ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE LECTURE

THE TEMPEST: WHAT SORT OF PLAY?

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IN 1930 the Annual Shakespeare Lecture read to this Society by the distinguished poet and critic Lascelles Abercrombie, was *A Plea for Liberty of Interpreting*.[1] At the present time that cause, it is my belief, has been overwon. To appreciate the many reverberations of a work of art can—of course—be nothing but right and good; and when the artist is Shakespeare they are manifold indeed. If I were doomed to forget every critical utterance on Shakespeare but one, I should wish to remember the one with which Dryden begins his famous character of him: the praise of his 'comprehensive soul'.[2] Among its manifestations is his urge to dramatize a subject comprehensively from many sides. Nowadays, this many-sided view is often thought to earn the title of ambiguity, the ambiguous being much admired, probably because it appeals to a prevalent scepticism. Ambiguity, when it is genuinely an artistic quality, presents alternative meanings which in a sense are not alternative, since neither is to be discarded: there is no question of choosing one and not the other.[3] Hence it does not, as some critics and more producers appear to assume, confer a charter to adopt at will this or that interpretation, on the ground that it is no less permissible than others. Nor can I envisage Shakespeare, or any artist before very recent times, conceiving it an artistic virtue so to design and execute a work as to leave it open to interpretations incompatible with one another. The virtue has traditionally lain in the artist's creation of a form perspicuous and coherent enough to

[1] Reprinted in *Aspects of Shakespeare*, ed. J. W. Mackail, 1933.

[2] 'Of Dramatic Poesy', *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker, i. 79.

[3] A fine example is T. S. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men' (see my article in *English*, Autumn 1966). In 'Andrew Marvell' (1921) Eliot admired, in wit of Marvell's sort, the 'recognition, implicit in the expression of every kind of experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible': *Selected Essays*, 1932, p. 289. William Empson published *Seven Types of Ambiguity* in 1930 (revised 1954).

focus understanding of what the work has to say, and to direct the response of the audience. So Dryden thought: 'as in perspective . . . there must be a point of sight in which all the lines terminate; otherwise the eye wanders, and the work is false'.[1] The critic who hopes to contribute to the full and just reception of a work should set out, I believe, in the faith that such a point of view exists, and make it his prime business to recognize it and to ensure that his readers are able to recognize it, too.

Such being my conviction, it will be understood why for once I find myself in disagreement with Professor Muriel Bradbrook, some of whose observations on *The Tempest* I am obliged to reject. When she calls it 'a *new* myth', I am delighted; when she warns us that 'its simplicity is deceptive' I could not more strongly agree. But I cannot believe that it 'is susceptible of almost any interpretation that the audience chooses to put upon it', still less that it is 'deliberately enigmatic':[2] Shakespeare belongs to no School of Night. I take comfort in that 'almost'; I do not imagine that Miss Bradbrook would demur to my saying that it is sadly easy to put forward interpretations of a work—and *The Tempest* has been no exception—which if not explicitly contradicted by the text go directly against the grain of it. We critics often need to ask ourselves the question with which some of us have been in the habit of checking the wilder speculations of students: 'But will the play allow you to say that?' Artistic form exists to inhibit some responses as well as to prompt others.

[1] 'Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', ed. cit. I. 208.

[2] 'Shakespeare the Jacobean Dramatist', *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. K. Muir and S. Schoenbaum, 1971, pp. 155 f. Professor Bradbrook quotes Dr. Anne Righter (New Penguin Shakespeare edn., p. 17): 'it is rarely possible to be sure what is going on inside [the] people' of the play. But *The Tempest* is a play of which Aristotle's principle is eminently true: 'they do not act to portray the characters; they include the characters for the sake of the action': these people (except for Antonio in the final scene) can enact the myth which is the play, without our needing to know more than we are given about what goes on inside them. Admittedly, in default of knowing more we cannot be certain of Antonio's repentance or unrepentance, and this matters for the myth. His silence may signify unrepentance, or be simply to avoid his becoming a focus for the attention of the audience: Prospero's earlier 'they being penitent', which applies to Antonio along with Sebastian and Alonso, may mean 'Since they are penitent' or possibly 'in so far as they are penitent'. But the doubts which trouble us probably did not exist for Shakespeare's audience: the actor's demeanour would resolve them. One cannot envisage Shakespeare deliberately leaving the point doubtful, so that Antonio could be unobtrusively repentant in some performances, and unrepentant in others.

At all events, I should like to begin the present quest (the latest of many)[1] for the subject with which *The Tempest* is centrally concerned, by adverting to two interpretations impossible, surely, to maintain in face of the play as it is: interpretations that would make it a kind of play it is not. The earlier owed its vogue to Lytton Strachey's essay, 'Shakespeare's Final Period', published in 1904 and reprinted in his *Books and Characters*, 1922. It is discernible in Walter Raleigh's *Shakespeare* of 1907, which seems to attempt a blend of Strachey's unfavourable view with Dowden's that in the Romances Shakespeare had finally reached haven, the view Strachey was attacking. The impression left by Raleigh's chapter is that for him these plays were (as Professor Philip Edwards has put it[2]) 'the toys of serenity' an ageing Shakespeare amused himself with. To quote Raleigh's own words: 'It is as if Shakespeare were weary of the business of drama, and cared only to indulge his whim'; perhaps 'he sought refreshment in irresponsible play'.[3] According to Strachey, Shakespeare had become 'bored with people, bored with real life, bored with drama, bored in fact with everything but poetry and poetical dreams'.[4] That opinion may no longer have much currency, though one can never be sure a devil's advocate is done with: T. S. Eliot, after all, resuscitated Rymer on *Othello*, saying he had 'never seen a convincing refutation' of him.[5]

