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Chapter 6

Wisdom and Mastery in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

The Tempest may not shake our being through emotional shock as Shakespeare's greatest tragedies do, nor through the convulsions of laughter as do his best comedies, but it has a philosophical power second to none of his plays. Much of that power comes from the combination of its compactness of vision, its economy of style, reinforced by its neo-classical unity of plot, time and place, and its ability to compress with ease a range of dramatic forms into a new dramatic shape. As his last completed play, it is perhaps fitting that it deals with the theme of wisdom and mastery themselves rather than the tragic consequences of their absence. Although, as *The Tempest* shows, the acquisition of wisdom and mastery requires awareness of the consequences of their lack, and the subsequent right response and opportunity to act. While the great tragedies end in suffering of often-unbearable intensity, suffering can also be, as it is in *The Tempest*, an opportunity to gain and use wisdom.

By placing the action of *The Tempest* on an island, Shakespeare provides a location relatively free from the contingencies of court and country. By placing the island outside of the Old World, he provides a location that is, in every sense, an opportunity for a new beginning. Initially, it is Prospero who takes advantage of that opportunity, but, by play's end, every living soul on the island has the opportunity to begin anew. From the experience of loss of his dukedom, exile, and the danger to his daughter brought about by his inattentiveness, Prospero learns on

his tiny dominion how to be the leader he never was in Milan. By making Prospero a practitioner of magic Shakespeare enables us to see how the forces of the irrational are every bit as, if not more, important to wisdom as reason itself. We are beings of night and day, of dream and wakefulness, and hence simply following daylight's guidance leaves us incomplete. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare endows Prospero with magic arts that enable him to conjure up the elemental spirits that usually only appear in dreams and visions and thus remain concealed from the day-light of ordinary reason.

The Tempest moves from tempest to calm completion, brought about through the magical manipulations of a man who has learnt how to create the conditions for meaningful forgiveness and a more peaceful future.

Rank is Not Leadership

The storm tossed ship at sea with which *The Tempest* opens is a dramatic representation of the classical political metaphor of a state in crisis. The first line of the play is a call by the ship's master, which is immediately followed by the boatswain's response. The union of right call, right response and right action is precisely what the urgency of the situation requires. Through his swift response we see that the boatswain, although a subordinate to the ship's master, is the required master for the situation, and his actions all confirm his mastery. It is the situation that dictates the kind of service one must perform to achieve the right end. Right service at the right time is a defining characteristic of leadership—what is the right service cannot be gauged merely from a rulebook, or from merely occupying a certain rank. This point is emphatically made as Shakespeare contrasts the practical wisdom of the boatswain with the foolish and reckless behavior of the men of rank, a king, a prince, and a duke, and a councilor. In a scene of marvelous economy, Shakespeare shows that all of these men mistake title for substance, and by so doing display how lacking they are in wisdom and how poor they are as leaders of their respective domains. The distance of each from wisdom is immediately conspicuous from their opening words and deeds. Fittingly, the one figure of importance on the boat who does not speak is Ferdinand. His silence and his innocence will make Prospero's use of him far easier than had he been an evil man or a bad leader.

The next person to speak after the boatswain is Alonso, King of Naples. On board with him are two people who will later conspire to kill him, his own brother and Prospero's brother, Antonio, who has usurped the dukedom of Milan. We are yet to learn that Alonso was a conspirator with Antonio against Prospero, and that together they are, as Ariel puts it, "three men of sin" (3.3.66). Were he Machiavellian enough, Alonso would know that in encouraging one brother to dispossess and usurp the powers of another, he is not only forming an alliance with someone completely untrustworthy and whose lust for power oversteps the sanctity of family ties, he is also sending out signals about the success of disloyalty and intrigue to his own brother. In traveling away from his kingdom with Sebastian and Antonio he is in waters far more dangerous than Prospero has conjured through the storm. It is only through Prospero and Ariel's intervention that Alonso is able to survive. What Shakespeare shows us in first words is just how out of touch the King of Naples is with what really matters. "Good boatswain," he says, "have care" (1.1.19), as if his command could contribute the least thing to the matter at hand. He then asks for the master and gives a command to the mariners, "Play the men" (1.1.10). He is unable to discriminate between real and counterfeit command, and his lack of discrimination is both intrusive and time wasting. Antonio, who, like Alonso, shows his preference for title over deed, repeats his question.

When the boatswain spells out that their interference "assists" the storm and orders them to their cabins, Alonso's councilor, Gonzalo speaks up to chastise him, thus revealing that he too reveres title too much. His reproach, "Nay, good, be patient", indicates his inability to grasp the appropriate moment for the appropriate deed. This is not the time or place for the kind of patience Gonzalo wants from the boatswain. His job is to give good counsel, but we might doubt whether he is capable of that. Later, we learn that, although he was placed in charge of Prospero's banishment, Gonzalo had furnished Prospero and Miranda with clothes, linens and books from Prospero's library. While he had the insight, foresight and courage to aid Prospero and Miranda, there is not the slightest hint in the play that Gonzalo was brave enough to tell the truth to his master about the wrongness of overthrowing Prospero or the dangers of traveling with Antonio. He is no Kent. He is not a bad man. Indeed, the character notes stipulate that he is honest, but he serves a bad master. And, unlike the innocent Ferdinand, he remains with the three bad men after they are washed-up on the island. He must learn his lesson with them. Just as Alonso must learn to see the consequences of what he does, Gonzalo

must learn the art of saying the right thing at the right time, that is, he must master the art of giving counsel.

