

The Tempest: Shakespeare's Farewell to His Art

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I created a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time too.... I like to think of the world I created as being a kind of keystone in the universe; that, small as that keystone is, if it were ever taken away the universe itself would collapse. My last book will be the Doomsday Book, the Golden Book.... Then I shall break the pencil and I'll have to stop.

—William Faulkner, in *Writers at Work: the Paris Review Interviews*, first series, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1959), p. 141.

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which occupies the final place in the Shakespearean corpus, may be understood as a presentation of an artist, perhaps *the* artist, looking backward over an entire body of work. More specifically, *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's final dramatic presentation of his ultimate view of existence, a vision that finds its voice in Prospero, the wise "magician," whose voice in a significant sense is Shakespeare's own. Therefore, *The Tempest* is a play about the dramatist and the dramatist's art, intention, and vision of existence. The play abounds with echoes of Shakespeare's earlier plays, and the powerful art that Prospero, or Prospero-Shakespeare (as I prefer to call him on the basis of what follows), possesses is *au fond* the playwright's theatrical art.

The focal center of the play, then, would be Prospero-Shakespeare's speech in which he bids farewell to his art, a speech in which he looks back on the entire Shakespearean body of work (V. I. 40-64):

¹ Citations from *The Tempest* in are to *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (New York, 1964).

Ye Elves of hils, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
And ye, that on the sands with printless foote
Doe chase the ebbing-*Neptune*, and doe flie him
When he comes backe: you demy-Puppets, that
By Moone-shine doe the greene sowre Ringlets make,
Whereof the Ewe not bites: and you, whose pastime
Is to make midnight-Mushrumps, that reioyce
To heare the solemne Curfewe, by whose ayde
(Weake Masters though ye be) I have bedymn'd
The Noone-tide Sun, call'd forth the mutenous windes,
And twixt the greene Sea, and the azur'd vault
Set roaring warre: To the dread ratling Thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted *Joves* stout Oke
With his owne Bolt: The strong bass'd promontorie
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluckt up
The Pyne, and Cedar. Graves at my command
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough Magicke
I heere abiure: and when I have requir'd
Some heavenly Musicke (which even now I do)
To worke mine end upon their Sences, that
This Ayrie-charme is for, I'le breake my staffe,
Bury it certain fadomes in the earth,
And deeper then did ever Plummet sound
Ile drowne my booke. *Solemne musicke.*

The actions to which Prospero-Shakespeare refers are, for the most part, not actions that have occurred within *The Tempest* itself. Therefore, it seems that the reverberations of earlier Shakespearean plays that echo in the speech must necessarily have evoked in the "mind's eye" of the aware audience the plays to which they refer and, by extension, must necessarily refer to those plays.

The "Elves of hils, brooks, standing lakes and groves" are the minor spirits in *The Tempest*. Prospero-Shakespeare next invokes another spirit who "on the sands with printless foote/ Doe[s] chase the ebbing-*Neptune*, and doe[s] flie him/ When he comes backe." That a spirit is being invoked here one may deduce from the observation that only the foot of a spirit would leave no footprint, and that the spirit could only be Ariel one may deduce from a recollection of his first song (I. ii. 441-445):

*Come unto these yellow sands,
and then take hands:
Curtsied when you have, and kist
the wild waves whist:
Foote it featly heere, and there....*

Prospero-Shakespeare's third invocation, to the "demy-Puppets, that/ By Moone-shine doe the greene sowre Ringlets make," is to the fairies of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (see esp. *Dream* II. ii. 90); and his final invocation, to those "whose pastime/ Is to make midnight-Mushrumps, that reioyce/ To heare the solemne Curfewe," is to the three

weird sisters of *Macbeth*. It is by the aid of these spirits, among others, that Prospero-Shakespeare has been able to exercise his art, and he calls them “Weake Masters” because they are masters only within the realms to which Prospero-Shakespeare has assigned them, and because they are weak with respect to Prospero-Shakespeare, from whom they derive all their power.

Prospero-Shakespeare follows his invocation by a list of his accomplishments, a list that brings before us, in miniature, a vision of certain key plays that have preceded *The Tempest*, with a concentration on the tragedies. Prospero-Shakespeare “bedymn’d/ The Noone-tide Sun, call’d forth the mutenous windes” in *King Lear*, “[a]nd twixt the greene Sea, and the azur’d vault/ Set roaring warre” in *Othello* (II. I. 1-113 & 208-217; esp. 5, 24, 25, 39, 45, 80, 109, 213). He gave fire “[t]o the dread ratling Thunder/ ...and rifted *Joves* stout Oke/ With his owne Bolt” in *Julius Caesar* (I. iii. 4-10; also cf. *Coriolanus* V. iii. 148-153); “[t]he strong bass’d promontorie” that he “made shake” is the castle at Elsinore in *Hamlet*, a castle that was situated on a promontory in Denmark (cf. *Hamlet* I. iv. 70, II. ii. 291); and he “by the spurs pluckt up/ The Pyne, and Cedar” when in *Macbeth* he moved the trees of Birnam Wood to Dunsinane Castle. When he finishes his summary with “Graves at my command/ Have wak’d their sleepers, op’d, and let ’em forth,” he can mean any one of a number of plays in which ghosts appear, or he can mean the last plays in which persons seemingly or allegedly dead are miraculously brought back to life. This, then, is what Prospero-Shakespeare has accomplished by his “so potent art.”

Just as *The Tempest* is, as it were, the capstone of the entire Shakespearean corpus, this speech is the capstone of *The Tempest* itself, to which one must turn for a retrospective synthesis of Shakespeare’s body of work (and teaching) as a whole.