The second palpable misinterpretation of *The Tempest* is quite widely entertained. Recently it was forced on my attention by a student of English literature who took the most brilliant First of her year. In her dissertation, which was on *The Tempest*, she contended that the reconciliations with which it ends are so precarious that a new round of discords will soon disrupt the harmony, with people once more at each other's throats; and that for the due effect of the conclusion, Shakespeare reckons on our recognizing this, which he has given us the means to foresee. Her interpretation was a counterpart, perhaps an offshoot,

[1] Judiciously reviewed by Professor Philip Edwards, 'Shakespeare's Romances: 1900–1957' (*Shakespeare Survey*, 11, 1958) and 'The Late Comedies' (*Shakespeare: Select Bibliographical Guides*, ed. Stanley Wells, 1973; cp. J. H. P. Pafford (ed.), *The Winter's Tale*, 1963, pp. xxxvii–xliv.

[2] *Shakespeare Survey*, 11, p. 3.

[3] *Shakespeare*, 1907 (1925), pp. 209, 211. To be fair to Raleigh, he excepted *The Tempest* from the suggestion, 'perhaps . . . true', that the late Romances showed Shakespeare's mind 'unstrung by fatigue' (pp. 211, 214).

[4] 'Shakespeare's Final Period', *Books and Characters*, 1922 (reprinted from the *Independent Review*, iii, Aug. 1904); 1924 edn., p. 52.

[5] 'Hamlet' (1919), *Selected Essays*, 1932, p. 141 n. 1.

of an attitude towards Shakespearian romantic comedy, which for *Twelfth Night* has been traced by T. W. Craik[1] as it runs through interpretations by W. H. Auden, Jan Kott, and even Philip Edwards, and, more moderately expressed, by E. C. Pettet and Clifford Leech.[2] Elsewhere I have described critics who share this attitude as unable, apparently,

> to believe that a great author, seized of human nature and the human condition as a great author must be, can have . . . given a story a happy ending, without (as the fashionable phrase goes) undercutting it, to the point of casting upon it a destructive doubt.

Such a view reflects, I believe, what Gilbert Murray, diagnosing in *Five Stages of Greek Religion* a phase of discouragement not unlike that which besets us today, called 'The Failure of Nerve'.[3] It is projected upon *The Tempest* and Shakespeare's other romantic comedies from outside (as Marxist, Freudian, or theologically formulated Christian presuppositions sometimes are); it is not discovered in them. *The Tempest* belongs to a kind of play which has, inescapably, a romantic happy ending.

Strachey and Raleigh accepted as happy the endings of Shakespeare's late Romances, but evidently saw them as facile. Missing in *The Tempest* and its three predecessors the intensity and full human characterization of the tragedies, they concluded

[1] *Twelfth Night*, Arden edn., 1975, pp. liii f. Like myself, he regards 'as wholly regrettable' a 'general trend in twentieth-century criticism and production' of Shakespearian romantic comedy 'which may be called anti-romantic, a tendency towards extracting the potentially ironical and ridiculous in Shakespeare's dramatic situations' (ibid., p. xcv).

[2] Cf. Clifford Leech's conviction that *Two Gentlemen of Verona* 'exhibits the minor quality of both love and friendship' with 'the very idea of attachment presented as a small thing' (Arden edn. 1969, p. lxxv); the second essay of his '*Twelfth Night*' *and Shakespearean Comedy*, 1965; and in *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, 1950 (p. 154) and 'The Structure of the Last Plays' (*Shakespeare Survey*, 11, 1958, p. 27) his seeing in the final scenes of *The Tempest* 'harshness of tone' and a 'burden of moral exhaustion', and at the end, for Prospero 'a mere re-entry into the flux . . . as Fortune's subject once again', and 'the sense that nothing is yet concluded'. But is not that because it is not concluded so as to satisfy his imagination, which cannot be satisfied with a happy conclusion and so cannot rest in the one Shakespeare has given him, but has to fashion, beyond the play, another more in keeping with his own sense of reality? Nevertheless, it is a far cry from Professor Leech to the lunatic fringe exposed in two amusing and timely articles by Richard Levin on 'Refuting Shakespeare's Endings' (*Modern Philology*, 1975, pp. 337 ff., and 1977, pp. 132 ff.). Though one does not suppose their motives lie deep, even these 'refuters' witness to a somewhat disturbing desire in some quarters to repudiate Shakespeare's affirmations.