From the beginning, Gonzalo speaks hot air. The boatswain knows he is dealing with a fool getting in the way, and he answers that he will be patient when the sea is; he knows that titles are useless against the elements. He orders him to be-gone and be silent. Instead of obeying by keeping silent, Gonzalo replies, "remember whom thou hast abroad." The storm shows how feeble and inaccurate social and political authorizations can be; nature is the benchmark against which we are to judge the adequacy of our authorizations. The point is fittingly made by the boatswain when he says "if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will / not hand a rope more; use your authority: / If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long" (1.1.20–23). Like Alonso, Gonzalo is a man who, in spite of political power, owes his longevity to fortune rather than political wisdom. He has difficulty seeing evil, and hence preventing it. His resort in the time of crisis to a proverb—the man born to be hanged need not fear drowning—cannot help but remind us of that other Shakespearian speaker of proverbial platitudes, the more meddling and destructively irredeemable Polonius. Fools hang onto words and insignificant signs in times of crisis, when the resolution of crisis requires right action performed at the right moment. Gonzalo consoles himself in his uselessness by fastening onto the proverb, and then ruminating that the boatswain's "complexion is perfect gallows" (1.1.28–29), as if the boatswain's complexion could guarantee his safety. Gonzalo literally cannot help himself from talking, and so he provides a running commentary on the shipwreck. Fittingly his voice is the last voice to be heard as the ship goes down, and the first to be heard of the surviving party of which he is a member. And yet, Gonzalo is redeemable. In his elliptical and verbose manner he has acknowledged the competence of the boatswain, and as his cries give way to prayer ("The wills above be done" (1.1.64)), he shows an optimism and faith that can be turned to good use if placed under the right authority.¹ Gonzalo's essential honesty, however, should not blind us to the contrast between his reliance on words to give comfort and reassurance with the boatswain's right action mixed with frustration at time-wasting speech.

The interruptions, however, don't stop there, and Gonzalo returns with Sebastian and Antonio. By now the boatswain is almost at his wits' end as he asks whether the three have a death wish. In the pairing of Alonso and Gonzalo, Shakespeare introduced the foolish and indiscriminate (which is a kind of foolishness), but with

Sebastian and Antonio he introduces the discriminating clarity of malicious intent, or evil, which Alonso possesses to greater degree than Sebastian. The pairing of folly and evil is a common one in Shakespeare.² Central to it is Shakespeare's realization that the lack of vision of the foolish invariably assists the spread of evil, while the truly evil invariably possess a sharpened vision of weakness and vulnerability as well as the ability to manipulate the foolish. The truly evil do not lack intelligence, but they use their intelligence for their own elevation, and thus affecting a break with the classical virtue of justice and the Christian virtue of charity. The other classical virtues of practical wisdom, courage, and moderation, and the Christian virtues of faith and hope are all inverted when yoked to the unjust and uncharitable: practical wisdom becomes cunning, courage treachery, temperance calculated indifference, and faith and hope directed completely towards one's own will rather than towards any higher and, hence, self-constraining and elevating order.

Sebastian's first sentence reveals a man who has learnt how to use the language of moral righteousness in the exercise of authority. However, he cannot see that in a storm the language of moral righteousness is as absurd as an appeal to rank. But Sebastian wants to establish his authority through intimidation, but in this art he is still a student. Antonio, here and elsewhere in *The Tempest*, is the master of brutal power. Whereas Sebastian's "A pox o' your throat" (1.1.39) is a call upon nature to afflict an insubordinate, Antonio's "Hang, cur, hang" (1.1.42) is a direct political threat. Antonio is quick to use the weapons of State against anyone who irritates or impedes his will. Even from this one remark we can establish that Antonio is the most rashly ruthless of the four political figures Shakespeare has introduced. Later, Prospero will call him "most wicked sir" (5.1.141), adding that he cannot call him brother because it would "infect my mouth" (5.1.42). In part, his ruthlessness stems from a reckless courage: "We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art" (1.1.43), he says defiantly. If we can judge him by his words, we have to concede that he is far less fearful of death than his associates. And while the boat is sinking it is Antonio who shows most willingness to die: "Let's all sink with the King." (1.1.60) Sebastian, on the other hand, more cautious and hence less dangerous, more humane even, opts for self-survival first: "Let's take leave of him" (1.1.61). We do not know yet what Antonio has done to his brother, nor that he has the power and guile to seduce Sebastian into being prepared to commit fratricide. But we do know that we are dealing with a ruthless and reckless man whose indifference to death suggests a titanic degree of defiance. As has so often been

noted by critics, he will say nothing, neither word of remorse nor gratitude, when Prospero forgives him for "his rankest fault" (5.1.143). Like others on board, though, he does not know that, during the storm, he is experiencing an illusion no less forceful than their own illusions about their ability and authority.