It is well to begin with some general observations about this final play.

First, the text of the play is the best preserved of all the Shakespearean plays. Indeed, “the text of this play as it has come down to us in the Folio,—and there is no Quarto,—is of remarkable purity” (*New Variorum*, Appendix, 271).² This frees one to experience and read the play without a plethora of scholarly distractions.

Next, one should consider the “godlessness” of the play, by which I mean that it is set in a world of absolute religious enlightenment, a world that transcends any and all religious perspectives. The Judaeo-Christian God neither appears in the play nor is invoked by any of its personages.³ Only the most generalized deities (and those preponderantly pagan) are referred to throughout.⁴ The stance of religious neutrality that Shakespeare adopts in the play is most clearly indicated in the discussions of the recent marriage of Alonso’s daughter, Claribel, to an African monarch (see II. I. 72-79, 125-130, 267-285; and V. I. 246-247). This marriage would have represented to the Elizabethans a marriage between an Italian Catholic and an infidel, a marriage that would not have been sanctioned except in the kind of world with which Shakespeare presents us in *The Tempest*.

² From this perhaps one might be tempted to infer that Shakespeare and his editors took special care that this play, above all others, be preserved intact, and that the finality of the text *qua* text is not merely accidental.

³ Only Caliban and Trinculo use the word ‘god’ in the singular. The three times that Caliban uses it (II. ii. 124, 158; V. I. 349), he is referring to Trinculo, and Trinculo’s only use of it (II. ii. 160) refers to himself.

⁴ “The heavens” (I. ii. 73, 136, 206, 498; IV. I. 21; V. I. 174); “Heaven” (III. I. 82; IV. I. 9); “Providence” (I. ii. 188; V. I. 223); “Heavenly” (V. I. 59, 118); “Fortune” (I. ii. 210; V. I. 307); “Destiny” (II. I. 275; III. iii. 74). Other references are “the wills” (I. I. 78), “any God of power” (I. ii. 12), “Some God o’th’land” (I. ii. 453), “conscience” (II. I. 305-306), “Fate, the Elements” (III. iii. 82), “the Powres” (III. iii. 94), the pagan theology of the masque (IV. I. 67-159), and “gods” (V. I. 238).

the members of the Court Party gives subtle and profoundly penetrating clues to his intelligence and moral character through his reactions, both verbal and physical, to this situation.

The gauge by which to measure the individuals on board is the boatswain, a competent sailor and a sensible person who knows his place in society. That the latter is true is made explicit toward the end of the play when he enters (V. I. 256) and brings his news (V. I. 264-268) to the company assembled there. He first pays tribute to the priority of the Court Party by announcing their safety as the “best newes,” making the news of the ship’s safety secondary to that.

This is important because from it one can conclude that when he is being harsh or abrupt or impudent to his societal betters he is doing so for a good and urgent reason, namely, the saving of his ship and those on board. The passengers react in two ways to him: generously or scornfully. Only Gonzalo reacts generously, seeing in the boatswain’s brusque manner a natural command of the situation in which he can put confidence (cf. I. I. 36, 54-56). Anthonio, Sebastian, and Alonso react to the boatswain with scorn and distrust. Sebastian’s reaction is bred from pure terror; he loses all sense of authority, either conventional in the form of the monarch (cf. I. I. 75) or natural in the form of the boatswain (cf. I. I. 49-50).

Anthonio and Alonso are so bound up in notions of the conventional authority that on the ship would be in the form of the captain (I. I. 17-18, 20), that they are blind to natural authority. Or rather, Anthonio is blind, as his excessively maledictory comments about the boatswain reveal (cf. I. I. 52-53, 65-67). Alonso, on the other hand, is only myopic: despite his asking for the captain, he also gives some encouragement to the sailors (I. I. 18); he hurls curses at no one; and he retires to pray to a higher natural authority (cf. I. I. 62).

These reactions establish a hierarchy: Gonzalo at the top, sensitive to both natural and conventional authority (cf. I. I. 62-63); Alonso, myopic with respect to the former and able to see the latter; and Sebastian, blind to both. Ferdinand is conspicuously absent except for a brief silent appearance (I. I. 15) and except by glancing allusion (I. I. 62), an allusion that tells us that he too is praying. This suggests that Ferdinand, realizing his inability to be of any help in the crisis (i.e., realizing his limitations, thereby implicitly demonstrating his modesty and humility), leaves the practical business at hand to the sailors where it naturally belongs without attempting in any way to impose on them his conventional authority as prince (thereby implicitly demonstrating his respect for the proper authority at the proper time, i.e., his prudence), but seeks instead a supernatural authority to supplement the natural authority of the sailors (thereby implicitly demonstrating his lack of worldly experience and suffering and labor, the proper possession of which would lead him to see the insufficiency of the supernatural here and the relative roles of the supernatural, the natural, and the conventional). Ferdinand, then, has the highest insight of any of the passengers (although it will only be actualized fully on the isle), and his supremacy will be recognized when Prospero-Shakespeare has him stranded separate from the others.

All the passengers, however, with the possible exception of Gonzalo (whose simple-minded goodness remains unchanged from beginning to end), are deficient to a greater or lesser degree, and in the storm scene, their deficiencies have been revealed either explicitly or implicitly.