[3] 1925; ch. iv, heading.

that Shakespeare's grip on life and drama had grown slack; these plays, thought Strachey, were the product of contracting interests and failing powers. While those who insist that destructive doubt is cast on the happy ending show themselves unable to take the dramatic genre of *The Tempest*, Strachey and Raleigh misconceived it. *The Tempest* is a drama of fantasy, but not an escape from the real world into dreams. Elizabethans did not share Strachey's assumption that 'poetical dreams' were unlikely to be criticism of life. Renaissance fable was highly prized as a vehicle of difficult and lofty truths. Two great works of Shakespeare's elder contemporaries, Sidney's *Arcadia* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, are no more realistic than *The Tempest* itself; yet they were written and read as major criticism of life.[1] To the more serious-minded among Shakespeare's audience the distance at which *The Tempest* stood from realism must have been in itself a strong hint that more was meant than met the ear. The excursion into an otherworld of fantasy is designed, like the illusion of drama itself, to take us beyond actuality, so that we may return with deeper understanding of realities. Within the play, for the characters, there is this experience in an otherworld, visited and returned from. The otherworld in *The Tempest* corresponds to otherworlds in earlier plays: Bohemia (with its sea coast and sheep-shearing feast); the Welsh mountains in *Cymbeline*; the forest of Arden, the wood near Athens, the greenwood in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; even, in *Much Ado*, Hero's tomb. They all constitute places or localities acting, dramatically and psychologically, as enclosures within which transformations, and conversions, and recognitions, can take place.[2]

Dramatizing, as he does in *The Tempest* and the other Late Romances, conversions, recognitions, and reconciliations in the aftermath of tragic conflicts, conflicts which they resolve and heal, Shakespeare is continuing to develop his thought and the subjects of his drama in a natural progression (as E. M. W. Tillyard has shown[3]) from his tragedies themselves. There is no

[1] Cf. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, 1938: 'We shall not understand what Shakespeare's contemporaries expected from the romantic material . . . unless we remember what they thought of the *Arcadia*'; and Philip Edwards in *Shakespeare: Select Bibliographical Guides*, p. 118.

[2] Cf. the *temenos*, the numinous enclosure protective of the personality while it undergoes transformations: C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, p. 105.

[3] Op. cit. 'II. The Tragic Pattern': the book, says Edwards (op. cit., p. 121) although 'too schematic . . . has been properly influential in its claim that the last works are not a breakaway from Shakespeare's tragic

abdication from concern with reality such as Raleigh and Strachey postulated. That was their second error, this time about the content of the plays, and their relationship to the tragedies Shakespeare had been writing. In this further extension of his art, he concerns himself especially with an aspect of reality which Aristotelians might have called 'metatragedy'—'what comes after tragedy': namely those possibilities, after tragic experience, of regeneration, reconciliation, and healing.[1]

In *The Winter's Tale*, we recall, Shakespeare presented the tragical experience in the first part of the play, with its catastrophe in the death of Mamillius, and as the audience are led to believe, of Hermione too. The healing through the second generation is presented after a time-gap of sixteen years, unacceptable to neo-classical critics such as Ben Jonson and Quiller-Couch,[2] but with skillful use of techniques, which nowadays we judge successful, to maintain unity of dramatic form as well as of dramatic theme.

In Shakespeare's further masterpiece in this genre, *The Tempest*, the dramatic unity is attained in part by the classical method; the method of beginning the enactment very late in the story. With the exception of what the shipwreck at first appears to be, the tragical events are over before the enactment begins; and with the same exception, the play is set wholly in the otherworld, enacting the final expiations, repentances, and reconciliations: the movement from the tempest of disorder to a harmony prevented, however, from being facile by a number of qualifications.

To secure dramatic unity on this plan requires no less skill than on the plan of *The Winter's Tale*. Neither play exhibits a falling-off, since the Tragedies, in Shakespeare's mastery of theatre and dramatic craftsmanship. Those tragedies are rightly recognized as his supreme achievement, and in a sense any change from their intense power and full humanity must result in dramas of less magnitude. It may even be true that as he aged he could no longer command, or at least no longer stand up to,

world, but an extension of it'. Cf. also Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Last Phase*, 1954, p. vii and *passim*.

[1] See, for these and related themes recurring in the Romances, Pafford, ed. cit., pp. xlvi–xlviii and nn.

[2] *Shakespeare's Workmanship*, 1918 (1931), pp. 233–4: 'in *The Winter's Tale* the gap between Acts III and IV comes of honest failure to do an extremely difficult thing . . . which Shakespeare essayed again and again, until at length, in *The Tempest*, he mastered it'. Cf. pp. 179, 229.

the vast and terrible passions of *King Lear*.[1] Yet in its very different way *The Tempest* manifests no less marvellous a genius. It is a genius seen not in the poetry alone—to think so is Strachey's third mistake—but equally in Shakespeare's command of the comprehensive subject, with all its constituent themes, for which he has found dramatic form; in the astonishingly rich pattern of correspondences and cross-references within that dramatic form; and in the dramatic unity of the form itself. One of Shakespeare's means to dramatic unity in *The Tempest* is, of course, to observe the unity of time, which he had disregarded in *The Winter's Tale*. That requires him to begin late in the story: accordingly, what has gone before has to be conveyed to the audience during the brief space of the present action.[2] What is more, the impact of that past has to be made adequate to its functions in the present. It is conveyed in retrospect through narratives spoken, and references made, by the characters; but these have to be given their present force. Prospero's narratives are full of strong present emotion. When he tells of Ariel's and Caliban's history, he is rebuking, with strong emotion, their mutinous attitudes, and exerting his authority to dominate them. His long narrative to Miranda was taken by Bradley, and very surprisingly by Granville Barker, as an easy-going relapse by the old master into barefaced exposition.[3] In the theatre, I have seen two supreme artists in retrospective narration: Hans Hotter as Wotan, and Sir John Gielgud as Prospero. No one who has seen and heard him act this speech can doubt that Coleridge is right to admire it as he does.[4] It is

[1] In his preface to *Last Poems*, A. E. Housman said of 'the continuous excitement' under which he wrote *The Shropshire Lad*, that now he could not 'well sustain it if it came'.