Attentiveness and Command

Whereas the men of rank of Scene One all lack the essential ingredients of leadership, in Scene Two we are witness to authority rightly used. Miranda's first words show her insight (she immediately suspects the storm is her father's work) and her compassion—"O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer...O, the cry did knock / Against my very heart" (1.2.5–16). Both qualities reflect well on her upbringing. But Miranda is not aware of who she is, who her father is or why her father has exercised his craft in this way. Compassion does not suffice for wisdom, and until she knows more she is not in a position to see that this seemingly awful event caused by her father is part of a process that has the potential to benefit all involved. That is to say what Miranda expresses as a sentiment is but a shadow when compared to Prospero's ability to act for the greater good. Miranda is to be schooled by Prospero in how to bring about a better world and not just wish for it. His opening line commands his compassionate daughter to "Be collected" (1.2.14), that is, to take stock of her power. We are witness to Prospero's authority—precise, directive, and attentive. He goes on, "No more amazement... There's no harm" (1.2.15–16). And when Miranda, still "uncollected", continues in her grief, he not only repeats his assurance but stresses his love and the loving purpose behind the action: "I have done nothing but in care of thee" (1.2.19). Prospero admires Miranda's compassionate nature and he assures her there is "not so much perdition as an hair / Betid to any creature in the vessel" (1.2.35–36). From the outset his words (and they will be backed up by deeds) indicate that Prospero is a real leader. However, Miranda is aware of only one of Prospero's two roles of authority, that is, as a father. She is unaware of the other role that has required him to conjure up the storm and "shipwreck." As he tells Miranda of their past, he takes off his magic robe (with Miranda's help). In his role as father he needs no assistance from magic, but when, on the island, he guides Miranda's heart for stately purpose, he will again resort to magic.

It has been said, brilliantly I think, by D. G. James, that *The Tempest* is a commentary on *King Lear*. In *King Lear* the storm is the beginning of the getting of Lear's wisdom; but Lear's great tragedy is that his wisdom comes too late.³ With *The Tempest*, the storm is conjured up for a purpose. It is not the elements that govern here, as in *Lear*, but a wise man whose wisdom has come through the understanding borne of the tragic. Whereas Lear shows his failure as a father and a king by giving away his power at the wrong time, for the wrong reason and to the wrong children, Prospero grants power through the demonstration of its rightful use.

Prospero is wise because he has learnt how to exercise authority properly, that is, how to exercise authority on the basis of knowledge of the powers at one's disposal and of the tasks to be carried out. This knowledge is the arc that spans the play, from Prospero's opening speech to his epilogue; it is also what makes his magic purposeful. Prospero's most valuable knowledge has come from hard experience, not from the comfortable environment of books. Indeed, his love of books is at the root of his tragic experience. And as I have already suggested practical wisdom requires knowing what word is right for what time. This is because life is continually changing. There is no guarantee that yesterday's wisdom is right for today, for each moment contains its own unique characteristics. "Context," writes Rosenstock-Huessy in a remarkable and almost completely unread essay on Shakespeare, "is king in the texture of the temporal order."⁴ Miranda does not know who she is because it has not been the right time for her to know. But "The hour's now come; / The very minute bids thee open thine ear" (1.2.43–44). Prospero tells Miranda the story of how they came to be on the island and how he had lost his dukedom. He loved his brother and expected his brother to not be who he was. In Milan he lacked discrimination. He loved his reputation and books. But he was inattentive to his task, his powers and his surroundings. The importance of the role that his inattentiveness played in his downfall is underlined when Shakespeare has Prospero ask Miranda: "Dost thou attend me?" (1.2.91). He chastises Miranda when he thinks she is being inattentive: "Thou attend'st not!" (1.2.101), though she reassures him that this is not the case. His repetition of the need to be attentive and his chastisement are much more a reproach of his own earlier inattentiveness than of Miranda. And even after Miranda reassures him of her attentiveness, he emphasizes: "I pray thee mark me" (1.2.103), while later breaking off and imploring: "Dost thou hear?" (1.2.120). Prospero's previous inattentiveness and inability to distinguish between genuine wisdom, that is

wisdom that creates more good in the world and mere mental refinement has endangered Miranda as well as himself. Moreover, it is through no virtue of Prospero that they landed safely on the island. His inattentiveness also awakened the evil nature in his brother. And, finally, it has made Milan subservient to Naples, forcing his subjects to pay a tribute to Naples. "Alas, poor Milan" (1.2.129), he says, acknowledging the grief that he has caused to others by making his library his dukedom.

He and Miranda were fortunate. Gonzalo supplied provisions for survival and the books that he subsequently made right use of. In his exile he prepared himself by developing the powers that enabled him to take command of the spirits of the island. Fate responded to his preparedness by placing his enemies in the vicinity of his island, giving Prospero his opportunity. The original meaning of opportunity (from the Latin *opportunistus*) is the favorable wind that drives a ship to port. *The Tempest* created by Prospero transforms a wind of fate (via Ariel) into a purposeful storm that can lead him toward the port of Milan. He has learnt how to be attentive so that he can seize his opportunity. It is now or never. As he says: "I find my zenith doth depend upon / a most auspicious star, whose influence / If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes / Will ever after droop" (1.2.207–210).

Freedom and Service

Having told Miranda of their past, Prospero puts her to sleep and resumes his magic by summoning Ariel. He recounts how he has conjured up the storm, how those on board have all safely arrived and been dispersed around the island. The ship is safe, and Ferdinand has been separated from the rest. From the plan's inception, Prospero has not wanted to harm his enemies, but to rectify past wrongs and create an opportunity for reconciliation. That Ariel has been a good servant is well underlined by Prospero whose questions are accompanied by interjections of praise. But Ariel is tired of service and wants the freedom that pertains to his nature—he is, of course, the only being in the play whose essence is one of absolute freedom. However, Prospero's work has not been completed. He needs Ariel's assistance. And in spite of the affection he has for Ariel, he cannot let sympathy divert him from his purpose and risk bringing everything to ruin. Thus he reacts to Ariel with sternness, calling him a liar and a "malignant thing" and even threatens to imprison him once again. His harsh rebukes serve the purpose of

re-instilling his right to command that was originally based on the debt that Ariel owes him. Without Prospero's intervention, Ariel would still be in the cloven pine in which he had been imprisoned by Caliban's mother, the Algerian witch Sycorax. Ariel's confinement within a tree for twelve years was all the more terrifying because it was so contrary to his free-floating and light-loving nature. The reminder of his service to Ariel, as well as his threat to re-imprison him, tempers Ariel's impatience for immediate release. Although he is not human, Ariel's service requires that he conform to the principle of the rightness of time. At the risk of stating the obvious, Prospero's harshness towards Ariel is also proof that he now knows what leadership is. This is reinforced through Ariel's apology and willingness to continue service, even if it is based on Prospero's promptings about the debt he owes and threats.

Ariel's departure coincides with Caliban's entrance. Whereas Ariel is Prospero's "spirit", Caliban is his slave. The pure and compassionate Miranda has no compassion left for Caliban—for her he is merely a villain. Prospero says of him that he never yields "kind answer" (1.2.354), he is a "poisonous slave" (1.2.368). Every service of Caliban's is now a forced service, from which Prospero profits. Caliban is as weighed down by resentment as Ariel is airy. His first words to Prospero are a refusal to render service. The joy that marks the initial exchange between Ariel and Prospero is contrasted with the antagonism and mutual cursing in the initial confrontation between Prospero and Caliban.

Nothing in *The Tempest* so clearly demonstrates the difference between our contemporary moral sensibilities and priorities and those of Shakespeare (and his time) than the "radical" reading of Caliban that makes of him an innocent victim. Today *The Tempest* is often read through the lens of post-colonialism, which makes Shakespeare's portrait of Caliban a Euro-centric portrait of the indigene as a lesser being and thus a self-serving apologia for colonialism.⁵ But it is a fundamental violation of the text to say that Prospero's relationship with Caliban is a general endorsement of colonialism, or a general statement on the indigenes by Shakespeare.⁶ Shakespeare has deliberately taken some characteristics of inhabitants of the New World, and from it has forged a new character. This is precisely what we see in the very name of Caliban, an anagram of cannibal. An anagram simultaneously evokes a familiar image and something different from the familiar. This, too, is what Shakespeare does with the island that bears all manner of resemblances to what has been reported by explorers, and yet it is located (not in the New World, but somewhere between Milan and Tunis), charmed (the gods

who bless the island are Roman) and populated (much is made of the fish-like nature of Caliban that suggests he is not like other "Indians") in a way that defies such a straightforward correspondence.⁷ The reason for this is that Shakespeare wants to control the terms of interaction to achieve his purposes. Of course, as the epilogue makes transparent, there is a correspondence between Prospero's art and the art of the drama itself, and it is the audience that grants release and gives pardon to Prospero and the dramatist who has created Prospero. The dramatist may set out purposes that are realized through the actions of the characters, but the audience (and the same goes for directors and literary critics) is not compelled to remain fastened to those purposes.

Furthermore, the difference between the modern sympathy for Caliban and the difficulty for many moderns to empathize with Prospero's character and means is symptomatic of a fundamental difference between their existential, social and political priorities and Shakespeare's. Here it is not my concern to argue for the superiority of Shakespeare's vision over that view which takes Caliban's side (though I think that). But I do want to clarify why Shakespeare paints Caliban in a less than sympathetic light, and how the portrayal of Caliban fits into Shakespeare's web of problems about wisdom and leadership. In doing that, I will suggest that if one takes Shakespeare's treatment of wisdom and leadership seriously, one will be less inclined to be impressed by the "radical" political readings of Shakespeare in which many perennial political problems, which preoccupied Shakespeare, simply do not figure.

Caliban sees himself as the rightful owner of the island he has inherited from Sycorax. But Sycorax herself was not indigenous to the island. She was brought and left there by sailors after her banishment from Algiers. Any claim to succession therefore is based upon the right of possession of the original discoverer. Although there may be a case for this in international law, Shakespeare takes a different approach. Prospero's behavior in *The Tempest* is not based on the idealist belief that principle alone determines right; rather, it is the result of the fusion of right principle, right purpose and right action. Prospero and Miranda land on the island by accident; they do not freely choose to be there; they have every intention of departing; and no intention of possessing it after their departure, let alone plundering it for all its "resources." All of these are indicative of a fundamental difference between Prospero and Miranda and colonialists. More importantly, for Shakespeare's purposes, Prospero arrives with a superior range of powers with him. Indeed his powers, which he develops even further on the island,

are and increasingly become his essence. In spite of Caliban's claim to possession through succession, his isolation means that prior to Prospero's coming, there is no issue of ownership. There is simply no one else to question it. The problem of ownership arises the moment another inhabitant arrives. Then, the different range and quanta of powers at the disposal of each becomes the essential component in the matter of claims and entitlements. Originally, and as can be established by Caliban's own admission of the nascent affection with which each held the other, there was also not a problem concerning entitlements. On the contrary, initially the relationship was mutually advantageous, involving the exchange of knowledge—Prospero's knowledge of astronomy and language, and Caliban's knowledge of the island and its qualities. But then, as Caliban tells the story, for no apparent reason, Prospero imprisoned him. The former king of the island is now reduced to a prisoner.

Caliban's original speech is as touching as his plight seems pitiable. But it is deceptively self-serving, and Prospero calls him a liar. One important thing that Caliban leaves out in his description of the island is the tormented cries that came from the imprisoned Ariel—as Prospero reminds Ariel earlier "Thy groans / Did make wolves howl, and penetrate the breasts / Of ever-angry bears" (1.2.329–331). There is nothing to suggest that Caliban had sympathy or concern for Ariel. There is nothing to suggest that Caliban is capable of pity for anyone but himself. All his thoughts are refracted through his own self-pity. He is incapable of understanding the terror that he has caused to Miranda by his attempted rape when she was just a child. When Prospero makes plain the true reason why the relationship between them soured and why he has made Caliban a prisoner, Caliban counters by regretting that he had not been successful in populating the island with little Calibans. Caliban cannot escape the lack of socialization that characterized his early years. Prospero is forced to learn an important lesson about leadership—that not everyone can be as one would wish them to be. The fact that Prospero had held Caliban in affection most likely stemmed from the appreciation for beauty which (as is often noted) he expresses so beautifully in the speech beginning: "Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not" (3.2.133–134). Indeed, the contrast between his limited capacities, appetitive nature and deformed body, on the one hand, and the sparkling language and wonderful attentiveness to nature's bounties, on the other, is very captivating. Prospero's original attitude toward Caliban was in all probability enchantment by the beauty of a dainty monster. It was no less full of good will than the attitude of

more modern audiences. But Caliban's uncontrollable actions and Prospero's duties to his daughter make it impossible for him to let Caliban's charm be the determining factor of their relationship. The fact that Caliban has no regret about his attempted violation reveals to Prospero his inability to sacrifice his impulses in order to accrue the advantages of civilization. This has left Caliban weak. This is starkly evident in Caliban's attitude toward speech. According to Caliban himself, the most profit he has gained from learning language is that he knows how to curse. He has not in any way grasped the connection between power and speech. He knows the extent of Prospero's power, and he knows that he must obey it; it is, he says, far superior to the power of "my dam's god Setebos" (1.2.427). But he has not grasped how Prospero's power is intrinsically related to language. Had Caliban persevered, he would be able to read, and then he could learn what Prospero's books contain. His curses would then also have effect, instead of being empty. Had he the ability to learn magic, he could summon spirits as Prospero does, and he could have the power to issue commands as well as think through his plight and arrive at a way of resolution. But he remains quite powerless, less powerful even than the very dregs of civilization, as is evident in his treatment at the hands of Trinculo and Stephano.

Caliban is condemned to powerlessness because he is too swift to seek gratification. That is also at the core of his desire for and understanding of freedom—it is a freedom from labor, and hence a freedom from accumulating power over time and into the future. It is not a liberating freedom, if by liberating we mean that which increases our power as opposed to that which merely enables us to follow our limited capacities. Prior to Prospero's coming, this limited type of freedom sufficed for Caliban, and it will have to suffice again after Prospero's departure. But it means that he is condemned to live as a beast, which makes him vulnerable whenever he comes into contact with human beings who are able to draw upon the resources contained in civilization. He is then likely to be treated, as indeed Prospero treats him, as a beast of burden, as another power to be pressed into service for the ends that enmesh people within civilization.

Like Ariel, Caliban longs for freedom. But unlike Ariel, Caliban's freedom does not pertain to his nature. Rather, he wants what gratifies him, and that may be freedom, but he will also let it go as soon as he sees an advantage in it. He is, to use the Aristotelian term, a slave by nature—his railing against his master does not in any way make him less slavish by nature. The contrast with Ariel could not be more striking. As with Aristotle's category of a slave by convention, Ariel is

nowhere a real slave.⁸ In spite of him calling Prospero "Master" and Prospero calling him "my brave spirit," Ariel never loses, nor surrenders his own individual nature to another; he knows that he is providing a service for a limited time. Most importantly, there are some things he will never do. Thus when he was the servant of Sycorax, he was "a spirit too delicate / To act her earthly and abhor'd commands, / Refusing her grand hests" (1.2.314–316). Indeed, whereas Ariel's relationship with Prospero commences with an obligation to his liberator, with Caliban, as I have said, the relationship does not begin as one of master and servant. Although, as it turns out, the natural balance within the relationship is one of master and slave: Caliban would have been enslaved by whoever came to the island.

This is clearly evident in his response to Trinculo, the jester, and the drunk Stephano. Immediately on meeting them, he makes gods of them, swears himself into servitude and straight away promises to show "every fertile inch o' the isle" (2.2.149). He is a servant to his fear and his desire for freedom from labor. Trinculo and Stephano are dumbfounded. They have done nothing more than engage in drunken comic banter. Now, thanks to Caliban's servile behavior and information, they can aspire (in their own bumbling comic manner) to fortunes and political heights previously unimaginable. In keeping with the coupling of his desire for freedom and his new found enslavement to Trinculo and Stephano, Caliban sings the stirring lines: "Farewell, master, farewell, farewell!...Freedom, high-day! High day, freedom! Freedom, highday, freedom!" Even though he thinks that means: "No more dams I'll make for fish, nor fetch in firing at requiring. Nor scrape trenchering, nor wash dish," Caliban simply "Has a new master...a new man" (2.2.179–187)—an incongruity he seems incapable of noticing.

The incongruity between freedom and service to a master, is, however, not as silly as first appears. Indeed, the coupling of freedom and servitude is at the heart of Shakespeare's understanding of freedom. As Shakespeare enunciates it, the issue of freedom is not one that can be broken down into the choice between not serving or serving. The question is who to serve. Caliban's slavish nature does not come from the fact that he is willing to serve—all free men and women serve. His slavishness is bound up with the who and how of his choice of service: he would serve his own slavish nature if he could, and, failing that, he would serve a drunk and a fool. And yet, in the conspiracy, it is Caliban who leads as he watches his "gods" squabbling and doting "on such luggage," mere "trash." Of the three, he is

the most aware of the importance of time, pleading with Stephano and Trinculo: "We shall lose our time" (4.1.248). With Prospero so enraptured by success, celebration and pageantry, there was a moment of opportunity available. Had Stephano and Trinculo even the wisdom of Caliban, and had they heeded his advice for the need to act in the available time, they may have succeeded in their plan to murder Prospero. But Caliban is stuck with his co-conspirators, and hence doomed to fail. He too has his lesson to learn. At the end of the play, Caliban, for the first time, willingly (that is without cursing and resistance) accepts Prospero's command. It is a willingness born of fear (of being turned into a barnacle or an ape or being pinched to death), and recognition of the foolish choice of service that he has entered into in his search for freedom. His final words combine a willingness of service, a resolution, an openness to grace and the ability to learn from his mistakes: "Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter / And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass / Was I to take this drunk for a god / And worship this dull fool!" (5.1.330–333). We have no way of knowing whether the lesson will stick. If he remains alone on the island, (what in all likelihood will happen) he will not need such lessons. The lessons required for civilization will be of no use to his life-world. He will be free again in exactly the way he desires; free to serve no one but his own appetites. But in that freedom, just as he was previously, he would be vulnerable to any newcomer more powerful than himself.

The freedom that may suffice for Caliban, if left alone, cannot suffice for men and women in society. In a society, all are bound by obligations, which are frequently burdensome. Nevertheless, *The Tempest* implies that it is an illusion to believe that we can be free if we unburden ourselves from social obligations. In Caliban, Shakespeare follows this premise through by depicting a character who cannot successfully free himself from such bonds through his own will, and who eventually sees no other alternative than to curb his natural and monstrous appetite if he is to remain living amongst men and women. But the issue is considered from another angle when articulated by Gonzalo in the form of a utopian ideal.

Utopia

Significantly, it is Gonzalo who articulates the ideal. We have already seen in the first scene of the play that Gonzalo talks too much. The point is taken up again with Alonso's first words to him 'Prithee, peace,' as well as Sebastian's and

Antonio's mockery. His verbosity is only matched by his unbridled and unreasonable optimism. With almost no information to guide him about the nature of the island, Gonzalo says: "Here is everything advantageous to life" (2.1.48), as if he could possibly know in such a short time what dangers and prospects lie before him on the island. It is not that Gonzalo notices nothing. On the contrary, he notices the state of the clothes they are wearing, and the lushness of the grass. But what he notices is what gives hope. What he does not notice is danger. Along with his optimism he has a kindly heart, as is evident in his chastisement of Sebastian for rubbing Alonso's sore by reminding him that in marrying his daughter against her will and everyone's wishes to an African, and with Ferdinand now drowned, he has left himself without an heir. Whatever we may think about Sebastian's verbal cruelty, he is telling an unpleasant truth, while Gonzalo wants to avoid harsh realities.

Gonzalo begins his utopian speech with the lines: "Had I plantation of this isle, my lord. / And were the king on't, what would I do?" Gonzalo answers his question by saying that he would eliminate commerce, law, letters, riches and poverty, service, succession, contract, labor and its products: "No occupation, all men idle, all, / And women too, but innocent and pure; No sovereignty." The responses of Sebastian, "Yet he would be king on't," and Antonio, "The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning" are accurate, that is, Gonzalo has described a world where sovereignty is meaningless; it is meaningless because his world is void of all the aspirations that fuel conflict. Gonzalo continues about being king in a world in which nature provides all, where there is no treason, felony, nor weapons. All is innocence and idleness. Here, there is as little need for wisdom as there is for labor and leadership (see 2.1.144–171). The false premises are that life is so benign that labor is not necessary and that people are fundamentally innocent—"all idle; whores and knaves" (2.1.16) is the grimmer version from Antonio who understands the darker side of human nature. Gonzalo does not know it, but Caliban is the reality of his utopian dream (a point even harder to miss when one traces the source of Gonzalo's speech; it is from Michael Montaigne's essay, 'Of the Cannibals'). It is also apposite that Gonzalo breaks into his utopian speech in the presence of Sebastian and Antonio. If an idea such as that proposed by Gonzalo could be taken seriously by sufficient number of men, then men like Sebastian and Antonio would be quick to take advantage of it. Gonzalo's view of freedom, as articulated here, is an unwitting invitation to tyranny.

Shakespeare makes all too obvious the weakness of the idea of utopia. Even Gonzalo seems to recognize its impossibility when, after being told to keep quiet by Alonso, he says he said the whole thing to make Sebastian and Antonio laugh. However, it is difficult to gauge whether Gonzalo really thinks he is engaging in "merry fooling," or whether he has simply become sick of the constant sneering of Antonio and Sebastian. Certainly, by insisting that he has been talking nothing, he is able to turn the tables on Sebastian and Antonio, letting them know he is tired of being the butt of their insults and that he is not as stupid as they think. He indicates he has some measure of their character when he snipes back: "you would lift / the moon out of her sphere, if she would continue / it five weeks without changing" (2.1.186–187). The "merry fooling" is discontinued in Act 2. But the matter overhangs *The Tempest*, and it would seem that Shakespeare is aware that the impetus for utopia stems from a deep ambivalence about the value of civilization. A major implication of the discovery of the New World, as Montaigne recognized, is that it provides a yardstick for measuring the defects of the Old World (i.e. of civilization). Shakespeare acknowledges the truth behind this ambivalence when he indicates that evil is exacerbated by the powers made accessible through civilization. It is acknowledged in a response by Prospero to the observation, fittingly made by Gonzalo: "For, certes, there are people of the island— / Who, 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," Prospero remarks: "Honest lord, Thou hast said well; for some of you there present are worse than devils" (3.3.38–45).

The utopian scene is a prelude to the conspiracy of Antonio and Sebastian to murder Alonso, one of the two conspiracies of the play. This is a conspiracy of evil; the other, as we have seen, is the conspiracy of clowns. The one is a conspiracy instigated by a cunning civilized man and his pupil; the other a marriage of natural resentment and civilized stupidity. The evil conspiracy commences with Antonio's ability to wake up Sebastian's sleeping and lazy ambition. "I am standing water," says Sebastian, only to be answered by Antonio: "I'll teach you how to flow" (2.1.233–234). Antonio's power is the classical humanist power of persuasion, or rhetoric. The steps to the throne are simply laid out: the dead Ferdinand, the absent and all-too-distant, Claribel, and the sleeping Alonso. The thin wall of Sebastian's conscience is easily toppled and he is ready to commit fratricide to gain power for himself. Yet Sebastian remains more captivated by the lingering power of words, "O, but one word!" (2.1.300) than the

swiftness of the murderous deed. The moment is lost as Ariel's song awakens the sleeping Gonzalo. And for the first time in the play Gonzalo's speech serves a genuinely good purpose as he awakens the king and the other sleepers.

Prospero's Magic and Moral Contrivances

The conspiracy fails because Antonio's rhetorical power, which resembles black magic in so far as it is a means of enchantment that requires evil deeds for self-empowerment, is not as strong as Prospero's magic.⁹ Prospero's magic also involves the power of speech. But whereas Antonio persuades the baser nature to achieve what he wants, Prospero's speech is of a commanding nature directed to the greater good. Not only does Prospero summon spirits and issue commands, his magic extends to prophecy, to making himself invisible and to the ability to transcend the word by creating music out of the air. The emphasis upon the magical power of music and song is particularly conspicuous in Ariel's service. It is Ariel's music and song that thwart Antonio's intentions by alerting Gonzalo to the danger to the king (although Gonzalo is not aware that the danger comes from Antonio and Sebastian). It is also through Ariel's song that Ferdinand is drawn towards Miranda and Prospero. Music becomes a source of sheer impish delight that further contributes to the comic chaos that the invisible Ariel has generated amongst the clownish conspirators through his repeated rebuke of Caliban, "Thou liest," which Caliban falsely ascribes to Trinculo. Further, Alonso registers Ariel's accusations as billows speaking or as winds singing and the thunder's pronouncement of the name Prospero as the sound of an organ-pipe. Music also accompanies the entrance of Prospero's enemies into the magical circle, as the prelude to his confrontation. In *The Tempest*, music is a power that may reach even further into the soul than speech, stirring what cannot yet be spoken. It corrects the soul's discordances and cures the brain, thus enhancing reason and understanding and the honest speech that make them possible. But music and song do not succeed with everyone. Antonio and Sebastian are as untouched by the music as they are by honest speech and an open heart. They are too deaf, too closed. In this respect, their cunning makes them the biggest fools of the play—a point brought out as they chase specters and spirits, as if they could be cut down like men. It is also evident from the fact that even the fools, Stephano and Trinculo and Caliban, have

repented. That it is Antonio and Sebastian who laugh loudest at the fools brings the point home with a good lashing of irony.

The failure of the music to touch all and the lack of repentance by Sebastian and Antonio demonstrate a fundamental limitation of Prospero's magic: it cannot enforce goodness of heart. The other major limitation of his magic is that it cannot rid him of the need to remain attentive. The point is fittingly made in the scene containing the most spectacular demonstration of Prospero's magic, the betrothal masque for Miranda and Ferdinand. The extent of Prospero's powers is so great that he can summon goddesses (Iris, Ceres, Juno) to bless and celebrate the betrothed. But his magical prowess has momentarily blinded him to his fallibility. Only at the last minute—"The minute of their plot is almost come"

(4.1.143)—does he turn his attention to the comic conspiracy. The importance of this lapse is underlined by Miranda's comment that she has never seen Prospero so angry before. Political wisdom, as made explicit here, requires not only attentiveness to the intrigues of evil men, but equally to conspiracies which fuse resentment, intemperance and foolishness, as this one does. Wise leadership involves an all consuming attention, not just magical power. Indeed, Prospero will abjure his magic once he has achieved his purposes of restoring his political power and, through the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda—a new union between Naples and Milan as equals, and liberty for the people of Milan.

Throughout *The Tempest*, all of Prospero's powers have been used in the pursuit of these political ends. It is against these ends that all Prospero's moral choices must be measured, including the two that most go against contemporary sensibilities. The first, as we have already indicated, is the enslavement of Caliban and Ariel. The second is the contrivance of the marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda. Nothing is more important to his purposes than the union between Ferdinand and Miranda; it is even more important than Prospero's forgiveness of his enemies. Indeed, it is what elevates his forgiveness above the merely personal plane, dependent upon his free will, and turns it into an essential condition for future peace. By making Ferdinand his son, Alonso and he are tied together as relatives. Punishment of Alonso, however justifiable, would only contribute to bad blood between Naples and Milan, and the possibility of a cycle of vengeance. In Milan, Prospero had indulged his private interests; on the island, he has learnt to be the servant of his moral and political responsibilities. If Prospero were to turn his back upon his duties, he would be a monster far worse than Caliban. Yet by acknowledging that these responsibilities dictate his choices, he must conform to

moral requisites of a higher order than those that govern others in domains of lesser responsibility. By the same token, he must bring others into the orderly constraints he devises precisely because he is aware of what is at stake. This is why Prospero sets up the love between Miranda and Ferdinand through magical power. Such intervention would seem to violate the moral principle of love freely chosen and freely given. But Miranda and Ferdinand, like Prospero, cannot be expected to comply with the same moral obligations as those whose lives generate an entirely different, and politically less significant chain of reactions. Miranda is born into a political complex. Her actions cannot escape having large-scale political consequences. She simply does not have the right (the same is true of Ferdinand) to act as a merely private person. That Prospero magically nudges Ferdinand and Miranda toward each other follows from the fact that the art of ruling requires that in the matter of political succession fortune is not the appropriate master where matters of the heart are concerned. His solution is the best of both worlds: Ferdinand and Miranda are (thanks to Prospero) charmed by each other, and all their citizens will benefit from the marriage. Every moral compulsion is a demand for sacrifice. Miranda's and Ferdinand's freedom, no less than Ariel and Caliban's, and indeed Prospero's, has been sacrificed for some higher good. In love, though, this sacrifice of the will of each for the will of the other is the exact good that is sought for. Here sacrifice and grace, freedom and bondage are one and the same. Thus Miranda: "to be your fellow / You may deny me; but I'll be your servant, / Whether you will or no" (3.1.98–100) and Ferdinand "Ay, with a heart as willing / As bondage e'er of freedom" (3.1.105).

In satisfying each other, Ferdinand and Miranda satisfy their subjects. It will not satisfy those for whom free choice and social equality take precedence over all other moral requisites. If *The Tempest* is not judged by the moral principles of sacrifice and responsibility, but by free choice and social equality it is easy prey for studies such as Lorie Leininger's "The Miranda Trap." Leininger points accusingly at Shakespeare for writing lines such as Prospero's reproach of Miranda "What, I say— / My foot my tutor (1.2.541)?"¹⁰ Such a study gains whatever moral power it may appear to have by its refusal to acknowledge that the political, economic and social structures of modern liberal democracies, and the accompanying patterns of responsibilities and possibilities, cannot be simply transposed into the early seventeenth century. The appropriate measure for assessing Miranda's fortunes, as a daughter whose life is dictated by political duties, can be seen if her position is compared with Claribel's. We know that

Prospero has put a spell on Miranda and that Ferdinand has been enchanted by the music. Nevertheless, in their enchanted state they have, in turn, cast a spell on each other: "They are both in either's powers" (1.2.451), says Prospero. However it may have come to pass, the fact is that they love each other. Claribel, on the other hand, is miserable in her obedience. No one but her husband and father want the marriage, and, worst of all, her marriage has taken her outside the sphere of political influence and hence outside the common good.

For all her initial innocence, by *The Tempest's* conclusion, Miranda herself understands that politics requires contrivances of a very different order from other activities. This is neatly drawn out in the exchange between Miranda and Ferdinand that is witnessed by Prospero, Alonso et. al. Miranda and Ferdinand are playing chess, a suitable game for future statesmen, and Miranda after falsely accusing Ferdinand of cheating, responds to his declarations of love and innocence: "Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play" (5.1.174–5). Miranda has imbibed her father's practical wisdom, now she starts to teach Ferdinand.

Conclusion

The Tempest is a triumphant play: the triumph of wisdom over evil, of virtue over vengeance, of future peace over present strife, of the better over the worse, and even of life over death. It is a play of findings rather than loss. Prospero has found a way back to his dukedom; Miranda and Ferdinand find each other; Alonso finds Ferdinand and the way back to goodness; Ariel finds his freedom; Caliban finds that it is better to seek wisdom and grace than merely serve his appetites; Gonzalo finds a measure he did not have. When Prospero embraces Gonzalo with the words "First noble friend, / Let me embrace thine age, whose honor cannot / be measured or confined" (5.1.127–129), Gonzalo responds with a new found thoughtfulness: "whether this be, / Or be not, I'll not swear (5.1.130–131)." He has learnt not to be certain without reason, and he is given the speech that so acutely pulls together the good that has come from the experience, pointing out that "all of us" have "found ourselves." All these findings are the products of the wisdom that Prospero has found. Only two, Sebastian and Antonio seem incapable of finding anything. Whereas Antonio is silent, Sebastian says of Prospero, "'The devil speaks in him!" (5.1. 128). Indeed, they are losers: Antonio has lost his dukedom and Sebastian his

potential crown. But even they have found something—that a wise and powerful leader will defeat their ambitions, and the ambitions of men like them. Only by being master has Prospero been able to reveal what each needs to learn. Before his banishment Prospero had wrongly thought that wisdom was a private affair, something that he drew into himself and kept in solitude. By the time *The Tempest* begins he has understood that one's social and political location bring responsibilities with them: wisdom requires knowing what they are, and what opportunities are available; mastery involves the right act at the right time.