

The Tempest


DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Prospero, <i>the rightful Duke of Milan</i>	Caliban, <i>a savage and deformed native of the island, Prospero's slave</i>
Miranda, <i>his daughter</i>	Trinculo, <i>Alonso's jester</i>
Antonio, <i>his brother, the usurping Duke of Milan</i>	Stephano, <i>Alonso's drunken butler</i>
Alonso, <i>King of Naples</i>	The Master of a ship
Sebastian, <i>his brother</i>	Boatswain
Ferdinand, <i>Alonso's son</i>	Mariners
Gonzalo, <i>an honest old counsellor of Naples</i>	Spirits
Adrian, <i>a lord</i>	
Francisco, <i>a lord</i>	
Ariel, <i>an airy spirit attendant upon Prospero</i>	

THE MASQUE

Spirits appearing as:

Iris	Juno
Ceres	Nymphs, reapers

AKESPEARE'S POWERFUL late romance *The Tempest* has been addressed by modern critics from two important perspectives: as a fable of art and creation, and as a colonialist allegory. These readings very much depend on one's conception of European man's place in the universe, and on whether a figure like Prospero stands for all mankind or for one side of a conflict.

The first interpretation, following upon the ideas of Renaissance humanism and the place of the artist/playwright/magician, offers a story of mankind at the center of the universe, of "man" as creator and authority. Such a reading is, by its nature, at once aesthetic, philosophical, and skeptical. Prospero is man-the-artist, or man-the-scholar: Ariel and Caliban represent his ethereal and material selves—the one airy, imaginative, and swift; the second earthy, gross, and appetitive. Prospero has often been seen as a figure for the artist as creator—as Shake-

unifying the world around him by his "so potent art." By his magic, his *good* magic, or what has been described as *white* (or benevolent) magic, he subdues anarchic figures around him, like Caliban and his mother, Sycorax, the previous ruler of the island, who is also a magician (often thought of as a practitioner of *black*, or malevolent, magic). Prospero's magic books enable him as well to thwart the incipient revolts of both high and low conspirators, and to exact a species of revenge against those who usurped his dukedom and set him adrift on the sea—for *The Tempest* is one of Shakespeare's most compelling "revenge tragedies," turned, at the last moment, toward forgiveness.

But there is something troubling about this idealized picture of a Renaissance man accommodated with arts and crafts, dominance and power, in a little world, a little island, that he takes and makes his own. Many critical observers, especially in the later twentieth century, have seen Prospero as a colonizer of alien territory *not* his own, a European master who comes to an island in the New World, displaces its native ruler, enslaves its indigenous population (in this case emblemized by Caliban), and makes its rightful inhabitants work for him and his family as servants, fetching wood and water, while he and his daughter enjoy all the amenities of the temperate climate and the fertile land. The tensions between the aesthetic and the political lie at the heart of the play.

First staged in 1611, with King James present in the audience, *The Tempest* was subsequently performed as part of the marriage celebration for his daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, whom the King was about to "lose" to her husband, Frederick, the Elector Palatine—just as Prospero "loses" his daughter, Miranda, as he tells Alonso, King of Naples, "in this last tempest," to Ferdinand, the King's son. So the political and social context, the timeliness, of the play may have been evident from the beginning.

Although it takes the form of an extended scene of instruction between Prospero and Miranda, father and daughter, the play is fundamentally built on the continuous contrast between Prospero's two servants, Ariel and Caliban, mind and body, imagination and desire or lust. If Ariel is imagination personified, surely Caliban is something like libido (sexual desire) or id (basic human drives). If one thing is clear on Prospero's island, it is that, for all his anarchic and disruptive qualities, Caliban is *necessary*—like the body itself. "We cannot miss him," says Prospero (meaning, "We cannot do without him"). "He does make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That profit us" (1.2.314–316). Later in the play, after Caliban foils the conspiracy against his life, Prospero will say ruefully of him, "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.278–279). What Prospero acknowledges in this phrase is not only responsibility (Caliban is my slave), but also identity (Caliban, the "thing of darkness," is part of me).

In one way we might say that *The Tempest* is macrocosmic: Caliban is a spirit of earth and water, Ariel a spirit of fire and air, and together they are elements

allied to Renaissance science. Together these figures give us a picture of the world. In another way we could say that *The Tempest* is microcosmic, its structural design a mirror of the human psyche: Caliban, who is necessary and burdensome, the Ibbido, the id, a "thing of darkness" who must be acknowledged; Ariel the spirit of imagination incarnate, who cannot be possessed forever; and therefore must be allowed to depart in freedom. And in yet a third way the play's design illustrates the basic doctrines of Renaissance humanist philosophy: Mankind is a creature a little lower than the angels, caught between the bestial and the celestial, a creature of infinite possibilities. In all of these patterns Prospero stands between the poles marked out by Ariel and Caliban.

The second kind of interpretation, the colonial or postcolonial narrative, follows upon early modern voyages of exploration and discovery, "first contact," and the encounters with, and exploitation of, indigenous peoples in the New World. In this interpretive context *The Tempest* is not idealizing, aesthetic, and "timeless," but rather topical, contextual, "political," and in dialogue with the times. Yet manifestly this dichotomy will break down, both in literary analysis and in performance. It is perfectly possible for a play about a mage, artist, and father to be, at the same time, a play about a colonial governor, since Prospero himself is, or was, the Duke of Milan. His neglect of his ducal responsibilities ("rapt in secret studies," he allowed his brother to scheme against him) led first to his usurpation and exile, then to his establishment of an alternative government on the island, displacing and enslaving the native inhabitant Caliban, whose mother, Sycorax, had ruled there before Prospero's arrival and who, as Caliban says, "first was mine own king" (1.2.345).

Caliban's name is a variant of "cannibal" (deriving from "Carib," a fierce nation of the West Indies), and Shakespeare's play owes much to Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" (1580), which draws trenchant and unflattering comparisons between the supposedly civilized Europeans and the native islanders. "There is nothing savage or barbarous about those peoples; but that every man calls barbarous anything he is not accustomed to," Montaigne writes. Despite the nakedness and unfamiliar ways of these tribes, contemporary European societies "surpass them in every kind of barbarism," like treachery, disloyalty, tyranny, and cruelty, which "are everyday vices in us." As for cannibalism itself, there is "more barbarity in lacerating by rack and torture a body still fully able to feel things, in roasting him little by little . . . than in roasting and eating him after his death."¹

Colonialist readings have gained force in the last fifty years by analogy with the historical events of postcolonialism, whether in South Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean, but they are also entirely pertinent to Shakespeare's own time. During the years when *The Tempest* was written and first performed, Europe, and England in particular, was in the heyday of the period of colonial exploration. Sir Walter Raleigh is one important and charismatic figure who went from the Elizabethan court to the New World, and in his account, *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), he describes encounters

with native populations of just this kind. Captain John Smith set out with the Virginia colonists in 1606, and his *General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624) is another key source for this period, documenting the encounter of Englishmen (for which we may read Prospero's Italians/Europeans) with a native culture and climate in the New World.

There are moments in the play that clearly evoke the local historical context: as for example, when Trinculo, the drunken jester, stumbling over the recumbent form of Caliban, imagines a fast way to make money, by exhibiting him back in the Old World for a fee:

Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday-fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man. Any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian.

The Tempest 2.2.26-31

"Were I in England" is Shakespeare's typical sly wit—an in-joke for the English audience, like the scene in which the gravedigger in *Hamlet* remarks that no one in England would detect Hamlet's infirmity: "There the men are as mad as he" (5.1.142-143).

Many of the twentieth-century rewritings of *The Tempest* are inspired by New World concerns, and even are written from the point of view of the oppressed. The Uruguayan philosopher and critic José Enrique Rodó wrote his *Ariel* in 1900, calling upon Latin America to retain cultural values unswayed by the materialism of the United States; in 1913 he published *El Mirador de Próspero* (Prospero's Balcony). Martinican playwright Aimé Césaire published the first version of his *Une Tempête*, a radical adaptation of Shakespeare's play, in 1968, and the Cuban revolutionary intellectual Roberto Fernández Retamar wrote his *Caliban* in 1971. The story of *The Tempest* has intersected, repeatedly and always interestingly, with other "political" and colonial moments, through and beyond the postcolonial period of the mid-twentieth century. In many revisionist readings, Caliban becomes a more central and sympathetic figure. In some productions, dating as early as the turn of the last century, he is a loner and a misunderstood "hero," dispossessed of his birthright by the invading Europeans. From W. H. Auden's poem *The Sea and the Mirror* (1944) to Césaire's *Une Tempête*, an adaptation explicitly made "for a Black theater," to films as diverse as *Forbidden Planet* (1956) and *Prospero's Books* (1991), *The Tempest* has retained its power and fascination.

But is Prospero's enchanted island in the Old World or the New World? The play's indebtment to many New World texts is evident in its descriptions: the storm in the "still-rexed Bermudas"; the native inhabitants, often associated by critics with American Indians; the echoes of Jamestown and the early Virginia tracts, as well as of Montaigne's influential account of New World natives. In

literal geographical terms, however, the island must be located in the Mediterranean Sea, not far from the coast of Africa. The King and court party are returning from the wedding of Claribel to an African in Tunis, and Sycorax hails from Algiers ("Argier"). Scholars have also begun to remind us that an even closer island, one actually within the "British isles," was famed for the wildness of its inhabitants, linking Ireland as yet another colonial space evoked by the play's suggestively rich and elusive landscape. That *all* of these associations seem germane is now virtually taken for granted.

What is most magical about the isle, however, is that in being many places at once, geographically, culturally, and mythographically hybrid, it eludes location and becomes a space for poetry, and for dream. It is not found on any map. Prospero's enchanted island, while drawn from real explorations and published accounts, is ultimately a country of the mind. And this is made clear by the very structure of the play, which starts out in medias res, in clamor, in shipwreck, and in darkness.

As *The Tempest* begins, the audience finds itself in the middle of a storm at sea. All around is confusion: "A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard." Voices cry out, seemingly from nowhere, in disconnected fragments that recall other Shakespearean storms, and other romances.

Boatswain Keep your cabins; you do assist the storm.

Gonzalo Nay, good, be patient.

1.1.12-14

These lines might have come from the shipwreck scene in *Pericles*, where the nurse Lychorida urges the King in very similar words: "Patience, good sir, do not assist the storm."

"What care these roarsers for the name of king?" cries the Boatswain in despair. This is an echo of the storm in *The Winter's Tale*, in which the nobleman Antigonus was torn to pieces by the bear. Those waves, too, "roared," with no regard for such cultural niceties as rank and status. This present tempest, the tempest in the play that bears that name, is thus somehow the quintessential storm, the "perfect" storm, distilled of all the Shakespearean tempests we have weathered before, from *Othello* and *King Lear* to the romances. Indeed, this scene is often played in total darkness, emphasizing the confusion and disorder.

And yet in a moment the audience will discover that the tempest that has whirled about us was not a tempest at all, but a piece of art. We find ourselves, in fact, in a position very close to that of Miranda, Prospero's daughter. We, too, are a horrified audience with only a single thought:

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,
Dashed all to pieces! O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perished.
Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the ship within the earth, or ere
It should the good ship so have swallowed and
The fraughting souls within her.

1.2.1-13

"O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer!" Miranda, whose name comes from the Latin word *mirari*, "to wonder at," is the ideal spectator of tragedy and catharsis. Had she been any god of power, she would have intervened. But her father, Prospero, tells her—and us—that we are to have "[n]o more amazement," no more wonder: "There's no harm done." As for Miranda, "[T]hee, my daughter," he says, "[a]r ignorant of what thou art." His remarks framed by this suggestively chiasmic sentence ("art ignorant of what thou art"), Prospero will "pluck [his] magic garment" from him, saying, "Lie there, my art," and will begin to tell his daughter that the storm is a fiction, that its victims are safe; and that the entire event is a function of his art. Thus, from the very beginning, *art* the noun, meaning "magic," and *art* the verb, the present indicative of "to be," establish a frame for both the sentence and the play. The question of whether art is linked primarily to ordinary being or to magical creation will lie, as we have already begun to sense, at the very heart of Shakespeare's play.

As the audience soon learns, this is not the first tempest to have touched the lives of Prospero and Miranda. The play is structured like a hall of mirrors, a palimpsest, or a mise en abyme. Twelve years ago, says Prospero, in a very similar storm, "i'th' dead of darkness, / The ministers" of Naples and Milan "hurried thence / Me and thy crying self." This tempest is thus a cyclical event, a repetition (like the performance of a play)—a wrought and invented storm, to answer and resolve the first storm, a dozen years earlier, when Miranda was "a cherubin," an angel, "that did preserve me." So Prospero, formerly powerless or overpowered, now returns to the storm as a "god of power," in Miranda's phrase—one who can look into the "dark backward and abyss of time" and can transform it into both present and future.

This scene of necessary exposition, explaining what has happened before the play begins, is beautifully and concisely handled. To Miranda the past is "rather like a dream than an assurance," and the figure of life as a dream, and the difficulty of telling dreaming from waking, will persist as a major theme. As her name implies, Miranda is the ideal audience, hanging on every word; the play

begins at a key moment in her life, as well as in her father's, a moment when everything is about to change. Yet we may notice that there is something odd in the way Prospero tells his tale. Over and over again he asks her whether she is paying attention to his story. "I pray thee mark me." "Dost thou attend me?" "Thou attend'st not?" "Dost thou hear?" Why does he do this, when, as she protests, "Your tale, sir, would cure deafness," and when the audience in the theater, too, listens almost as if spellbound? Perhaps for that very reason. Prospero's repetition itself is a kind of charm or spell, hypnotizing his wondering daughter, so that finally, as he says, "Thou art inclined to sleep; 'tis a good dullness, / And give it way, I know thou canst not choose" (1.2.186-187).

The shape of the play is predicated on the general thesis—one omnipresent in Renaissance literature and drama, and given eloquent expression in Shakespeare's plays as early as Puck's Epilogue in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—that life may all be an illusion, "[n]o more yielding but a dream," or, as Prospero will express it in an equally celebrated passage, that "our little life / Is rounded with a sleep." When Prospero enchants his beloved daughter, when Miranda sleeps, the audience is transported into the world of possibility that is also the world of theater and of art.

What does it mean to sleep in this play about dream and fantasy, about the seen and the unseen? For Miranda, it is the point of entry into a whole new world. For Prospero, it means that he can evoke his "tricky spirit" Ariel, whom he has charged with overseeing the storm and its effects. Allied with imagination, invisible to everyone but Prospero—and the audience—Ariel seems to be the embodiment of music and sound. He plays on pipes and tabors throughout the action, and he sings a number of songs, the first two of which may be the most striking, though all of them are lovely. The play, like the isle, is full of music. These first two songs are both sung to Ferdinand in act 1, scene 2, when Ferdinand thinks of himself as the sole survivor of a shipwreck that has drowned his father and left him King of Naples.

In the first song we hear what is in essence a prediction of the action of the play to come—a song of plot, of forethought:

Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands;
Curtisied when you have and kissed—
The wild waves whist—
Foot it feately here and there,
And, sweet sprites, bear
The burden. Hark, hark.

1.2.378-384

This song is closely related to the riddles and prophecies that play such a large part in the other romances. Decoded, it is the whole story of the play. Ferdi-

nand, Alonso's son, *has* come unto these yellow sands—landed on the isolated island that is the central romance locale. He will shortly take hands with Miranda, Prospero's daughter, and both "curtsy" and "kiss"—that is, both obey the rules of decorum and chastity—and express his love and plight his troth. Doing so will make the "wild waves whist," stilling the tempest, a tempest that has really been raging since Prospero and the infant Miranda were put out to sea, a tempest that is, as Prospero says (sounding much like King Lear), the counterpart of his "beating mind." Once the tempest or dissension is stilled, the play will move to a marriage dance ("Foot it feately here and there") performed by the masque of the nymphs and the mowers, both symbols of fertility. "And, sweet sprites, bear / The burden." The word "burden" here carries two meanings: the heavy task of bringing this plot about, and also the chorus of the song, since a "burden" in music is a refrain or chorus. As they bring about the desired marriage and reconciliation, the sweet sprites, and Ariel in particular, will accompany that transformation with music and song, bearing both burdens at once.

Ariel's second song to Ferdinand is even more celebrated, and makes a cameo appearance, as readers of modern poetry will recognize, in *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. But where Eliot's poem centers on fragmentation and loss, in the Shakespearean context Ariel's song is one of metamorphosis and restoration, though it begins with a lie:

Full fathom 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.

1.2.400-405

Of course, Ferdinand's father is *not* dead. But for the son who does not yet know this, the terrifying aspects of human death are, in this song, entirely masked or transcended. Instead of decay or fear, we have metamorphosis: "Of his bones are coral made"; "Those are pearls that were his eyes." Coral and pearls are natural materials, transformed from minuscule sea creatures, from shells and sand. Metamorphosis here is not only fantasy; it is an aspect of nature and of change. Audiences and readers familiar with Shakespeare's language may call to mind the very similar, and yet very different, passage in *Richard III*, when Richard's brother Clarence dreams of death by drowning (1.4.21-33). As we saw in a consideration of that play, the similarity of the imagery in the two passages (gems in place of eyes; fish gnawing upon the bodies of the dead; gold, pearls, and jewels scattered on the sea floor) points up the radical difference in tone. Clarence's horrific vision of decay becomes Ariel's blithe assurance of eternal

change. The concept of a "sea-change / Into something rich and strange" clearly goes beyond the local relevance of the song here—Ferdinand's mourning for his father—to comment upon the progress of the entire play. As in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in *Twelfth Night*, and elsewhere in Shakespeare, the sea is fertile and even eternalizing. The formal structure of this song, with its patterns of chiasmus, or crossing, beautifully mirrors the pattern of metamorphosis here:

bones / coral : pearls / eyes
body / jewel : jewel / body
nothing / doth fade : doth suffer / something
negation / change : change / affirmation

For the audience, the summoning of Ariel signals a fundamental shift in perception. Throughout the play, as we will see, sleep and waking will be used as a measure of the imaginative capabilities of the dreamer. By this simple but powerful device the play splits the visual and imaginative field, allowing for parallel and distinct planes of awareness. We see what Prospero sees. Others, though, see less, see differently. Sleep and dream—as in a contemporary Renaissance play like Calderón's *La vida es sueño* (1635) or a modern play like Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* (1946)—are ways of entering and exiting the dramatic action, as well as indices of consciousness and conscience.

Thus the play is framed by the sleep of the mariners, who take no part in the action. Ariel has put them in safe harbor, as he explains to his master, Prospero: "all under hatches stowed, / Who, with a charm joined to their suffered labour, / I have left asleep" (1.2.231–233). At the close of the play, rubbing their eyes in a touchingly innocent ignorance, they will emerge from their temporary prison. The Boatswain speaks for them all as he explains his puzzlement:

If I did think, sir, I were well awake
 I'd strive to tell you. We were dead of sleep,
 And—how we know not—all clapped under hatches,
 Where but even now, with strange and several noises

 We were awaked.
 5.1.232–238

They find their ship magically restored to wholeness, their captain alive and "[c]lapping to eye her." The Boatswain concludes his explanation:

On a trice, so please you,
 Even in a dream, were we divided from them,
 And were brought moping hither.
 5.1.241–243

In a sense, the whole play takes place during the mariners' dream, the dream of the uninformed, and the uninformed.

But if sleep is a sign of innocence, wakefulness is—as often in Shakespearean tragedy—a sign of guilt. In act 2, scene 1, when one by one the courtiers fall asleep to the music of Ariel's pipe, the King, Alonso, remains awake, and wonders why: "What, all so soon asleep?" Although Alonso is guilty of complicity in the exile of Prospero, he is now also a figure of sympathy and pathos, since he is mourning the supposed death of his own son, Ferdinand, and he, too, soon falls asleep, leaving awake upon the stage only two men: Antonio, Prospero's brother, and Sebastian, the brother of Alonso—that is, the already usurping Duke of Milan and the potentially usurping King of Naples. Sleeplessness afflicts them as it afflicts other Shakespearean characters of uneasy conscience, and they speak to each other in the language of sleep and dream. When Antonio suggests that Sebastian might become king, Sebastian rejoins,

What, art thou waking?

 surely
 It is a sleepy language, and thou speak'st
 Out of thy sleep.
 2.1.205–209

"[W]hat a sleep were this / For your advancement?" Antonio replies. Here "sleepy language," like the "sleepy drinks" mentioned at the beginning of *The Winter's Tale*, suggests a wish, a fantasy, a condition contrary to fact. The sleep of Alonso provides an opportunity for Sebastian to realize his dream of usurpation.

The sleep of the courtiers, like the raging of the storm, is one of Ariel's devices. Dressed by Prospero in a cloak of invisibility, and therefore unseen by anyone but his master and the audience, Ariel marks the borderline between visible and invisible, conscious and unconscious. He is fire, the element associated above all with transformation, but he is also the spirit of air—by which is meant both wind and breath, or "inspiration": "Now on the beak, / Now in the waste, the deck, in every cabin, / I flamed amazement" (1.2.197–199); "I come / To answer thy best pleasure. Bet to fly, / To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride / On the curled clouds" (190–193). As a wind god, he causes the tempest itself. Addressing the royal conspirators in act 3, scene 3, as "three men of sin," he will appear to them in a clap of thunder and a streak of lightning—air and fire—to accuse them of their past misdeeds against Prospero. "Methought," exclaims a horrified Alonso, "the billows spoke and told me of it, / The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder, / That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounced / The name of Prosper" (3.3.96–99). In this scene, the stage direction indicates that Ariel appears "like a harpy"; the harpies were figures associated by ancient poets such as Homer and Hesiod with wind spirits, and with the souls of the dead.

It is significant, though, that for all of Ariel's capacity to describe and bring about metamorphosis, he himself remains under Prospero's control for almost the entire duration of the play. His persistent requests to be liberated from bondage are easy to miss if we focus on his apparent freedom: to fly, to sing, to remain invisible, to invent stratagems, to speak in many voices, to entrap the unwary conspirators. Yet Ariel's situation under Prospero's rule has many similarities with his situation under the sway of Caliban's mother, Sycorax, who imprisoned Ariel in a pine tree for twelve years—the same amount of time that Ariel has been serving his new master, Prospero. As with the cyclic and emblematic tempests, which take place a dozen years apart, the question of Ariel's freedom returns with new urgency as the play opens. Even Sycorax, who is described as a type of Circe, or female magician, is imaged as powerful and aversive, as a bent old hag who is also a walking sign of cyclical repetition, endlessly returning upon herself: "The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy / Was grown into a hoop" (1.2.259–260). Indeed, as we will see, the very pattern of *The Tempest*—a play that, unlike most by Shakespeare, obeys the three supposed classical "unities" of time, space, and action—is to repeat, with a difference, all the main events of the past (tempest, usurpation, bondage, rule of the island). As they are repeated, each is interrogated, reversed, and undone.

Compared to that of Caliban, though, Ariel's bondage looks a great deal like freedom. For Prospero's two servants are constantly, and directly, contrasted. In terms of the four elements, Caliban is clearly earth and water, spending his time in "bogs, fens, [and] flats," mistaken for a fish (and smelling like one), fond of fishing, and eagerly volunteering to dig sustenance in the form of pignuts out of the earth with his long fingernails.

Ariel was once imprisoned in the cloven pine, and Caliban now complains to Prospero that "I am all the subjects that you have, / Which first was mine own king, and here you sty me / In this hard rock" (1.2.344–346). Prospero keeps Caliban penned up in a cave, a naturalistic prison, but also the traditional allegorical place in which to restrain lustful desire. Yet he, too, once had a kind of innocence. There is pathos in his memory of Prospero and Miranda's arrival on the island, when they treated him with kindness, and he taught them what he knew:

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 loved thee,
And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine pias, barren place and fertile—
1.2.335–341

In one way, this seems like a classic version of the New World encounter, the guileless native inhabitant cunningly persuaded to lead the invaders to local treasure. But at the same time, rhetorically and tonally, the lines seem to be spoken in the remembered voice of a child, lacking language, or at least European language ("the bigger light . . . the less"). With elegant economy, Shakespeare's play enacts at once ontogeny and phylogeny, the history of the individual and the history of the species.

This sensory impression of Caliban as a child is made even stronger by his unexpectedly lovely praise of music, in a passage that rivals even Ariel's songs for its beauty:

Be not afraid. 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 waked 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 waked
I cried to dream again.

3.2.130–138

Waking, sleeping, dreaming, crying to dream again—this, too, seems like the voice of a child. Like another aversive figure in the romances, *Gymbeline's* Cloven, Caliban is associated with lovely music even as he also spits forth curses and the raw language of sexually explicit desire. But to be a child, even a child of nature, is not enough, as the play's persistent wordplay on the two senses of "natural" suggests. A "natural" in early modern English is a fool—"Lord," quoth he. "That a monster should be such a natural!" exclaims Trinculo—and Caliban is presented here, in Prospero's resonant, dismissive phrase, as one upon whose nature nurture can never stick. The play requires civility and civilization.

The turning point comes with the awakening of sexual desire, the transformation of a child into a sexual rival, when Caliban, in Prospero's words, tried "to violate / The honour of my child" (1.2.350–351). "O ho, O ho!" Caliban retorts. "Would't had been done! / Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (352–354). Caliban's desire estranges him from his foster father, Prospero, and causes him to be imprisoned in the rock. When a more appropriate suitor appears in the person of Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, Prospero will be sure to stress the importance of chastity before marriage.

As if to provide contrast with the supposedly unregenerate nature of Caliban, the play presents a number of other indigenous islanders who are spirits of a different sort. In the banquet scene (3.3), the good-hearted counselor Gonzalo praises the "several strange shapes" who enter bringing food, observing that

though they are of monstrous shape, yet note
Their manners are more gentle-kind than of
Our human generation you shall find
Many, nay, almost any.

3.3.31-34

So these spirit "monsters" compare favorably in manners to human beings. In a similar moment, later in the play, the spirit Ariel will convince Prospero to show mercy rather than to exact revenge, and Prospero will praise him as a paradoxical model of exemplary *humanity*.

Even the endearingly human Miranda, who came to the island as an infant, herself might be regarded as a kind of "noble savage," although she has been "home-schooled," in our modern parlance, by her father and his library of learned and powerful books. Her famous—and often misapplied—observation, "O brave new world / That has such people in't" (5.1.186-187), is quickly countered by Prospero in the most paternal of put-downs ("'Tis new to thee"). But of course he is secretly delighted at her interest in humankind, and in the husband he has imported for her with such effort. Like other noble children raised outside the court in the romances—like Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, or Guiderius and Arviragus in *Gymbeline*—she exhibits a "natural" nobility and generosity of spirit that are manifestly lacking in some of the supposedly civilized Europeans who are shipwrecked on the island's shores. Caliban alone stands out in the play as a manifest refutation of the romantic view of the "noble savage." Is Prospero right to call him "[a] devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick" (4.1.188-189)? The play raises a question that may seem to modern readers very modern: What is the relation of nature to nurture, or—as we would say today—of heredity or genetics to environment?

If the figure of Caliban suggests one view of the situation of mankind in thrall to nature rather than nurture, the Neapolitan court party has a different view, as we have already seen. Gonzalo, who will be so impressed by the "several strange shapes" when they enter to bring a banquet, is also the one who offers a more extended philosophical view of "natural man" in his notion of an ideal commonwealth. In such a place there would be

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 or endeavour. Treason, felony,

Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth
Of its own kind all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.

2.1.151-156, 159-164

This is an almost word-for-word transcription of a famous passage from Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," and it has, of course, one glaring fault in the context of Shakespeare's play. It refuses to acknowledge that human beings are prone to anarchy, rivalry, and strife—that they are all, in some sense, Calibans. "No occupation" may have been appropriate for an unfallen Adam and Eve, but not for the inhabitants of Gonzalo's lesser day. Gonzalo plans "[t]o feed my innocent people," but the fertile isle itself is not enough to certify the innocence of people formerly corrupt and fallen. His fellow courtiers mock him for wanting to be king, while he declares that there will be "[n]o sovereignty."

When Gonzalo compares his commonwealth to the Golden Age, we know that we have caught him in a primal error, though an error that is admirable and idealizing. The human society of Gonzalo's time—and that of any audience, in Shakespeare's time or our own—is not innocent or golden, and the play insists upon the importance of occupation, labor, and "service," whether it is dealing with the "high," or aristocratic, conspirators or the "low" conspiracy of servants and monsters (Stephano and Trinculo, Caliban). It is in the scene in which Gonzalo proposes his ideal commonwealth, to the disgust and disdain of his more corrupt companions, that we hear about another planned usurpation, in which Sebastian and Antonio plot to kill Alonso and seize the kingship of Naples, just as twelve years before Antonio had seized the dukedom of Milan from his brother Prospero. Once again a cycle seems about to repeat itself—a second storm, and a second usurpation. Shakespeare's craftsmanship in this play is subtly evocative and economical, so that such doublings and repetitions become an intrinsic, almost uncanny, part of the structure and effect of the play.

Thus, for example, we hear Alonso in this same scene bemoan what he believes to be the death of his son, Ferdinand (the son thinks the father is dead; the father believes the same about the son), "O thou mine heir / Of Naples and of Milan, what strange fish / Hath made his meal on thee?" (2.1.111-113). The "strange fish" might well remind Renaissance audiences of the biblical story of Jonah, as told in the Geneva Bible of 1560, which was Shakespeare's most likely text: "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah: and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days, and three nights" (Jonah 1:17).

From this description, it is easy to see why Christians of the period thought of Jonah as a type of Christ, another man who was reborn after three days and nights. Since Ferdinand explicitly associates himself with resurrection ("a second life"), this is very likely to be a shadow of meaning behind the image of the devouring "strange fish." But in act 2, scene 2, the strange fish comes to life,

revealing itself to be Caliban, who has swallowed up his strange bedfellow, Trinculo. As with other Shakespearean comic low characters—Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* comes to mind—what is *figurative* or metaphorical in the “high” plot becomes *literal* or unmetaphored in the “low” one. Bottom, who behaves like an ass and is called one, acquires a literal ass's head and an appetite for hay. (Helena in the same play declares that she will be Lysander's “spaniel,” but she does not turn into a dog.) So Caliban, who looks like a fish and smells like one, enacts the same scenario as in the Book of Jonah, first encompassing, then releasing, the hapless jester Trinculo. “What have we here, a man, or a fish?” Trinculo asks himself as he stumbles upon the “monster.” Frightened by the storm, he decides to take refuge under Caliban's gaberline (or cloak), and the audience is treated to a remarkable spectacle, four arms and four legs sticking out from under a tarpaulin. Trinculo/Caliban becomes a monster-of-a-man, with two heads and two voices.

We might recall that the basic situation in these two scenes in *The Tempest* is closely parallel: instead of “high,” royal conspirators planning to seize Alonso's crown by murder, we have “low,” comic conspirators planning to seize Prospero's isle by murder. Gonzalo is able to prevent the murder of Alonso because he is awakened by Ariel's song; and the drinking song of Stephano, Alonso's butler, pervades the atmosphere of the scenes that follow. “That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor,” Caliban declares once he has tasted from Stephano's bottle. “I will kneel to him” (2.2.109–110). In this scene Caliban sings (“Farewell, master, farewell, farewell!”), and by act 3, scene 2, they are all singing a drunken “catch,” or round, with the ominous refrain, or “burden,” “Thought is free.” Similarly, Stephano is as astonished as Ferdinand to learn that an inhabitant of this island speaks Italian: “Where the devil should he learn our language?” Ferdinand's response is more genteel but equally surprised: “I am the best of them that speak this speech.” Both speakers, incidentally, think they are addressing nonhuman creatures. Stephano calls Caliban a monster, while Ferdinand views Miranda as a goddess.

Caliban wants to people the isle with Calibans; Stephano—to whom Caliban proffers Miranda as a lure (“She will become thy bed . . . [a]nd bring thee forth brave brood” [3.2.99–100])—would people it with Stephanos (“His daughter and I will be king and queen” [3.2.101–102]). Ferdinand, the approved suitor, will, as his father and hers both wish, take Miranda back with him to Italy, to found a new European dynasty. “O heavens,” cries Alonso, still believing that his son and Prospero's daughter have been “lost” to death rather than to love, “that they were living both in Naples, / The king and queen there!” (5.1.151–152).

For as much as the play seeks to compare and contrast Caliban with Ariel, so it also compares him continually with Ferdinand. Each is the son of a ruler. Each thinks of himself as destined and entitled to be king. The analogy is made explicit and telling by juxtaposing them, in language and in action, in connec-

tion with the topic of labor—an important theme in *The Tempest*. We may recall that in his fantasy of an ideal commonwealth, Gonzalo proposed that all men could be idle, but recognized that the realities of both the island and the world beyond it continually emphasize the need for occupation and for work. Caliban, naturally enough, dreams of being free from Prospero's solicitude and tutelage, and free from his bondage—as well as being free with his daughter. By contrast, Ferdinand swiftly discovers the essential truth that a certain kind of freedom comes only through a certain kind of bondage. Again and again we hear him assert that it is in restraint that he has at last found liberty. Believing his father dead, and himself therefore King of Naples, Ferdinand encounters Miranda, is enchanted by her, and—drawing his sword—is charmed from moving by Prospero:

Ferdinand My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up,
 My father's loss, the weakness which I feel,
 The wreck of all my friends, nor this man's threats
 To who I am subdued, are but light to me,
 Might I but through my prison once a day
 Behold this maid. All corners else o'th' earth
 Let liberty make use of; space enough
 Have I in such a prison.

1.2.490–497

Ferdinand's description of his enchantment (“My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up”) returns the play to the pervasive theme of dream and waking, as well as to the cognate pair of freedom and bondage. And this question of the role of bondage and enslavement, whether willing or coerced, lies at the heart of much of the political criticism of *The Tempest*. Remembering Ariel's “sweet sprites, bear the burden,” and Miranda's charmingly mistaken identification of Ferdinand as a “spirit” and a “thing divine” (1.2.413, 423) rather than a human being, we may see Ferdinand here as about to enter into the service of his beloved.

When Ferdinand is bound, Caliban is freed (though in his case by liquor rather than by love), as his own song suggests: “Ban, ban, Cacaliban / Has a new master. —Get a new man!” (2.2.175–176). As he wanders off unsteadily toward his so-called freedom and his fate, warbling the burden “Freedom, high-day! High-day, freedom!” this scene and those words are juxtaposed to the next, the beginning of act 3, where the stage direction tells us, “Enter Ferdinand, bearing a log.” Ferdinand, indeed, is the “new man” Prospero has gotten, performing the same tasks as Caliban (fetching wood, for example) but in a very different mood. “The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead, / And makes my labours pleasures,” he declares (3.1.6–7), and “The very instant that I saw you did / My heart fly to your service” (64–65). This language of servitude to a

mistress is borrowed, in part, from the conventions of Petrarchism and courtly love. Service and bondage are freedom for Ferdinand, as the humble task of carrying logs, so hated by Caliban, becomes a useful and even a gratifying job. We may note that Prospero will later make a very similar argument to Ariel, emphasizing that freedom and bondage are properly linked:

Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou
Shalt have the air at freedom. For a little,
Follow, and do me service.

4.1.260-263

But if slavery is an issue that links the concerns of Shakespeare's time to those of our own, so is the question of gender and power. Why should the audience prefer Prospero the magician and his daughter Miranda over Sycorax the magician and her son Caliban? Both Sycorax and Prospero keep Ariel in a condition of bondage. What makes us choose Prospero over his predecessor? It is not entirely easy to glean the "true" story here, since, by Shakespeare's design, we only hear and see one side—Prospero's side. Sycorax is silenced by the simple and definitive fact that she never appears in the play. Although she is, in theory, the most powerful female figure in the *Tempest* story, she is presented only in memory, through the accounts of Caliban ("This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother") and Prospero ("The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy / Was grown into a hoop"). Her place of origin, Argiers, marks her as one of the several strong North African women in Shakespeare who are associated with magic powers (Cleopatra, to give the most obvious example, but also the "Egyptian charmer" who gave the magic handkerchief to Othello's mother).

Ferdinand's sister Claribel, another potentially powerful woman, first in line to inherit the Neapolitan throne, has also in effect been exiled from the playing-space. The Neapolitan courtiers are returning from her wedding in Tunis when they are shipwrecked. Antonio asks Sebastian after the storm, "Who's the next heir of Naples?"

Sebastian
Antonio
Claribel
Sebastian
Antonio
Sebastian
Antonio

She that is Queen of Tunis; she that dwells
Ten leagues beyond man's life; she that from Naples
Can have no note—unless the sun were post—
The man i'th' moon's too slow—till new-born chins
Be rough and razorable. . . .

Sebastian
Antonio
Sebastian
Antonio

. . . 'Tis true my brother's daughter's Queen of Tunis;
So is she heir of Naples; 'twixt which regions
There is some space.

A space whose every cubit

Sebastian
Antonio
Sebastian
Antonio

Seems to cry out "How shall that Claribel
Measure us back to Naples? . . ."

2.1.241-255

Sebastian unwittingly echoes the sentiments of Desdemona's father, Brabantio, in his estimate of this exogamous marriage. "Sir," he says to the King, "you may thank yourself for this great loss, / That would not bless our Europe with your daughter, / But rather loose her to an African" (2.1.123-125). Claribel, he insists, did not want to go: "the fair soul herself / Weighed between loathness and obedience" (129-130). (His "fair" emphasizes the whiteness of the bride in contrast to her husband.) But this is a dynastic marriage, arranged by the father for political purposes. The daughter's choice is not her own. Her marriage is an affair of state, not an affair of the heart.

Claribel is married to an African and lives half a world away—news of her father's death might take a generation to get to her (infants born now will by that time be grown men with beards). So Sycorax, the former ruler of the isle, and Claribel, the first heir of Naples, are exiled from the play by its playwright, leaving only a single woman, Miranda, the good daughter. Miranda, who is cautioned to hang on her father's every word, who becomes the object of all both schooled and put down by her pedagogue father. Miranda does not lack either charm or spirit. She does, importantly, rebel against her father (just as Juliet did) to choose a lover apparently against the paternal will. But this play is a romance or tragicomedy, and the father is playingacting his opposition, as King Simonides, the father of Thais, did in *Pericles*.

Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand is set up as a love match, a delightful instance of love at first sight in which each overestimates the other (he thinks she is a goddess, she thinks he is a spirit). Indeed, Prospero finds it necessary to correct her: "No, wench, it eats and sleeps, and hath such senses / As we have" (1.2.416-417). But at base this, too, is a dynastic marriage, an "arranged marriage" in the most literal sense, since Prospero has caused the wreck in order to bring this suitor to the island ("It goes on, I see, / As my soul prompts it," he remarks approvingly, aside to the audience, when the lovers are immediately attracted [422-423]). Both fathers see immediate political advantage in the match, and the magnificent climactic tableau in the fifth act, signaled by the stage direction "Here Prospero discovers [i.e., reveals] Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess," draws upon the fact that chess is a "royal" game, in which the pieces are kings and queens, bishops, knights, and pawns. Each piece moves by particular rules that govern it, and some are "checked," or brought to a standstill in the course of the action, just as Ferdinand and the court party are, "bound up" (1.2.491) "charmed from moving" (stage direction, 1.2.470), unable to "budge" till Prospero releases them (5.1.11). The chess-playing lovers, reenacting a scene common in stories of courtly love, are also exhibiting a mise en

abyme (a version of the familiar "play-within-the-play"), in which a model of the entire action is recapitulated *within* the action. Thus the lovers are in a sense *already* ruling the Europe that is represented in the alternating squares of their game board.

The term "checkmate," which comes from an Arabic phrase meaning "the King is dead," is the ritual exclamation of a chess player who is about to win a game. The term was in common use long before Shakespeare's day, and would have been understood as the key word of the game in question, even if not actually uttered. Indeed, the double and antithetical sense of "mate" here (to kill or rival; to marry) marks the transition at the center of the play's action, for instead of killing King Alonso, Prospero has contrived a marriage between the King's son and Prospero's daughter. Moreover, *The Tempest* itself could be regarded as a mise en abyme in this sense, since Prospero deliberately restages the events of the past in order to reverse their outcome for the future.

Three levels of language chart a hierarchy in the play: the "excellent dumb discourse" of the spirits, who do not need to speak in order to communicate; the language spoken by all the human characters in the play (fictively Italian, but actually, of course, Shakespeare's English); and the curses and expletives of Caliban ("When thou didst not, savage, / Know thy own meaning, / Miranda says to him, "but wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes / With words that made them known," and Caliban retorts, "You taught me language, and my profit on / Is I know how to curse" [1.2.358-361, 366-367]). Thus again we have high, middle, and low, or suprahuman, human, and subhuman. Prospero, who can speak to any and all of these populations, apparently possesses—through his magic books—a fourth language as well, a language of spell and incantation.

But the play is also careful to situate him between and among the denizens of human society. Generations of critics have identified him as a playwright, reading the play as a metadrama about Shakespeare the maker and the fictional creatures he has under his sway. Viewed in this way, Prospero becomes the point in a series of other "playwright figures," from Prince Hal to Hamlet to the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, who cast roles and play them as a way of reordering their worlds. The "playwright" reading has often also been linked to the popular notion that *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's farewell to the stage, and Prospero's Epilogue Shakespeare's final gesture of aesthetic relinquishment, before he retires to Stratford, as Prospero does to Milan, "where / Every third thought shall be my grave" (5.1.313-314). But in point of historical fact, *The Tempest* was not Shakespeare's last play, and the romantic notion of a "farewell to the stage" serves the Shakespeare myth better than the Shakespeare reality; it is we, not the playwright, who seem to need a ceremonial occasion to say good-bye.

Clearly, though, Prospero's power does come from his knowledge, and specifically from his books. As Caliban counsels the unheeding Stephano and Trinculo,

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Remember

First to possess his books, for without them

He's but a sot as I am, nor hath not

One spirit to command. . . .

3.2.86-89

The longer passage of which this is a part seems to recall the scenario of the murder of Hamlet's father beginning, as it does, "Why, . . . 'tis a custom with him / It's afternoon to sleep. There thou mayst brain him, / Having first seized his books" (84-86). Caliban is insistent on the source of his master's power: "Burn but his books" (90). When at the close of the play Prospero himself declares, "Till drown my book" (5.1.57), he voluntarily renounces the magic powers, spells, and alchemy that have come to him through his "secret studies" in magical lore.

Two things should be borne in mind here. First, that magic was not at this historical moment fully differentiated from what today we would call "science"; the latter word meant something more like general knowledge or "learning" in Shakespeare's day, and did not emerge fully as a term denoting either theoretical truths or practical experimentation until later in the seventeenth century. And second, that books were relatively rare possessions in this period. Although the governing classes in England in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were being urged to read and to acquire books, the number of books they actually owned was very small. Prospero's possession of books is itself a sign of distinction. At the same time, as his failure to govern effectively in Milan seems to have demonstrated, it is also a sign of his turning away from the public and political world.

That Prospero proposes to "drown" his empowering book of magic may seem at first a less violent action than the book burning proposed by Caliban, but both methods have disturbing histories. Books deemed heretical were burned, as were heretics. But drowning was a test for suspected witches. To drown a book is a convenient mode of disposal if one lives, like Prospero, surrounded by water, but for a Renaissance audience, this plan to drown a book would have also evoked unmistakable and dangerous associations with witchcraft. If it is ever possible in the play to distinguish Prospero's "white," or beneficent, magic from the more dangerous practice of "black magic," his own explicit phrase of disavowal, "this rough magic / I here abjure" (5.1.50-51), sets magic on one side, and what the spirit Ariel calls the "human" on the other.

The Tempest starts out, as we have noted, as a kind of "revenge play," and then turns away from that mode toward forgiveness at a crucial moment. Prospero, despite his intellectual inclinations and his paternal instincts, is as obsessed with retribution as any other English Renaissance stage revenger. And Prospero's conversion from vengeance to "virtue" comes—with a gesture typical of the late Shakespeare—through the agency of an unlikely figure. The

agent of conversion is not a human being, but is instead the spirit Ariel, whose wistful observation intervenes on the side of mercy for the hapless Neapolitan conspirators—the King and his followers—immobilized by Prospero's spell:

Ariel

Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now behold them your affections
Would become tender.

Prospero

Dost thou think so, spirit?

Ariel

Mine would, sir, were I human.

Prospero

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 moved 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. . . .

Go, release them, Ariel.

My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves.

5.1.17-32

As if this last phrase were itself a magic commandment ("And they shall be themselves"), Prospero now begins the series of divestments and restorations that will return him to his former identity, as man rather than mage, Duke rather than island ruler—and, ultimately, actor rather than dramatic character.

The Tempest is a play that could be said to end, in fact, three different times, each time with a gesture profoundly moving and rhetorically powerful. The first of these endings comes during the masque of Ceres that Prospero and his spirits have provided for the entertainment of the betrothed couple, Miranda and Ferdinand. The masque commemorates the ideal values of marriage—fidelity, fertility, progeny—and Ferdinand is enchanted: "So rare a wondered father and a wise / Makes this place paradise" (4.1.123-124). But no invocation of a timeless paradise can remain unchallenged in a Shakespearean world. Suddenly reminded of the plot against his life, and thus of the fallenness of man, Prospero abruptly breaks off the masque and speaks the lines that seem to resonate across the centuries:

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,

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The cloud-capped 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. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. . . .

4.1.148-158

The "revels" of which he speaks are a formal part of the court masque, the moment when the noble actors dance with the audience, so that these lines prefigure the liminal encounter at the end of the play, when Prospero delivers his Epilogue. Although *The Tempest* was performed in a private theater and not in the company's more public playhouse, the Globe, the reference here to "the great globe itself" seems imbued with an unmistakable double significance. Prospero is "vexed," his "beating mind" remembers, just in time, the threat against him. The masque is thus abruptly sundered. Disappearing spectacles were a commonplace of the masque tradition, as much an aspect of the entertainment as the songs and dances themselves, and the extradramatic authority that postromantic readings have given to this magnificent passage derives, in part, from the tendency to quote it out of context as "Shakespeare's farewell." Almost invariably, though, in the modern theater, a hush attends the declamation of these lines, which have taken on a life, and an itinerary, of their own.

The play's second ending occurs immediately after the affecting scene with Ariel in the fifth act, in which Prospero affirms his own "nobler reason" and "rarer action" in offering mercy rather than seeking vengeance. No sooner does Ariel depart than Prospero, tracing a magic circle on the stage, invokes "Ye elves, of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves," and the other spirits with whose aid he has dimmed the sun, called forth the winds, summoned the lightning and the thunder. His speech, a paraphrase of the incantation of the witch Medea in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (book 7, lines 263-289), underscores the powers he is about to relinquish:

[G]raves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure. And when I have required
Some heavenly music—which even now I do—
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it even fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

5.1.48-57

The third and final ending is the play's famous Epilogue, in which Prospero addresses himself directly to the audience, putting himself in our hands and asking of us—as various characters in the play had sought from *him*—freedom from bondage and confinement. Requesting the “good hands” (applause) and “[g]entle breath” (praise) of the audience in the theater, he puts himself in the position in which he had previously put those who conspired against his life, asking for mercy and forgiveness. Again he emphasizes his powerlessness:

Now I want

Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

Epilogue 13–20

Prospero's loss of power has been demonstrated effectively in some recent productions by a modern stage device: a sudden shift, at the beginning of the Epilogue, from an amplified to a nonamplified voice, seeming to diminish and “humanize” the actor. As with some other Shakespearean epilogues we have encountered (Puck's in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and especially Rosalind's in *As You Like It*), this direct address to the audience—a common device in performances of the period—emphasizes both the fictive nature of the play and the human identity of the actor/performer/speaker. Puck, a spirit, and Rosalind, who calls herself a magician, have much in common with Prospero. But Prospero's dramatic persona, not only a magician but also a political figure and a mortal and suddenly aging man (“Every third thought shall be my grave”), renders the tonality of this Epilogue sadder rather than playful, reaching across the boundaries of stage and audience, from actor to spectator, from age to age, and from mortality to the dream of eternity and art.

Henry VIII (All Is True)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Prologue	His Page
King Henry the Eighth	Thomas Cromwell
Duke of Buckingham	Cranmer, <i>Archbishop of Canterbury</i>
Lord Abergavenny, <i>Buckingham's son-in-law</i>	Queen Katherine, <i>later Katherine, Princess Dowager Griffith, her gentleman usher</i>
Earl of Surrey, <i>Buckingham's son-in-law</i>	Patience, <i>her waiting-woman</i>
Duke of Norfolk	Other Women
Duke of Suffolk	Six spirits, <i>who dance before Katherine in a vision</i>
Lord Chamberlain	A Messenger
Lord Chancellor	Lord Caputius
Lord Sands (Sir William Sands)	Anne Bullen
Sir Thomas Lovell	An Old Lady
Sir Anthony Denny	Brandon, <i>who arrests Buckingham and Abergavenny</i>
Sir Henry Guildford	Serjeant-at-arms, <i>who arrests Buckingham and Abergavenny</i>
Cardinal Wolsey	
Two Secretaries	
Buckingham's Surveyor	
Cardinal Campaius	
Gardiner, <i>the King's new secretary, later Bishop of Winchester</i>	

AFTER BUCKINGHAM'S ARRAIGNMENT

Sir Nicholas Vaux
Halberdiers
Tipstaves
Common people

APPEARING AT THE LEGANTINE COURT

Two vergers
Bishop of Saint Asaph
Two Scribes
Two priests
Archbishop of Canterbury
Serjeant-at-arms
Bishop of Lincoln
Two noblemen
Bishop of Ely
A Crier
Bishop of Rochester