[2] And like Ibsen, the modern master of retrospective technique, but unlike Seneca or the great Greek tragedians, he has to convey what is quite unknown to his audience.

[3] 'In the second scene of *The Tempest* (for Shakespeare grew at last rather negligent of technique) the purpose of Prospero's long exposition to Miranda is palpable' (*Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1904 (1924), pp. 42 f.) Cf. Granville Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, 2nd ser. 1930, p. 243 n. 1, on 'the artlessness of method' in 'the Prospero–Miranda, Prospero–Caliban scenes . . . by which the story is told'. See next note.

[4] He admires especially its power 'of exciting immediate interest', and its dramatic propriety, 'the perfect probability of the moment chosen by Prospero . . . to open out the truth to his daughter'. In consequence, he believes, it conveys all the necessary information to the reader (we should say audience) without making him conscious of it as a technical device (Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (Everyman edn.), i. 119, ii. 133.

acted by Gielgud with riveting power: like Hotter's Wotan, his Prospero re-lives what he tells. He accuses Miranda of inattention because no degree of attention would satisfy him: she is attending hard—an inattentive Miranda would give a cue for inattention by the audience, and that is the sort of mistake Shakespeare does not make.

Besides these emotionally charged narratives and references, Shakespeare employs another means for ensuring the due presence of the past; and that is by parallels with it in the present action.[1] Antonio, who formerly enlisted Alonso to set him on Prospero's throne and consign Prospero and Miranda to death adrift at sea, now enlists Sebastian to kill Alonso and Gonzalo, so as to set Sebastian on Alonso's throne. Brother is again to usurp the throne from brother, and Sebastian draws attention to the parallel:

> . . . I remember
> You did supplant your brother Prospero.

Conspired against in Milan by Antonio, Prospero is conspired against in another plot for usurpation and his murder: Caliban's plot to make Stephano king of the island. Prospero succumbed to Antonio's plot because he neglected the approach of present evil. He was rapt in his studies and contemplation, by which he would become the philosopher-prince, a prospect of the greatest good for his people; but it was a prospect then cut short because he abdicated the prudence and active fortitude, the awareness of present evil and of the need for a strong hand against it, which the true ruler must also have. He is in danger from Caliban's plot because he is again rapt in a vision of an ideal future. His success in betrothing Ferdinand and Miranda, heirs to true princehood, opens the prospect embodied in the masque: the prospect of the Golden Age Restored, a cycle of fertility without winter:

> Spring come to you at the farthest
> In the latter end of harvest.

Hence, as he exclaims,

> I had forgot the foul conspiracy
> Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
> Against my life.

[1] 'By re-enacting samples' of the past (E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, 1938, p. 50; cf. Frank Kermode (ed.), *The Tempest*, 1954, p. lxxvi).

To be dragged back from contemplation of a prospect of the Golden Age Restored, by the necessity of recognizing present and pressing evil, and of taking stern measures against it, disturbs him profoundly:

> *Ferdinand.* This is strange; your father's in some passion
> That works him strongly.
> *Miranda.* Never till this day
> Saw I him touch'd with anger so distemper'd.[1]

But now, thanks to his education by ordeals of adversity, he is no longer merely the scholar-prince he was in Milan, and he does not fall victim to the temptation of losing himself in his vision, ignoring the threat of evil.[2] These situations, of Prospero's renewed temptation, and Antonio's second conspiracy, are crucial repetitions, with reversed outcome, of situations in the past, and essential means of meeting the requirements imposed by the unity of time.

In helping to give *The Tempest* its extraordinarily concentrated unity as a dramatic whole, the unity of time is reinforced by the unity of place. Except for the opening scene, or prologue, on the ship, the whole play is set in the otherworld of the island. The action is strongly unified by the centrality of Prospero as protagonist, and a very dominant one, he with his minister Ariel being so firmly in control of events and of the other persons. The action is unified strongly, too, by its forward movement in the working-out of Prospero's purpose: from the shipwreck by which he gets his enemies into his power; his care

[1] This crisis has been perhaps the least understood in the play (though cf. Tillyard, op. cit., p. 54). Even Kermode, in 1954 (op. cit., p. lxxv) wrote of the 'apparently unnecessary perturbation of Prospero'. Once Prospero has recollected the conspiracy, he is no longer in danger. To perturb him, he still has the shock of his narrow escape from failing to recollect, and the shame of finding himself not immune to his old temptation, but the chief cause lies deeper. It is no less right that the philosopher-prince, confronted with the world's evil, should be shaken to the soul, than that in Yeats's 'The Man and the Echo' the philosopher-poet should be shaken when confronted with its suffering:

> . . . I have lost the theme . . .
> Up there some hawk or owl has struck,
> Dropping out of sky or rock,
> A stricken rabbit is crying out,
> And its cry disturbs my thought.

[2] This is the classic pattern of rehabilitation: so Milton's Samson is given by Providence, in Dalila's visit and renewed cajoleries, the opportunity for his triumph over the temptation to which formerly he owed his downfall. Cf. Tillyard, op. cit., p. 53.

of them even in that shipwreck; the processes of ordeal, retribution and expiation; with the opportunity of penitence, leading to his pardons and whatever reconciliations are possible. There is strong forward movement, also, in the thematic development, from the discord of tempest to the resolution in harmony.[1] That resolution is foreshadowed in Ariel's first song:

> Curtsied when you have and kiss'd,
> The wild waves whist.

The tempestuous waves hush themselves, when you have begun your dance with a curtsy, and ended it with a kiss: that is when the dance, which is the play and the play's ritual, has been gone through to its completion.[2] The eventual harmony is expressed by symbolic sight and sound: in the story of Ferdinand and Miranda by the music and dance of the masque: in the story of Alonso and the other Men of Sin by the music which restores their reason:

> A solemn air, and the best comforter
> To an unsettled fancy;

in the story of Prospero—and of Ariel—at their restoration to their rightful realms: Ariel singing his song of liberation,

> Where the bee sucks there suck I,

while he robes Prospero as Prospero was

> . . . sometime Milan

and will now be so once more.

During its progress, the action is unified by being the history of three rebellions, with the prelude of Ariel's soon-quelled mutinous mood at the beginning, and in addition to the narrated rebellion of Antonio in Milan. They are Antonio's conspiracy with Sebastian against Alonso (and Gonzalo); Caliban's with Stephano and Trinculo against Prospero (and Miranda); and Miranda's rebellion against the expressed will of her father (though this accords with his real will).[3] She must

[1] The major significance throughout Shakespeare of tempests and music is amply demonstrated by G. Wilson Knight in *The Shakespearian Tempest*, even though one cannot agree that 'that significance constitutes the only final unity' in Shakespeare's work (p. 17).

[2] Commentators have been puzzled because 'To take hands and curtsy (make a reverence) were the first steps in all dances, but the kiss normally came when the dance was finished' (Kermode, ed. *Tempest*, 1954, I. ii. 379 n., with citations). But that is the point.

[3] Clifford Leech (in *Shakespeare Survey*, 11, 1958, p. 27) notes the prelude and two of the rebellions: not Antonio and Sebastian's against Alonso.

grow to womanhood by pursuing her love of Ferdinand on her own responsibility:—young people cannot be handed their freedom by their elders; they must at least feel that they are taking it. This parallelism is a main factor in unifying the subsidiary actions of the Ferdinand and Miranda story, and the Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo story, with the principal action of the Prospero, Alonso, Antonio story.

Indeed, parallelism of many sorts is no less important than forward movement in unifying the play.[1] The forward movement may be called its dynamic or progressive structure; the parallelisms its symmetric structure. The whole pattern, centred upon Prospero and kept within the unities of time and place, forms the integral dramatic design.

The Tempest, however, is not more remarkable for its dramatic unity than for what that unity controls and organizes—its comprehensiveness and rich complexity. Its symmetric structure of correspondences gives it the multiplicity of a hall of mirrors, in which everything reflects and re-reflects everything else. For example, if one looks at the characters in pairs, making the comparisons which resemblance or contrast or both invite—almost compel—us to make, with every two, and not only the obviously contrasted Ariel and Caliban, the pairing throws light on both. When I have had a sequence of lectures to devote to *The Tempest*, I have shown this—if you will bear with the enumeration—for Ariel and Trinculo as well as Ariel and Caliban; for Caliban and (successively) Stephano, Antonio, Ferdinand, and Miranda; for Prospero and Miranda, father and daughter both princely; Prospero and his wicked brother Antonio; Prospero and the good Gonzalo; Prospero, king of the island, and the pretender, Stephano; finally, for two trios: Gonzalo, Antonio, Sebastian, and Antonio, Sebastian, Alonso.

To illustrate what I have just been saying, I propose to take one leading theme of the play, and the characters in whom, as living drama, it has its being. It is an old favourite with Shakespeare: the theme of true sovereignty. In a play where the action is made up so largely of rebellions, it is a fitting part of the design. It is of great importance in the symmetric structure, among the correspondences between the characters, so many of whom are sovereigns or would-be sovereigns. In Milan,

[1] This feature was the subject of A. H. Gilbert's '*The Tempest*: Parallelism in Characters and Situations', *J.E.G.P.* xiv, 1915. My analysis was made independently.

Prospero was legitimate, but not wholly fit sovereign; he will return there as true sovereign. Antonio is usurping sovereign of Milan, yet not fully even *de facto* sovereign, for to become Duke he has bartered away the free sovereignty of the Dukedom, and become a vassal of Alonso. Alonso is usurping suzerain of Milan, though in Naples he is legitimate sovereign. Ferdinand is true heir of Naples, and indeed, thinking his father dead, he supposes himself already its sovereign: 'myself am Naples' he proclaims, and the phrase identifies him, up to a point, with the guilt of the House of Naples toward Milan and Prospero. Sebastian, tempted by Antonio, would be usurping King of Naples: Antonio hopes that in this way, by foul means, he can restore full sovereignty to the Dukedom of Milan, as the price of his complicity. In the event, the vassalage of Milan is ended by fair means: Alonso's repentance, and the union of Miranda, true heir of Milan, with Ferdinand, true heir of Naples, will unite, when they come to reign as joint sovereigns, the two once-hostile states. The union of Milan and Naples will be brought about by their love and Prospero's wisdom, in contrast with the forced union brought about by the treachery of Antonio and the alien encroachment of Alonso.

In respect of Milan and Naples, then, there are six sovereigns, prospective sovereigns, or would-be sovereigns: Prospero, Miranda and Ferdinand, Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian. The sovereignty of the island has three claimants. There is also Gonzalo, who would never dream of kingship in sober fact, but who, in order loyally to alleviate, if he can, the grief of his own king, Alonso, imagines himself king of it. No sooner has he, in fantasy, assumed command of it, than he abolishes sovereignty there, and sketches an ideal commonwealth. His description makes it plain that such a commonwealth would be possible only with ideal citizens, men and women of the Golden Age, or from before the Fall. For any others, rule, by due authority, is indispensable. The three actual claimants to be king of the isle are Prospero, Caliban, and Stephano. Stephano is put up to it by Caliban, who hopes to free himself from vassalage to Prospero (as Antonio, hoping to free himself from vassalage to Alonso, puts Sebastian up to usurping the throne of Naples). Caliban charges Prospero with being a usurper:

> This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother
> Which thou keepest from me.
> For I am all the subjects that you have
> Which first was mine own King.

Caliban's claims, in right of primitive possession, might be valid, if every order of being had the same right as every other. But for Shakespeare and his age such rights are proportioned to a being's place in the hierarchy of cosmic order, and Caliban's is a low place. He is not primarily a particular type of man; he is not even simply a half-animal human being, or a half-human animal. As a person of the drama, he dramatizes a stratum in the nature of man and the creation, after the Fall. He is the child of the woman's intercourse with the Devil. His descent from witch-mother and devil-father is a disqualification from kingship, not a Divine Hereditary Right to it. What he embodies, humanly speaking, must be kept in due subordination, even subjection. It cannot be transformed by nurture, but only by grace. He has 'a nature' on which 'nurture will never stick'[1]. His nature being what it is, despite the primitive virtues Shakespeare allows him, his claims and ambitions are for the sort of freedom which is anarchy (witness his down-tools song) and soon land him in superstitious slavery to Stephano.

Stephano, inferior to Caliban as a degenerate man from civilization, is Prospero's antitype. Prospero could say what neither Caliban nor Stephano can say with truth: that he is 'mine own king'. Thanks to his education by study, contemplation, and the ordeals of adversity overcome with the help of Providence, he has enthroned in himself those principles which should be sovereign in a man and rule him. He can maintain, though not always without an inner struggle, the self-mastery which Caliban and Stephano lack, and which is the true sovereign's chief title to exercise command. Stephano, his antitype, is a parody of the true sovereign. He is the incontinent man; the man devoid of self-discipline. He is intemperate in drink and anger, bawdy in song, lustful in his intentions towards Miranda. He cannot even discipline himself to his own purposes, but (inferior to Caliban in this) is distracted from the plotted murder which is to make him king by the first appeal to his senses, symbolized in the glistering apparel. As a false prince he is a would-be usurper, like Sebastian (and comparable with the actual usurper Antonio); a patron of the rebellious anarchist, Caliban (like Alonso, patron of Antonio's rebellion); a Lord of Misrule, leader in licentious freedom and drunken orgy. But he is also a tyrant. He has his foot kissed like an

[1] On nature and nurture in *The Tempest*, see Frank Kermode's edn., pp. xxiv f., xxxiv–liv.

oriental or papal despot. His reply to Prospero's 'You'd be king of the isle, sirrah' has a double meaning:

> 'I should have been a sore one, then!'—

'full of hurts from my punishment', but also 'one who would have made my subjects smart severely'. He is unable to do justice, beating Trinculo for words Trinculo did not speak, because he cannot discern truth; cannot tell appearance from reality. Where Prospero has insight into reality, and knows that even 'this great globe itself, yea, all which it inherit' are, in the last resort, appearance, not final reality, Stephano takes appearance for reality: the appearance of the insulting words being Trinculo's; the appearance of the glistering apparel, which Caliban scorns as trash. When, earlier, Stephano hears Ariel's music apparently attending upon him gratis, he unsuspectingly accepts that as the truth: he believes he can have the privileges of sovereignty for nothing: 'This will prove a brave kingdom to me, where I shall have my music for nothing.' The sovereignty which really commands Ariel and his music was not had by Prospero for nothing: it was earned by an arduous and testing education. From such educative experience, Prospero enjoys the true inspiration it confers; Stephano has a bastard sort of inspiration from his liquor. The parallel between Stephano's bottle and Prospero's book of magic makes more salient the comparison between the false sovereign and the true. The bottle and barrel are to Stephano what Prospero's book, learning, and art are to him. They are the precious possessions he got ashore with from his sea-peril. His 'kiss the book' points up the parallel. Further, it is toper's jargon, but also a profane version of the oath-taking ritual in a court of law. It is a travesty, therefore, of reverence to God, in taking to witness God's Word, the Bible; and of respect for the divinely constituted authority of the state and the law in the administration of justice. Stephano's liquor, like Prospero's art, is the source of his influence over his subjects, Trinculo and Caliban. In Caliban's eyes, he is 'a brave God' who 'bears celestial liquor'. Caliban believes him to be the Man in the Moon, dropped from heaven, a God-man, whom Caliban therefore worships. The true sovereign, according to the Tudor political ideas among which Shakespeare was brought up, was God's viceroy, whom God called 'a god on earth'. As the antitype of the true sovereign, this phoney God-man, Stephano, is a sort of *diabolus simius Dei*, the ape of Prospero's god-like, princely authority. The inverse comparison is made explicit, and Caliban is

disabused, in the final scene. There Prospero, 'as he was sometime Milan', the true sovereign in his ducal robes, confronts, with 'You'd be king of the isle, sirrah!' the well-harried drunken pretender, Stephano, in his stained, draggled finery, stolen and usurped, and renders him absurd even in Caliban's eyes:

> What a thrice-double ass
> Was I to take this drunkard for a god . . .

Prospero, the dominating central character, has the leading part in giving positive, as distinguished from negative, expression to the theme of true sovereignty. His dominance, and his role as the embodiment of sovereign authority, have sometimes been resented. But we should remember that he has not always been the true sovereign; and that even as we see him in the play it still costs him something to be so—in Gielgud's acting, that was made quite plain. Prospero lost his dukedom by not yet possessing all the qualities of the true sovereign. He had those which must be supplied by Nature. He had the princely lineage which confers legitimacy—the Divine Hereditary Right; and he had the innate seeds of nobility. Very properly he was endeavouring to improve these gifts of Nature, by nurture, self-education, so that he might become the philosopher-prince desiderated by Plato. But as yet he had not attained the self-mastery which shows itself in a balanced character: he had the unbalance, the lop-sidedness, which in Shakespeare often brings a man to tragic catastrophe. He devoted himself to contemplative at the expense of active life: he buried himself in his studies, and though they certainly prepared him for his future emergence as the philosopher-prince, in pursuit of them he abdicated his present responsibility for the practical affairs of state, and was oblivious, in his innocence, of the evil which awaits its chance in human nature and human society. His innocence (resembling Gonzalo's on the island) was rectified by the experience of his deposition and of the perilous yet Providence-guided voyage, which, with his subsequent life on the island, completed his education as the true sovereign, who must first of all be sovereign over himself. His eyes have been opened to the power of evil: yet since he owed his deliverance to the love his people bore him, the active goodness of Gonzalo, Miranda's heaven-gifted innocence (preserving him from the mortal sin of despair), and the grace of God in his Providential voyage, no less than to his own patience and fortitude in confronting adversity, the lesson he has learned is not one of cynicism, suspicion of everyone, and disbelief in goodness. He is now a man 'weathered by suffering';

a balanced character, endowed in the only possible way with true spiritual authority.

Even on the island, however, Prospero is not exempt from temptation and passion. As we have seen, the masque and its prospect of the Golden Age Restored almost tempts him into the same error of forgetting evil which betrayed him in Milan; and to acknowledge this evil shakes him to the soul: he feels and shows 'distemper'd passion'. Nor is he exempt from the temptation to vengeance on the Men of Sin, or at least from the passion that would prompt it. His decision is a victory he has to win over the still-living indignation and anger within him:[1]

> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
> Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part; the rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance.

He is putting the force of his whole personality, directed by its regenerate will, on the side of reason and temperance and against the irrational passions of fury and vengeance, whose existence in him he nevertheless acknowledges. Resuming his dukedom, Prospero will hold the balance he has learned between the active responsibilities of the ruler, symbolized when he dons his ducal insignia as Milan once again, and the contemplative wisdom of the philosopher, expressed when he says

> Every third thought shall be my grave.

He will not, like Shakespeare's Richard II or Julius Caesar, fail to distinguish between what in medieval and Tudor times were termed the king's two bodies:[2] as Milan he is the godlike prince, the great God's viceroy upon earth; but as Prospero, he knows himself mortal man, indeed an elderly man, whose mortal part will shortly lie under it.

Is then 'true sovereignty' the central theme we are seeking in *The Tempest?* Is it a theme which will comprehend all the others, a stem from which all the others can be seen to branch? At one time I tried so to regard it; but I found I had too much left over. There have been many attempts to identify the central concern of *The Tempest* to which the design directs us, or the comprehensive concern which the design embodies. Need I say I was not looking for a subject allegorized in the play, but for one which might be central as the love which finds its fulfilment

[1] Cf. Tillyard, op. cit., p. 54: 'he is still tempted to be revenged on Alonso and Antonio. He means to pardon them, and he will pardon them. But beneath his reason's sway there is this anger against them'.

[2] Cf. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 1957.

in marriage is central to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the education of the prince, in relation to honour and then to justice, is to *Henry IV*, parts 1 and 2? When I set myself to investigate afresh, by the tests of recurrence, parallelisms, and peaks of intensity,[1] what themes were really present and strongly emphasized, the themes which I found were not capable of being ranged in order except under so universal a topic as the nature of the cosmos. That may seem a laughable result; out has popped not a ridiculous mouse but an ever-expanding and formless vapour. 'The nature of the cosmos': it sounds so general that any themes could be brought under it. Yet when we particularize what, in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's dramatization of that subject comprises, it proves to be definite enough. The cosmos, says the play, has no more than relative reality: it is not eternal. At the Last Day

> . . . the great globe itself
> Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve.

I used to wonder why that speech, 'Our revels now are ended', was (as its fame testifies) the peak of poetry in *The Tempest*. The reason, surely, is because that is where the cosmic order is placed in the most comprehensive possible perspective, and even at its imaginable perfection is shown to be only relative, when its plane of reality is set against the ultimate reality of all.[2]

The cosmic order, as Shakespeare and many Elizabethans conceive it, is of two kinds. One is hierarchical, a 'Great Chain of Being',[3] from God downward, governed by the principle Shakespeare's Ulysses eulogizes as 'degree'. (This is not the place to argue that its validity is by no means called in question by Ulysses' decline, from the wise statesman who affirmed it, into the clever politician, but on the contrary remains as the measure of that decline.)[4] The second kind of cosmic order is cyclic: the motion of the cosmos is cyclic, not of course, evolutionary. The two great cycles are those of the seasons and their

[1] The method of observing 'fervours' and 'recurrences': cf. Harry Levin, *Christopher Marlowe: The Overreacher*, 1954 (1965), p. 15, quoting David Masson.

[2] Cf. Tillyard, op. cit. 'III. Planes of Reality'; especially pp. 60, 67 f., 78–80; and p. 82: 'the most famous speech of the play' gives 'a unity to it. Not that it in the least sums the play up.'

[3] Cf. A. O. Lovejoy's book with that title.

[4] My interpretation finds strong support in the parallel, surely deliberate, with Hector's decline to the devotee of honour, from the advocate of *ius naturale* and *ius gentium*, the principles of order which should operate between communities, as degree should operate within them.

fertility, and the generations of men, which also is a fertility cycle.[1] The promise of both cycles is dramatized when the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda is celebrated by the masque of Juno and Ceres—Juno, goddess of wedded love, and Ceres the corn-goddess—with the dance of spring naiads and autumn reapers, counterparts in spectacle and harmonious motion of the lines I quoted earlier:

> Spring come to you at the farthest
> In the very end of harvest,

opening the prospect of the Golden Age Restored, with Winter banished from the cycle of the seasons. Nothing but determined prejudice against Shakespeare's masques and the verse he wrote for them can explain the notion once entertained that this masque was an interpolation and not by him.[2] Not to recognize how organic it is to the drama is to impoverish not only appreciation of the masque itself, but the interpretation of the whole play.

The theme of the human generations (as in *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*) embraces the relationship of the young and the old. Prospero, with the wisdom of experience, guides the union of Ferdinand and Miranda; yet the youthful Miranda must take adult responsibility for it by disobeying her father's hest. When in her youth and innocence she exclaims: 'How beauteous mankind is', her father, who is aware what a mixed bunch she is looking at, knows she has much to learn: ''Tis *new* to thee.' But the phrase signifies also, ''*Tis* new, to *thee*'—the unspoiled innocence of youth means always the possibility of a fresh start.

The human cycle is a cycle not only of generation but of regeneration. As depicted in *The Tempest* and its fellow romances, the healing of wrong in the old generation owes much to the new. The process by which the entail of wrong and evil is broken, is one of death and rebirth (indeed the fertility-cycle of the seasons was ritualized in the death and resurrection of a

[1] In relation to the fertility cycle, *The Tempest* is the direct successor of *The Winter's Tale*, in which F. D. Hoeniger (University of Toronto Quarterly, 1950) has brought out its importance, though one cannot follow him in making the whole play an allegory of it.

[2] Cf. Hardin Craig's vindication of Shakespeare's verse and diction for musical spectacles and kindred passages, as deliberately differentiated for their purpose ('Shakespeare's Bad Poetry', *Shakespeare Survey*, 2, pp. 54–61); and Kermode's recognition in this masque of 'several important themes of the play as a whole' (op. cit., p. xxiii).

fertility-god, whether Adonis, Osiris, Mondamin, or another).[1] Ferdinand and Alonso are restored to each other as if from the dead. Alonso's sea-change, the death of his old self, and his transmutation are prefigured in Ariel's song

> Full fathom five thy father lies.

In Prospero, the Men of Sin, and even Caliban, the redemption of old wrong is a process from sin, through expiation, and (with an exception to be mentioned presently) repentance, to reconciliation and forgiveness, or at the least, pardon. Prospero sins by omission in Milan, expiates his sin by being deposed and set adrift to die—the sea-peril is a symbolic death from which he rises to a strange new life;[2] he acknowledges his fault by describing it to Miranda, and acting differently in face of Caliban's conspiracy; and reconciles himself with his enemies, having earned the power, and learned the will, to pardon. Alonso commits sin in Milan, Antonio and Sebastian in Milan and on the island. Alonso expiates it in the supposed loss of his son; and in the antimasque of the Harpy scene and in its sequel, where Antonio and Sebastian likewise expiate theirs. Prospero says of the three

> . . . They being penitent
> The sole drift of my purpose does extend
> Not a frown further.

Alonso truly repents, and enjoys the full benefit of forgiveness. Antonio speaks no word of penitence, but is spared the revelation of the plot against Alonso, and is pardoned, if not capable of receiving forgiveness in the same sense as Alonso is. That seems the most reasonable (though not an inevitable) interpretation of his silence,[3] and what Prospero says to him:

> For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother
> Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive
> Thy rankest fault—all of them.

Caliban expiates his sin when pixie-led by Ariel, and hounded by the spirits in the second antimasque. He is given the opportunity to earn pardon in trimming Prospero's cell, and resolves not only 'to be wise hereafter' but to 'seek for grace'. Prospero

[1] Cf. Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1 vol. edn.), chs. xxix–xl; H. W. Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha*, V. