bermoothes" and is patterned after the storm in the several accounts of Sir George Somers' shipwreck among those islands. The presence of spirits in the island has been attributed to the same accounts, which refer to Bermuda as "the isle of devils."

While these narratives were almost certainly in Shakespeare's mind, I suggest that the appearance of spirits in conjunction with Caliban was developed from two passages in



another book which he had read, Ludwig Lavater's *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght* (1572):

Ludouicus Viues, saythe in his firste booke *De veritate fidel* that in the newe world lately found out, ther is nothing more common, than, not only in the night time but also at noone in the midday, to see spirits apparantly, in the cities & fields, which speake, commaund, forbyd, assault men, feare them & strike them. The very same do other report which describe the nauigations of the gret ocean.

They whiche sayle on the greate Ocean sea, make reporte, that in certayne places, where the *Anthropophagl* doo inhabite, are many spirites, whiche doo the people there very muche harme.

Lavater gives as a marginal note to *Anthropophagi*:

"Which are people that eate and deuoure men." Shakespeare's familiarity with this common term is shown by Othello's reference to "the Canibals that each other eat, The Anthropophagi" (I.iii.143-144).

The activities of the spirits described by Lavater bear a certain resemblance to the treatment visited by Ariel and his fellows upon Caliban and the other plotters. As in Shakespeare, their location is indefinite, occurring at various points in the New World and "the greate Ocean sea." Most significant is Lavater's placing the spirits particularly in the lands of the Anthropophagi, or cannibals. For, as already mentioned, it is now generally conceded that the name *Caliban* is a metathesis of *canibal*; and in Lavater's account of spirits who plague the cannibals we find a probable source of Shakespeare's contrast between Ariel and Caliban.

We know that Shakespeare had read Montaigne's essay *Of the Caniballes*, in which the author describes certain savages from the New World and tells what he has learned concerning their native society. He is favorably impressed with this view of the "natural man," and his praise is reflected in Gonzalo's glowing description of the utopian state (II.i.147-168). Montaigne refers to the cannibals only incidentally as eaters of human flesh and seems more concerned with studying mankind in a primitive stage of social development. He says they were brought from "Antartike France." Eden places the savage worshipers of Setebos at "the 49 degree and a halfe vnder the pole Antartyke" and a few lines earlier mentions a meeting with "certeyne Canibals" farther up the coast in Brazil. The use of "Antartyke" and "Canibals" by both authors may have caused Shakespeare to connect the two accounts of primitive savages and to adopt Setebos as a deity of the cannibals, and hence of Caliban.

It is clear, however, that Shakespeare does not share Montaigne's enthusiasm for primitive man. Indeed, the personality of Caliban might be considered a refutation of the "noble savage" theory. He is a slave because he cannot live successfully with human beings on any other terms. He is educable to a certain extent but is completely lacking in a moral sense. He has repaid Prospero's kindness by attempting to violate Miranda's



chastity, and he cannot be made to see anything wrong in his action. He has imagination and sufficient intelligence to learn human language, but neither punishment nor kindness can give him a sense of right and wrong. He is not particularly to blame for his character "which any print of goodness will not take," since it resulted from his birth; and, in fact, his complete amorality makes him seem amusing rather than culpable. His love of music and his worship of Stephano as a god are probably based upon contemporary accounts of the Indians. Prospero's condemnatory words, like Othello's phrase "the base Indian," align Shakespeare with those who viewed the savages as a lower order of beings, rather than with idealists of primitive man.

Yet Caliban is something more than the primitive savage of the voyagers' narratives. His character is developed in accordance with a definite philosophical conception, the key to which is Prospero's phrase "the beast Caliban" (IV.i.140). This phrase is not spoken in anger but is intended to convey a precise meaning.

In my article "Misanthropy in Shakespeare," I have shown that Shakespeare used extensively the concept of bestiality as applied to human conduct and that he drew this concept directly from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to Aristotle, there are three evil states of the human mind: incontinence, malice, and bestiality. The incontinent man's evil appetites overcome his will to do good; the malicious man's will is itself perverted to evil purposes, though his reason perceives the difference between right and wrong; the bestial man has no sense of right and wrong, and therefore sees no difference between good and evil. His state is less guilty but more hopeless than those of incontinence and malice, since he cannot be improved.

While men can degenerate into bestiality through continued wrongdoing, Aristotle declares, a natural state of bestiality is relatively rare in the human race, existing occasionally among remote and savage tribes. Illustrating natural bestiality, he writes:

I mean bestial characters like the creature in woman's form [lamia?] that is said to rip up pregnant females and devour their offspring, or *certain savage tribes on the coasts of the Black Sea, who are alleged to delight in raw meat or in human flesh, and others among whom each in turn provides a child for the common banquet.*

It is probable that Shakespeare remembered this particular passage in the following lines from *King Lear*:

*The barbarous Scythian Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his oppelite, shan to my bosom,
Be as wen neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,
As thou my sometime daughter.
(I.i.118-122)*

The significant resemblance is the reference to tribes who eat their own children, a reference sufficiently uncommon to suggest a borrowing from the *Ethics*. His "barbarous Scythian" is also equivalent to Aristotle's "savage tribes on the coasts of the Black Sea," since the Scythians inhabited the northern and western shores of that sea. Herodotus



gives many instances of their barbarities; Montaigne follows Pliny and the medieval mapmakers in referring to them as cannibals. The combining of the Black Sea savages (Scythians) and the child-eaters in the same order by both authors suggests that Aristotle may be the source of Shakespeare's reference.

At any rate, it is difficult to see how Shakespeare could have avoided comparing Aristotle's Black Sea tribes with the savages of the New World. Aristotle convicts his tribes of bestiality on the ground that they ate their meat raw and had a taste for human flesh. Both Hakluyt and Stow condemn the Indians for eating raw meat, and numerous authors testify to their cannibalism. Such adjectives as "brutish," "bestial," and "base" are applied to them, and they become the type of the debased savage in certain areas of popular opinion. Stow also comments on the unintelligibility of their language, a point of resemblance to Caliban and to the incubus-begotten savages of Scot's *Discourse*.

In these parallels we can find a clue to the philosophic explanation of Caliban. The references to cannibals brought Aristotle and Montaigne together in Shakespeare's mind. Aristotle sees in the cannibal an example of bestial man in his natural state. Montaigne also uses the cannibal as an example of the "natural man" and praises highly the climate and customs of his country. Shakespeare uses that praise in Gonzalo's utopian speech, stating what such a country might be ideally, but he does not repeat Montaigne's praise of the cannibal as he actually exists. Rather, his Caliban, or *canibal*, is the embodiment of Aristotle's bestial man. The dramatist has sought to realize in the flesh the philosopher's concept of a primitive savage who has not attained the level of humanity.

If Caliban is to be regarded as a type of the bestial man, it is desirable that we determine in what his bestiality consists. He is not an eater of human flesh, possibly from lack of opportunity; but neither Montaigne nor Aristotle gives major emphasis to the eating of human flesh. They use cannibalism simply as an illustration of primitive or bestial conduct. Bestiality, in Aristotle, results from the absence of certain mental faculties which distinguish men from beasts. As men have immortal souls and beasts do not, it has been the task of philosophy to make the distinction with as much precision as possible.

Since the ancient Greeks, philosophy has recognized the three-fold nature of the soul. Every living thing has a soul. Plants have the vegetal soul, to which are assigned the powers of nourishment, growth, and reproduction. Animals have the vegetal soul included in the sensible soul, which possesses simple powers of perception. Man has both the vegetal and sensible souls included in the rational soul, which gives him the power of thought. To determine the exact division of functions between the sensible soul and the rational soul is not easy. Thomas Aquinas attempts it in his commentary on Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul*. According to Aquinas, the sensible soul possesses "intelligence," but only the rational soul possesses "intellect." Intelligence has the power to "apprehend," while intellect has the added power to "judge." Intellect may also be called "sapience" or "judgment." Intelligence is susceptible to error through following false knowledge or opinion. It is also prone to follow the "phantasies" or first impressions of things, lacking the reflective power of reason which allows man to



"judge" between the true and false, the right and wrong, in his own imaginings. When man's intellect is obscured in anyone of three ways (*tripliciter*), he also follows his phantasies, in the same manner as a beast.

Shakespeare shows his knowledge of these distinctions made by Aquinas. He thus distinguishes men from beasts in *The Comedy of Errors*, 11.1.20-23:

Men, more divine, the masters of all
these,.. Indued with intellectual sense and souls,
Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls.

"Sense" is here used with the general meaning of "perception." The word "intellectual" modifies both of the nouns following it. Intellectual sense is an attribute of intellectual souls, which distinguish men from beasts.

In the passage quoted, Aquinas points out that when man's intellect is "veiled" he follows his phantasies as does a beast. Intellect may be veiled by any strong passion, such as wrath, lust, or fear; by illness, such as frenzy or madness; and by sleep, as in dreams. In these instances, man cannot exercise rational control over his imaginings. These points are reflected in Shakespeare. When Romeo tries to kill himself in despair, Friar Laurence taxes him with showing "the unreasonable *fury* of a beast." When Cassio expresses remorse for getting drunk, he says: "I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial... To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast." Claudius describes Ophelia in her madness as "depriv'd of her fair judgement, without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts." These instances show that Shakespeare does not use "beast" merely as a word of obloquy but as a precise term to indicate the absence of the intellectual faculty. When the deficiency is permanent, as in Caliban, the man is a beast, and "the beast Caliban" is an accurate characterization.

It should be noticed that Caliban has to high degree the qualities of "intelligence" allowed by Aquinas to the beasts. He enjoys the sweet music of the isle, dreams of riches falling from heaven, and otherwise shows a fertile imagination. His foolish worship of Stephano as a god shows his lack of "judgment" (v.i.295-297), while his attempts upon Miranda's virtue and Prospero's life show the lack of a moral sense. Antonio and Sebastian are also would-be murderers, but at the end they are able to recognize the evil of their schemes, as Caliban cannot do, having no sense of right and wrong. It is this lack, rather than physical deformity or dullness of wit, that stamps him as a type of the bestial man.

Prospero believes that Caliban's nature is hopelessly incapable of moral improvement (I.ii.352-360), but Caliban's recognition of his folly at the end of the play might indicate some latent capacity for the perception of error. We need not debate the point. It is sufficient for our purposes that Shakespeare has shown, through Prospero's words, his intent to use the bestial-man tradition as an element of his play.

Caliban is Shakespeare's most original character, but even he has literary forebears. His parentage is taken from contemporary demonology. His appearance and



environment are suggested by writers on distant lands. His character results from Aristotle's conception of the bestial man. Yet here the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, which seem hardly more than hints for the remarkable creation that Shakespeare has based upon them. Fortunately, he has given us a clue to his sources in his choice of Caliban's name.



Critical Essay #11

Source: "The New World," in *The Dream of Prospero*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1967, pp. 72-123.

[In the following excerpt, James focuses on Caliban's character and his thematic significance to the play as a whole. Describing Caliban as a misshapen but definitely human creature likely drawn from contemporary reports of New World primitives, James recounts his history and his encounter with Prospero, who taught him language, but also heaped scorn on his new slave. James remarks, however, that Caliban possesses the ability to perceive the wonder of the world and to capture its sense of mystery and supernatural awe with his naive mind. James adds that the lines Caliban speaks "disclose the deepest truth about him" and argues that, as a primitive, he represents man in contact with the transcendent nature of life so often obscured in civilized man.]

I turn now to the figure of Caliban. I have said [elsewhere] there was nothing unimaginable to a Jacobean audience in a creature born of a witch and incubus. But I have also said that Shakespeare will have had in mind John White's drawings of the Indians he saw on Grenville's expedition of 1585. If Caliban emerges out of the murky past of demonology and witchcraft, he also emerges as a human figure out of a New

World whose inhabitants had been disclosed in White's drawings to the gaze of the ancient civilization of Europe. Shakespeare had taken on a complicated job. He must have his magician and his demonology, and his Ariel; and Caliban must somehow belong to their world. But Prospero is also the Old World in its dealings with the New; and in this world, Caliban is no monster but a man; and nowhere in *The Tempest* is Caliban to be seen as less than human. Caliban was 'a freckled whelp hag-born', says Prospero; but in the next line he gives him a 'human shape'. Prospero indeed also calls him 'a mis-shapen knave', and says that he is 'as disproportion'd in his manners as in his shape'; but it is Trinculo, Stephano, and Antonio who talk of a monster and a fish. Prospero speaks vaguely of Caliban's misshapeness in describing a creature represented as of monstrous birth: some measure of compromise there had to be, in order to relate the 'poor Indian' to the offspring of witch and daemon.

But it is also true that Prospero everywhere pours scorn and loathing on Caliban: Caliban was 'filth', a 'demi-devil', 'capable of all ill', 'would take no print of goodness', and was a 'born slave' beyond the reach of freedom. There could, indeed, be no question of Shakespeare's giving a sentimental picture of the primitive Indian. No doubt he had read the early descriptions of the Indians by Hariot and Barlowe; but by 1610 the picture had changed. The author of the *True Declaration* spoke of the ills and accidents that befell the colony in 1609; and he went on to describe how Powhatan like 'a greedy vulture' carried out ambush and massacre at the expense of the enfeebled colony. This, or something like it, had become the picture of the Indian which now prevailed and was officially acknowledged; and there was nothing, in Prospero's eyes, which relieved the malignity of Caliban.



But Shakespeare is at pains to recount the history of Caliban from the time of Prospero's coming to the island, and it is clear that there is much more to Caliban than Prospero allows. Caliban's age, when Prospero came to the island, can, we may suppose, be measured by Ariel's twelve years' imprisonment; and Sycorax had died within the space of these twelve years, leaving the island

*Save for the son that she did litter here,
A freckled whelp hag-born-not honour'd with
A human shape.*

But when Prospero came to the island Caliban was alone and languageless.

*When thou cam'st first, says Caliban,
Thou strok'st me, and made much of me;
would'st give me
Water with berries in't; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night; and then I lov'd
thee,
And show'd thee all the qualities O' th' isle, The fresh springs, brine, pits, barren place
and
fertile.*

*Cursed be I that did so! . . . All the charms
Of Sycorax: toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own King: and here you
sty me*

*In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest O' th' island.*

*Prospera: Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have
us'd thee*

*Filth as thou art, With human care. and lodg'd thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.*

*Caliban: O ho, O ho! would't had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
ThiS isle with Calibans.*

*Prospera: A bhorred slave
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each
hour*

*One thing or other: when thou did'st not,
savage,
Know thine own meaning, but would'st gabble
Me A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes*



*With words that made them known. But thy
vile race,
Though thou did'st learn, had that in't which
good natures Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserv'd more than a prison.
Caliban: You taught me language, and my
profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language.*

And when Prospero orders him off to fetch his logs, Caliban says:

*I must obey: hiS Art is of such pow'r
It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
And make a vassal of him.*

This, then, is the history of Caliban up to the time of the play's beginning; and I now comment briefly upon it before those coming straight from the sophistication of Naples and Milan appear upon the scene, and initiate the proper action of the play.

In the beginning, Prospero had cherished Caliban, and Caliban loved Prospero in return. But Caliban will be so quick at a later stage to take Stephano for a god that we may fairly assume that he had earlier taken Prospero for one. Thus the Indians in the early days had been disposed to view the white man. Prospero, like Stephano, must have dropped from heaven. 'Hast thou not dropped from heaven?' he said to Stephano; and when Stephano declares himself the man in the moon, Caliban says:

*I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee:
My mistress show'd me thee, and thy dog, and
thy bush.*

For Stephano, Caliban will do what he had done for Prospero when Prospero loved him:

*I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;
And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts;
Show thee a Jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmoset: I'll bring thee
To clustering filberts, and sometimes I'll get
thee
Young scamels from the rock. Wilt thou go
with me?*

And then, if Caliban will speak like this, filled with the wonder of the world he sees and knows, he will also speak of the wonder of what transcends the world.

*Be not afeard, the Isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and
hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments*



*Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes
voices, That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again' and then, in
dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show
Riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd,
I cried to dream again.*

What shall we say of this? There is first the music Caliban hears, and then the voices; and the voices win him back to sleep and dreams after long sleep; and then, in dream, the clouds open to him and show him riches ready to be yielded to him; but they are denied him by his waking; his waking is a morning; and he cries to dream again. Mr. Robert Graves has remarked that in these lines there is 'an illogical sequence of tenses which creates a perfect suspension of time'; and this is so. Caliban is not narrating his past, but describing his continuing condition: his continuing sense of wonder and mystery, and of a transcendent and supernatural life to which also the 'perfect suspension of time' applies. This is the dreaming innocence and grace of Caliban. At a later stage in the play, Prospero, in words as famous as those of Caliban, will speak of sleep and dream, and of our life in terms of them:

*We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with asleep.*

I shall speak later of these last lines; but I remark now that if Caliban's lines disclose the deepest truth about him, what above all Shakespeare saw in the primitive man about whom such contradictory reports came to him from the New World, Prospero will yet say of him that he is a born devil, upon whose nature nurture will never stick, on whom all his pains had been quite lost. Prospero is the highest and most spiritual form of sophistication in the play; yet he can speak like this of Caliban. This is not all, indeed, as we shall see, that Prospero has to say about Caliban. But I shall now give, in what may seem a strange apposition to the lines of Caliban of which I have been speaking, these words from one of the greatest spirits of Christendom:

In this Divine union the soul sees and tastes abundance, inestimable riches, finds all the rest and the recreation that it desires, and understands strange kinds of knowledge and secrets of God, which is another of those kinds of food that it likes best. It feels likewise in God an awful power and strength which transcends all other power and strength: it tastes a marvellous sweetness and spiritual delight, finds true rest and Divine light and has lofty experience of the knowledge of God, which shines forth in the harmony of the creatures and the acts of God. Likewise, it feels itself to be full of good things and far withdrawn from evil things and empty of them; and, above all, it experiences, and has fruition of, an inestimable feast of love. . . .

It may seem a far cry from Shakespeare's Caliban to the mysticism of St. John of the Cross. But in truth, it is not so far. Shakespeare was writing within the limits imposed by



the secular Jacobean theatre; and we see Caliban, in his primitiveness, credulity, polytheism, terrified by daemons and spirits (which he distinguishes from 'gods') which set upon him; but he is also, in his helplessness and dependence, exposed to a mysterious and transcendent reality. This, in the end, is 'the thing itself', divided, in the encompassing darkness, between terror and love, despair and adoration, and aware, above all, of a transcendent, supernatural world. This is Caliban disclosing to us the primary fact about our life: and I add that if Shakespeare's play may be said to be about anything, it is, for one thing, about the tragic diminution, which 'sophistication' and civilization must bring, of man's sense of his dependence on a transcendent world. What is primordial in man's nature is forced back by nature, culture, and authority; but the deep thing remains, however obscured. The brittle edifice of civilization, culture, and science cannot change it; and this we see if we look to the saints and the poets who break through the prison of sophistication in which many men find a delusory safety.

Adaptations

The Tempest. George Schaefer, 1963.

Ethereal production of the play that stresses its magical aspects. Distributed by The Video Catalog, Films for the Humanities & Sciences. 76 minutes.

The Tempest. Cedric Messina, Dr. Jonathan Miller, BBC, 1980.

Part of the BBC "Shakespeare Plays" series. Distributed by Ambrose Video Publishing, Inc. 150 minutes.

The Tempest. Bard Productions, Ltd., 1988. Production that focuses on the play's theme on humankind's exploration of their role in the universe. Distributed by Britannica Films. 126 minutes.



Further Study

Literary Commentary

Arthos, John. "Dream, Vision, Prayer: *The Tempest*." In *Shakespeare's Use of Dream and Vision*, pp. 173-202. Totowa, N. J. Rowman and Littlefield, 1977.

Survey of *The Tempest* that outlines its spiritual aspects.

Berger, Karol "Prospero's Art." *Shakespeare Studies* 10 (1977): 211-39.

Discusses Prospero's endeavor on the island in terms of magic and politics and argues that magic (of the kind that Prospero practices) falls to account for free will Berger notes that this aspect of Prospero's character represents one of the main themes of *The Tempest*: the opposition between imagination and reality, and the exposing of the dangers of a retreat into the self that leads to the neglect of others.

Bradbrook, M. C. "Romance, Farewell: *The Tempest*." *English Literary Renaissance* 1, No.3 (Autumn 1971): 239-49.

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Brown, Paul "'This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism." In *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, pp. 48-71. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985.

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Chambers, E. K. "*The Tempest*," in *Shakespeare: A Survey*, pp. 304-15, 1925. Reprinted by Hill and Wang, 1959. Discusses characterization of Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban, and comments on the mood of the play.

Clarke, Charles Cowden. "*Tempest*," in *Shakespeare Characters: Chiefly Those Subordinate*, pp. 273-92, London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1863.

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Craig, Hardin. "Magic in *The Tempest*." *Philological Quarterly* XLVII, No.1 (January 1968): 8-15.

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Davidson, Clifford. "The Masque within *The Tempest*." *Notre Dame English Journal* X, Nos. 1 and 2 (1976): 1217.

Discusses the role that the masque-symbolic of the generative principle of the universe-plays in enriching the thematic structure of *The Tempest*.

Dryden, John. Preface to *Troilus and Cressida, or, Truth Found Too Late*, p 247, 1679. Reprinted by Cornmarket Press, 1969.

Regards Caliban's characterization as proof of Shakespeare's genius.

Fitz, L. T. "Mental Torment and the Figurative Method of *The Tempest*." *English Miscellany* 25 (1975-76): 135-62.

Argues against two common critical perceptions of *The Tempest*: that its mood is "serene" and that it reflects a lack of stylistic experimentation.

Gildon, Charles. "Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare," in *The Works of William Shakespeare, Vol. 7*, pp. 257-444, 1710 Reprinted by AMS Press, 1967.

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Harrison, G. B. "*The Tempest*:" *Stratford Papers on Shakespeare* 5 (1962): 212-38.

Presents an overview of *The Tempest*, commenting on the mechanics of plot and character in the play. Interspersed with this commentary are some observations on the historical background to the play, especially in relation to English colonialism around the time that Shakespeare wrote.

Holland, Peter "The Shapeliness of *The Tempest*." *Essays in Criticism* XLV, No.3 (July 1993): 208-29.



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James, D. G. *The Dream of Prospero*. Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1967, 174p.

Considers the principal theme of the play to be the conflict between temporal and spiritual obligations.

Kott, Jan. "The *Tempest*, or Repetition." *Mosaic* X, No. 3 (Spring 1976-77): 23-36.

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Lindley, David. "Music, Masque and Meaning in *The Tempest*." In *The Court Masque*, edited by David Lindley, pp. 47-59. Manchester University Press, 1984.

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Orgel, Stephen. Introduction to *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare, edited by Stephen Orgel, pp. 1-56. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Shakespeare for Students (SfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, SfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels



frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in SfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by SfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
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Other Features

SfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Shakespeare for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series.

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A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Shakespeare for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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