The members of the Court Party stand naked before us, divested of their conventional appearances in and by means of the storm,⁵ and their “nakedness” is a necessary condition for their moral education, an education that will be effective only if they are, in some sense, educable.⁶

The storm has served its purpose, and so it abates under Prospero-Shakespeare’s direction. It is here for the first time, in the conversation with Miranda, that one discovers who had been in control of the storm, that the storm was just an illusion, and that “there’s no harm done” (I. ii. 18). Prospero-Shakespeare then divests himself of his magic art (“plucke my Magick garment from me: So,/ Lye there my art”—I. ii. 31-32), and he becomes Prospero, the father, relating the factual details of the expulsion to Miranda, his self-ignorant daughter (“who/ art ignorant of what thou art”—I. ii. 22-23). The events that he relates are events that occurred either in Milan or before his arrival at the enchanted isle when his art could become effective. The robe, then, is the symbol of his art, so that whenever he divests himself of it, he leaves the realm of the artist and assumes his nominal roles either as father or, later, as ruler of his temporal kingdom. This scene, then, is a subtle foreshadowing of the play’s climax (V. I.) and epilogue. Prospero-Shakespeare can withdraw willingly from his role as magician-dramatist, and he can enter with ease into his role as Prospero, father/ruler, something that he could not do as a young person.

Then Ariel arrives and describes the effect of the mock tempest on the passengers, a description whose particular reminiscences of Lear on the heath reaffirm the general connections between the two plays (I. ii. 241-244):

⁵ This bears comparison to the storm scenes in *Lear* in which one sees not only the physical nakedness or near-nakedness of Lear and Edgar in the storm but also the nakedness (i.e., nature) of humanity by means of the storm. To pursue the analogy further, one might say that the opening of *The Tempest* is a microcosmic mirror-reflection of *King Lear*, and as such, it is Shakespeare’s “sequel” to *King Lear*. One might even be tempted to say that if *King Lear* is the ultimate *in* human existence, then *The Tempest* is the ultimate *view of* (or stance toward) human existence.

⁶ The situation of the Court Party here is analogous to that of Prospero when he first arrived at the isle. That is, his art at that time was the necessary condition for his attainment of wisdom, the sufficient condition being his openness to his experience on the isle and his potential for being educated by them. To have just a hint as to how this points to *The Tempest* as the microcosm of the entire Shakespearean corpus, consider that in his early comedies and in the English histories as a whole, the primary gauge of virtue is openness or commitment to experience or appearance. One need only think of Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors*, Theseus and the artisans in *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Orlando in *As You Like It*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, and Prince Hal in *Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2*, as those who maintain this stance (openness) from beginning to end; or of those who undergo a metamorphosis, i.e., those who are initially closed but who move to openness, among whom one finds The King of Navarre and his courtiers who learn that the darkness of the cloistered Academy must give way to the daylight of the open field in *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, and Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*; or of those who abstain from this stance (i.e., remain closed) from beginning to end and suffer the necessary consequences therefrom, among whom one finds all Shakespeare’s monarchs except Prince Hal-Henry V in the English histories and Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. In the tragedies as a whole, educability becomes the primary gauge of virtue in humans (the tragic heroes and their lesser analogues) who are necessarily closed to experience in a very significant sense, i.e., who face existence through a veil of illusion. That this is central to tragedy can be seen in what seems the unavoidable tendency of humans to think of tragedy as a learning experience, i.e., as the education to sight of a great-souled human gone blind. In this overall scheme, then, the late comedies (*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Tempest*) represent Shakespeare’s attempt to fuse the virtues of openness (or commitment) and educability, an attempt that is not totally successful until the fusion is effected in the wisdom of Prospero, the dramatic embodiment of Shakespeare’s culminating view of human existence.

Prospero. Who was so firme, so constant, that this coyle
Would not infect his reason?
Ariel. Not a soule
But felt a feaver of the madde.

How did those on board react? Ariel relates that “all but Mariners/ Plung’d in the foaming bryne, and quit the vessell” (I. ii. 245-246), and he adds—and it is indeed a significant addition—that Ferdinand (who appears so ‘brave’ to Miranda, an apparent bravery to whose reality Ferdinand must be brought by Prospero-Shakespeare) was the first to jump. What happened to those who jumped? “On their sustaining garments not a blemish,/ But fresher than before” (I. ii. 256-257). The members of the Court Party, then, after having been stripped ‘naked,’ are re-freshed to face their ordeal. Even the sea in which they were immersed was an illusion.

Thus, the sea is robbed of the menacing appearance that humans have come to associate with it, and it becomes a medium for initiating the first step in a positive metamorphosis. This description of the sea is not only a prologue to Ariel’s song (I. ii. 460-468), in which the sea is explicitly seen as a vehicle for transformation, but also it points to the ultimate vision of the play.

The entrance of Caliban is anticipated by what is heard about his ancestry, and before long, he appears. His role in the play is somewhat problematical inasmuch as he is below the level of ordinary humanity. He seems to represent the appetitive in the human soul divorced from the intellectual and spiritive. He is characterized by bestiality, immoderation, and the lowest kind of *eros*, namely lust (I. ii. 406-412):

Prospero. I have us’d thee
(Filth as thou art) with humane care, and lodg’d thee
In mine owne Cell, till thou didst seeke to violate
The honor of my childe.
Caliban. Oh ho, oh ho, would’t had bene done:
Thou didst prevent me, I had peopel’d else
This Isle with *Calibans*.

Caliban’s relationship with Stephano is a gauge of his lack of discrimination or, rather, his inability to discriminate those who are truly beneficent to him from those who are deceptively beneficent. His relationship with Stephano is a perverted analogue of his relationship with Prospero-Shakespeare. When Caliban first sees Stephano (II. ii.) and drinks of his liquor, he thinks him to be a god, and he swears to kiss Stephano’s “book” (i.e., the bottle of sack), which Caliban interprets to be Stephano’s power, and which is his power and his only power. The importance of the “book” is further clarified when, in seducing Stephano and Trinculo to the murder of Prospero, Caliban insists that Prospero’s books must be destroyed. Characteristically, in these scenes, Caliban identifies the symbol of power with the actual power itself. Caliban is susceptible to the most superficial kind of appearance. However, one must not be left with the impression that Caliban is merely a passive vessel of desire and bestiality. As the embodiment of naked desire, he provokes the desire in others, i.e., he is a tempter.

A comparison of his servile soliloquy (with its harsh curses, its images of murkiness and bestiality, and its hollow bravado that covers a core of fear and vindictiveness—II. ii. beginning) with his sensuous temptation speech (III. ii. 143-151) makes this point as strongly as possible:

II. ii. 4-20

All the infections that the Sunne suckes up
 From Bogs, Fens, Flats, on *Prosper* fall, and make him
 By yench-meale a disease: his Spirits heare me,
 And yet I needes must curse. But they'll nor pinch,
 Fright me with Urchyn showes, pitch me i'th mire,
 Nor lead me like a fire-brand, in the darke
 Out of my way, unlesse he bid 'em; but
 For every trifle, are they set upon me,
 Sometime like Apes, that moe and chatter at me,
 And after bite me: then like Hedg-hogs, which
 Lye tumbling in my bare-foote way, and mount
 Their pricks at my foot-fall: sometime am I
 All wound with Adders, who with cloven tongues
 Doe hisse me into madnesse: Lo, now Lo,
 Here comes a Spirit of his, and to torment me
 For bringing wood in slowly; I'll fall flat,
 Perchance he will not minde me.

III. ii. 143-151

Be not affeard, the Isle is full of noyses,
 Sounds, and sweet aires, that give delight and hurt not:
 Sometimes a thousand twangling Instruments
 Will hum about mine eares; and sometimes voices,
 That if I then had wak'd after long sleepe,
 Will make me sleepe againe, and then in dreaming,
 The clouds methought would open, and shew riches
 Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd
 I cri'de to dreame againe.

The nightmarish quality of the first is opposed to the sweet dream quality of the second, a tonal indication of the difference of intent between them. However, the predominance of “s” sounds in both indicates the sameness of speaker. In attending to the sound similarity, one realizes that Caliban’s speech is not so much clearly articulated as hissed, a realization that associates him, at least affectively, with the snake and, by extension, with Satan, the Tempter, the Adversary. If one regards Caliban in this light, as Shakespeare’s Satan in its last avatar (some of the others being Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, Richard III, Iago in *Othello*, and Edmund in *King Lear*), and if one compares this Satan to the traditionally Christian one, one finds a marked divergence. First, the element traditionally associated with the Christian Satan is fire, but that element is associated in *The Tempest* with the agent of Prospero-Shakespeare’s art. Second, the Christian Satan is extraterrestrial, both in origin and in final abode, while Caliban is purely terrestrial. As always, Shakespeare’s focus is on the human things, the things of the earth or the political sphere (in the broad classical sense). In addition, he is not only at one with classical thinking here in this focus, but also in his recognizing the limits of that sphere.

In this light, Caliban represents that in humanity that always has been, is, and always will be intractable, i.e., that in humanity that makes the ideal or perfect regime eternally impracticable. This might lead one to conclude that the art of Prospero-Shakespeare can never be totally politically effective, because the art of the statesperson is necessarily only a shadow of the art of the playwright or philosopher.⁷ This

⁷ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, especially the image of the cave, VII. 514a 1 ff.

conclusion would be strengthened if one considered the following: (1) Prospero recognizes Caliban as an essential aspect of human existence;⁸ and (2) Caliban is left alive, as he necessarily must be. Yet, Caliban's fate at the end of the play is uncertain. Will Prospero take him too back to Italy, or will he leave him on the isle? That he will remain alive is indubitable in either case, and Prospero's assumption of Caliban's "paternity" seems to suggest the former.⁹

In terms of the theatricals of the play, Caliban represents the lowest possible level of audience, those for whom the play or spectacle is merely an instrument of fright or simple-minded delight or sexual excitement. He remains fundamentally unchanged by his experiences with Prospero-Shakespeare's shows, e.g., the show of dogs and hounds (IV. I. 280-281). One thread that illustrates his failure to change essentially is the movement from his apparent recognition of Prospero-Shakespeare's power,¹⁰ a power so great that it can even control his god, through the way in which he facilely substitutes Stephano for Setebos as his god (cf. II. ii. 124, 158) and for Prospero-Shakespeare as his ruler-master (cf. II. ii. 161) to the way in which he seduces Stephano and Trinculo to the murder, especially the picture of Prospero-Shakespeare that he paints there.¹¹ Again the limitations of Caliban's perspective are shown here: although he refuses to worship (as a god) or obey (as a master) a man (Prospero-Shakespeare) who 'is' a sot without his books (despite his apparent recognition of that man's power with his books), he is more than willing to worship a person (Stephano) who is a sot even with his 'book.' In addition, his apparent repentance at the conclusion (V. I. 347-350) must be regarded as a merely temporary effect of his fear of Prospero-Shakespeare's punitive measures (cf. I. ii. 436-438; V. I. 311-312), the physical manifestations of Prospero-Shakespeare's powers alone, and not the lasting effect that is available in the beneficent and redemptive art of Prospero-Shakespeare. Caliban presents the greatest challenge to that art, and it is a challenge that, as the play demonstrates, the art of the dramatist cannot meet. Hence, not only does Caliban represent the politically intractable, but he also represents the dramatically intractable. It is a tribute to Shakespeare that he had the insight to see this, the courage to present it, and the wisdom to accept it. Further, in the ultimate sense, Caliban represents the generic intractable in humanity. In other words, there is a Caliban in all humans over whom humans can never gain complete control but whom humans must acknowledge as theirs in a fundamental sense. The power to recognize this (in the true sense) is granted only to the great-souled, and usually the recognition is painful and destructive, of which Greek tragedies offer ample evidence.¹² Those great-souled individuals who survive the recognition of this are few indeed: that there is only one Prospero in Shakespeare's works, and that he can appear only in the last of these works, speaks more eloquently to this point than any commentary can.

⁸ II. I. 326-327: "this Thing of darkness, I/ Acknowledge mine."

⁹ One might infer that there is no need to take Caliban back to Italy, because he is already there, as he is already everywhere, i.e., wherever humans are, Caliban is.

¹⁰ I. ii. 436-438: "his art is of such pow'r,/ It would controll my Dams god *Setebos*,/ And make a vassaile of him."

¹¹ III. ii. 98-100: "Hee's but a Sot, as I am; nor hath not/ One Spirit to command: they all do hate him/ As rootedly as I."

¹² When Aristotle defines comedy at the beginning of the fifth chapter of the *Poetics* as consisting "in some defect or ugliness that is not painful or destructive" (tr. S. H. Butcher), he is actually telling us more about tragedy, which is the primary content of his work, than he is about comedy. If one inverts that definition, one finds that tragedy consists in some perfection or beauty (one that leads to the aforementioned recognition) that is both painful and destructive.

At this point, the reader will observe that the discussion of the earlier events of the play in chronological sequence, a discussion that was intended as prologue to a discussion of the principals of the action, has yielded to a discussion of one of those principals, the lowest. Now it is time to proceed to the others, in groups and hierarchically, according to the separations that are made in the play. Since the figure of Prospero-Shakespeare, the highest of the principals, is present in all the discussions, he will not be treated separately until that moment when the play itself demands that he be so treated, namely in the epilogue.

Stephano and Trinculo are the humans most closely associated with Caliban.¹³ They too are uneducable, but they maintain their status within the human species as a result of their physical appearance and of their having been conventionalized in speech (their speech is not filled with the maledictions that Caliban's is) and in dress (their apparel is courtly) and in behavior (they would not, in a conventional setting away from the isle, attempt to rape Miranda, whereas Caliban would). Their reactions are based solely on the physical, and for them the theater is an unelevating environment. The dramatic reflection of their inability to be elevated by drama is their final ordeal, a strictly physical one: Ariel "left them/ I'th' filthy mantled poole.../ There dancing up to th' chins, that the fowle Lake/ Ore-stunck their feet." (IV. I. 205-208) In other words, their physically sunken state is a reflection of their spiritually sunken state, a state from which they cannot be released until society is restored (V. I. 299-300).

Something of the moral character of the members of the Court Party (Anthonio, Sebastian, Adrian, Francisco, Alonso, and Gonzalo) has been hinted at briefly in the storm scene, but it is only through their actions on the isle that they become fully revealed. When they have landed, their reactions to what they have just experienced, to their present surroundings, and to possible future events bring to the fore the moral characters of all the members of the party. Keep in mind that this group of "spectators" carries within it the most powerful "hurt" to Prospero, and that he, in the form of Prospero-Shakespeare, must try to redeem them through his dramatic art.

Gonzalo is the first to speak, as he is in all the scenes in which the Court Party appears (II. I., III. iii., and V. I. 177 ff.). This shows at least an implicit priority of his vision of the island and of human existence over that of the other members of the group. He tries to ease the grief that Alonso is feeling for his dead (so he believes) son Ferdinand.¹⁴ Gonzalo's attempts to comfort Alonso are cruelly satirized by Sebastian and Anthonio, as are his and Adrian's comments on the pleasantness of the isle. In seeing that "the ayre breathes upon us here most sweetly" (II. I. 50), Adrian associates himself with Gonzalo as basically good, as does Francisco, who also tries to comfort and encourage Alonso (II. I. 114-123).

¹³ Caliban is not human. He is repeatedly referred to as a monster: see I. ii. 331-332, 374; II. ii. 21-44, 70, 113, 118, 144, 152-156, 160, 164, 167-168, 174, 189, 197; III. ii. 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 22-23, 26-30, 33, 37-38, 72, 84, 112, 126, 142, 159; IV. I. 161, 213, 223, 225, 227, 238, 251, 261, 270, 275; V. I. 307, 317, 326.

¹⁴ III. I. 4-7: "be merry; you have cause,/ (So have we all) of joy; our escape/ Is much beyond our losse; our hint of woe/ Is common, every day." Cf. *Hamlet* I. ii. 87-106 (Claudius's attempt to console Hamlet). The link seems there by virtue of the word "common" (cf. *Hamlet* I. ii. 71, 73, 98). Again, what would be a mask for evil in the tragedies is transformed magically into the voice of goodness in *The Tempest*. To solidify the link with *Hamlet*, think of the similarity in name between Gonzago and Gonzalo, and between the enacted murder of the former while asleep and the attempted murder of the latter while asleep. This suggestion also reinforces the theatricality of the actions of the persons in *The Tempest*. Also, cf. *Tempest* V. I. 139-140 to *Hamlet* III. I. 56.

Sebastian's basic evil most fully emerges for the first time, not so much in his refraining from comforting Alonso, but rather in his actually blaming Alonso for his own son's death because of lack of political prudence (II. I. 125-129, 131-138). Gonzalo justly rebukes Sebastian and in his generosity tries to hide the cruelty of the remark, even to the point of providing an effective excuse for the behavior that Sebastian exhibits (II. I. 145-146). Anthonio here remains conspicuously silent for the most part and speaks only to support Gonzalo; his silence, however, is merely the guise beneath which he is all the time calculating politically. His silent political calculation (with an occasional comment in concert with Sebastian) is the background against which Gonzalo constructs his perfect commonwealth, and so the tension is established between Gonzalo's articulated "All things in common" (II. I. 166) and Anthonio's submerged "All things mine," between Gonzalo's artlessness (in his naiveté and in his inability to see the practical evil that surrounds him, both of which are reflected in the artlessness of, the elimination of art in any form from, his ideal commonwealth) and Anthonio's artfulness (in his keen logical analysis of that with which he comes into contact). The tensions established here are themes that recur throughout the play.

The dialogue that ensues between Anthonio and Sebastian serves several purposes. First, it links in explicit conspiracy two individuals who have been implicit conspirators throughout.¹⁵ Second, Anthonio's attempt to seduce Sebastian to the murder of Alonso while he sleeps associates him with Caliban who also is a seducer to the murder of a ruler (Prospero-Shakespeare) while he sleeps (III. ii. 92-114, esp. 92-93), thus placing him as the lowest member of the Court Party. Third, when Anthonio speaks with a theatrical metaphor (II. ii. 273-277), he implicitly allies artfulness with drama, a debased version of Prospero-Shakespeare's alliance of art and drama. When the greater art confronts the lesser art(fulness) and thwarts the conspiracy, the necessity for moral responsibility in the artist is presented to us in as graphic a way as possible. Finally, by virtue of the conspiracy's being interrupted by Prospero through Ariel, it serves to underscore for us the extent of Prospero's powerful art.

The next time that the Court Party appears, its members still are divided into two factions: Gonzalo and Alonso united in fatigue, Sebastian and Anthonio united in conspiracy. The Banquet, an embodiment of the base desire for the material goals of greed and power that have dominated the conspirators, both past (Alonso¹⁶ and Anthonio) and present (Anthonio and Sebastian), appears mysteriously. The prologue has been presented; the drama is about to begin. No sooner does the Court Party decide to satisfy its hunger than the viands, in keeping with the transitory nature of the goals that they embody, are devoured by a Harpy (Ariel disguised) against a stormy background, an analogue of the first storm in appearance (thunder and lightning) and in intent (preparation for an education). The Harpy speaks to Alonso, Anthonio, and Sebastian, "three men of sinne" (III. iii. 74), forces on them the recognition of their own sins, and pronounces their punishment: "Ling'ring perdition (worse than any death/ Can be at once) shall step by step attend/ You" (III. iii. 98-100). Alonso's punishment is the most severe because it has the addition of his son's death (as a reality, although only a temporary one, now affirmed by the Harpy). One might ask why, if Alonso's nature is

¹⁵ The theme of political conspiracy, especially the opening of the argument that Anthonio uses to persuade Sebastian to the deed (II. I. 212-219, esp. 214 & 216) recalls Cassius's attempt to persuade Brutus to the murder of Julius Caesar (cf. *Julius Caesar* I. ii. and context). Here again the link between two plays is strengthened by names, i.e., Anthonio and Antony.

¹⁶ Cf. I. ii. 130-131.

the best or the highest of the three conspirators (as the actions within the play seem to indicate), it is necessary for his punishment to exceed that of the others. Perhaps it is precisely *because* his nature is better, i.e., because it is a more grievous crime, for example, for one who has been educated to justice to commit injustice than for one who has not been so educated. The sentence has been pronounced, and the Harpy “*vanished in Thunder*” (III. iii. 104). The drama is over, and the spiritual “stagehands” remove the scenery while Prospero-Shakespeare describes the effect that his play has had on the audience (III. iii. 112-115; italics mine):

my high charmes work,
And these (mine enemies) are all knit up
In their distractions: *they now are in my powre;*
And in these fits, I leave them....

They are now fully conscious of their guilt, something of which Gonzalo is aware along with his awareness of the dangerous consequences that might derive therefrom, consequences against which he sends Adrian to guard. Gonzalo, of course, remains unchanged by the drama. He is a naturally good person of modest intelligence: he cannot, by his very nature, do injustice; nor can he achieve the fullness of wisdom of which Prospero-Shakespeare is capable.

Prospero-Shakespeare is in control of a powerful art, and its effects on the audience are powerful.¹⁷ It takes Ariel to remind Prospero-Shakespeare that perhaps, in this instance, it is excessively powerful and should be mitigated (V. I. 21-26):

Ariel. your charm so strongly works 'em
 That if you now beheld them, your affections
 Would become tender.
Prospero. Dost thou thinke so, Spirit?
Ariel. Mine would, Sir, were I humane.
Prospero. And mine shall.

Prospero-Shakespeare agrees and—having been taught that “the rarer Action is/ In vertue, then in vengeance” (V. I. 33-34)—orders Ariel to release the sufferers. The instrument of the artist teaches the artist even at the very end of his career, when his powers are at their peak (cf. V. I. 4). How is this to be understood? Can Ariel, all of whose power is derived from Prospero-Shakespeare,¹⁸ teach him anything? The answer must be an emphatic “yes,” and in that answer is couched one of Shakespeare’s deepest insights into the nature of art. Ariel, the instrument or ‘technique’ that the artist (Prospero-Shakespeare) employs is not merely an objective tool, “but something much more intimate: a way of feeling, of seeing and of expressing one’s sense of life.”¹⁹

¹⁷ V. I. 16-18: “abide all three distracted,/ And the remainder mourning over them,/ Brim full of sorrow, and dismay.”

¹⁸ Cf. II. I. 329-331; III. iii. 109-110; IV. I. 43.

¹⁹ Ralph Ellison, “Hidden Name and Complex Fate,” *Shadow and Act* (NY, 1964), 162. The complete quotation is: “when I say that the novelist is created by the novel, I mean to remind you that fictional techniques are not a mere set of objective tools, but something more intimate: a way of feeling, of seeing and of expressing one’s sense of life.” I am profoundly indebted to Mr. Ellison’s essays in general for what they have to teach about the artist and art.

It is appropriate that, at this moment, when the artist and his art are one, and when the education by means of theater is complete, Prospero-Shakespeare utters what (it could be claimed justly) is *the* artist's farewell to art, i.e., to the instruments of art and to what those instruments have been used to create. Of course, it is a farewell that will not be final until all are reconciled and until Ariel²⁰ is set free.²¹ It is also a prologue to his final farewell to Ariel, a farewell that he makes much more simply and much more reluctantly²² than his grand solitary abjuration of his art and much more affectionately than his public farewell to Ariel in the last line of the play.

Ferdinand and Miranda must be placed at the end of the discussion of the play proper because it is in them that what the play implies beyond itself must be grounded most firmly. For this reason, they are perhaps the two most important "spectators" in the drama, and, because their capacity for wonder²³ invests them with the greatest possibility for growth and understanding, special attention must be paid to their experience with Prospero-Shakespeare's drama itself and to what that experience reveals about the life that is mirrored therein.

When Ferdinand and Miranda look upon each other for the first time, they look first with astonishment and then with love, as Prospero-Shakespeare declares.²⁴ Despite Prospero-Shakespeare's feeling that the two are perfectly suited for each other, he realizes that Ferdinand's mettle must be tested.²⁵ It is tested by an initiation into the theater as an actor in the log-carrying "drama" (III. I.) that he enacts with Miranda before an audience of one, namely Prospero-Shakespeare. The performance is a good one, and Prospero-Shakespeare is so pleased that he exclaims (III. I. 90-92):

Faire encounter
Of two most rare affections: heavens raine grace
On that which breeds between 'em.

Having successfully undergone the rigorous initiation, Ferdinand is doubly rewarded: first, with the hand of Miranda in marriage (IV. I. 4-7); second, with the privilege of viewing the masque that has been especially commanded by Prospero-Shakespeare for the occasion.

The Masque (IV. I. 68-129, 143-159) is Prospero-Shakespeare's most ambitious drama within the play, and it seems to represent the union (Iris) of the heavens (Juno) and the earth (Ceres), with a resultant universal fertility, i.e., a "brave new world" (V. I. 215). This seems to be strengthened by the union of the Nymphs of Spring and the Autumnal Reapers, a union that points to an eternal season of plenty.

Through watching the Masque, Ferdinand has been transformed, and his transformation is seen clearly when he can say about an isle that has been nothing but physically burdensome to him until now (IV. I. 137-138): "So rare a wondred father, and wise/ Makes this place Paradise." The Masque continues until Prospero-Shakespeare's startled awakening ends it. The Masque has evoked the mood of the early comedies, but

²⁰ After he has been given his final task (V. I. 370-373): the providing of "calme Seas, auspicious gales,/ And saile, so expeditious, that shall catch/ [the] Royall fletee farre off; My *Ariel*; chicke/ That is thy charge."

²¹ V. I. 373-374: "Then to the Elements/ Be free, and fare thou well."

²² V. I. 108-109: "I shall misse/ Thee, but yet thou shalt have freedome."

²³ "Miranda" means "wondering woman" or "woman going to be wondered at."

²⁴ I. ii. 513-514: "At the first sight/ They have chang'd eyes."

²⁵ I. ii. 525-527: "this swift business/ I must uneasie make, least too light winning/ Make the prize light."

the necessity for interrupting it evokes from Prospero-Shakespeare the mood of his tragedies (IV. I. 170-180):

Our Revels now are ended: These our actors,
(As I foretold you) were all Spirits, and
Are melted into Ayre, into thin Ayre,
And like the baseless fabricke of this vision
The Cloud-capt Towres, the gorgeous Pallaces,
The solemne Temples, the great Globe it selfe,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantiall Pageant faded
Leave not a racke behinde: we are such stuffe
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleepe.

This is Prospero-Shakespeare's final lesson to Ferdinand, one that he realizes is too severe and that he tries to mitigate immediately. Nonetheless, now Ferdinand's initiation is so complete that he is given the ultimate privilege of entering the cell of Prospero-Shakespeare,²⁶ something that he was, and could not be, permitted before.²⁷

Miranda, however, has remained largely silent. However, what could she say? She has lived on the enchanted isle her entire life, and her only avenue of education lies outside the isle, a possibility represented for her by the Court Party. She has remained relatively innocent (if not naïve) throughout, as her reaction to the members of the Court Party shows (V. I. 213-216):

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there heere?
How beauteous mankind is? O brave new world
That has such people in't.

Prospero-Shakespeare's only reply is a simple, serene, and nostalgic, "'Tis new to thee." (V. I. 217) With these four monosyllables, he expresses a lifetime of experience: a remembrance of when things were "new" to him, and of when things were "old" and dark and tragic, and a feeling of wise serenity that now pervades him.

However, the final statement is outside the play proper, in the epilogue spoken by someone who, I would suggest, is rather Shakespeare than Prospero. Everything that is requested by the speaker has been provided already within the play itself. Why, then, is the epilogue spoken, and who speaks it? The "who" perhaps should come first, for if it is correct to designate the artist within the play as Prospero-Shakespeare when he is invested with his magic art, then one can hazard a likely guess. Prospero-Shakespeare's abjuration of his art became effective when he freed Ariel and the others and gave Ariel his last command. This means that he became reduced to Prospero, father-ruler, and

²⁶ IV. I. 183: "If you be pleas'd, retire into my Cell."

²⁷ In addition, having been educated by Prospero-Shakespeare's theater, Ferdinand shows himself to be politically astute when he is discovered playing chess with Miranda (V. I. 197-203). His political calculation is shown when he cheats, as Miranda's response emphasizes: "Yes, for a score of Kingdomes, you should wrangle." Miranda's appreciation of the political perspective shows how far beyond naivete she is and how she has the potential to be a true and equal partner for a political leader such as Ferdinand may be expected to become.

abjured the Shakespeare. We also know that Prospero, father-ruler, is already on his way to Naples with the fair breeze provided by Ariel for that purpose. Whither, however, has the abjured Shakespeare gone? I would suggest that he has gone to the only place in the play left available to him, namely to the epilogue. I would further suggest that we can substitute “spoken by *Shakespeare*” for “spoken by *Prospero*.”²⁸ The epilogue, then, is the final speech of *the artist par excellence* to his audience:

Now my Charmes are all ore-throwne,
And what strength I have's mine owne.
Which is most faint: now't is true
I must be heere confinde by you.
Or sent to *Naples*, Let me not
Since I have my Dukedome got,
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
In this bare Island, by your Spell,
But release me from my bands
With the helpe of your good hands:
Gentle breath of yours, my Sailes
Must fill, or else my proiect failes,
Which was to please: Now I want
Spirits to enforce: art to inchant,
And my ending is despaire,
Unlesse I be reliev'd by praier
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy it selfe, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your Indulgence set me free. *Exit.*

What, then, is Shakespeare telling his audience? He has just presented his last play in which he himself is to be imagined behind the part of Prospero. The last stage direction has been obeyed by the cast—*Exeunt omnes*. The stage has been cleared. “Shakespeare” has returned to the empty stage, still dressed in the costume of Prospero.

He speaks, “Now my Charmes are all ore-throwne,” and one can only marvel at the vision of this artist, this person who, at the peak of his powers, after having examined and experienced the human condition in all its complexity, and after having attained the fullest wisdom possible for a human, possesses the moderation to stop and the understanding and sensitivity to know when to stop: to be able to cease making art when that cessation brings with it the realization that “what strength I have's mine owne. /Which is most faint.”

He continues, “now't is true/ I must be heere confinde by you./ Or sent to *Naples*.” In other words, the ultimate choice as to whether he remains in the theater, on the stage, or is allowed to go to Naples²⁹ is ours. “Since I have my Dukedom got,” i.e., since I have earned the right to take my proper place in the realm of humanity, “And pardon'd the

²⁸ This might be suggestive of the possibility that Shakespeare himself performed the part of Prospero. We will never know whether that is so. What matters is not that Shakespeare actually play the part, but only that we see him behind the words of the epilogue, no matter who the theatrical actor may be.

²⁹ Here this is the metaphor for the everyday public world that surrounds the world of the theater.

deceiver," i.e., pardoned the appearances³⁰ by which humans are beset and found in them a reality of goodness, then do not let me "dwell/ In this bare Island, by your Spell," i.e., allow me to leave the bare stage on which I stand enchanted by you as you have time and again been enchanted by me. Give me your applause.

"Gentle breath of yours, my Sailes/ Must fill, or else my project failes,/ Which was to please." That is, your spirit (breath) must give life and meaning to (must fill) my poetry,³¹ or else I have fallen short of (I have failed) my intention (my project) to educate and elevate your vision (to please), through an incorporation of my vision or part of my vision into yours. I have abjured the practice of my art, "And my ending is despaire,/ Unless I be reliev'd by praier/ Which pierces so, that it assaults /Mercy it selfe, and frees all faults." In other words, unless you are willing to accept a vision that necessarily includes every level of human existence, a vision whose serene and full acceptance requires an openness of moral view greater by far than the openness allowed by the traditional Christian concept of Mercy or by any traditional Christian concept, a vision that involves acknowledging even the Caliban (even all faults) in you as yours by nature, I must despair of having failed to achieve my moral goal.

"As you from crimes would pardon'd be,/ Let your Indulgence set me free." In other words, show me your applause as a sign that I have not failed, that I need not despair, that I have educated and elevated your vision, that my art has a strength of its own that will long outlast my own faint art-abjured powers.

The epilogue, then, on the exoteric level, is a simple plea by the speaker for a superficial, conventional sign that he has satisfied the simple pleasures of his audience, the kind of sign that he will receive from most. However, on the esoteric level, it is a profound request for a sign that he has shown the goods of human existence rather than the pleasures, that he has given clues toward answering the questions that humans always ask: How should I live? How can I act virtuously? How shall I properly love?

In a characteristically Shakespearean stroke of irony, one realize that the sign that the superficial (exoteric) audience gives will be the same as the sign that the true (esoteric) audience gives: both will applaud. Not only are the appearances preserved, but so is the reality that lies behind them. In the works of Shakespeare, the apparently contradictory mottoes of Gonzalo and Anthonio come together: their public accessibility allies them with Gonzalo's "All things in common," while their esoteric core allies them with Anthonio's "All things mine." The commonness of the plays is their universal accessibility on some level of understanding, a level less than the deepest. The mineness is their inner teaching that is accessible only to the few discerning among the audience. Shakespeare, then, in his last work, has preserved the image of each thing in human existence and in so doing, he presents us with the ultimate totality within which these things commingle.

³⁰ The deceiver *par excellence* in Shakespeare.

³¹ For "sailes" as a metaphor for poetry, see sonnet 80, esp. 5-12, and sonnet 86, esp. 1.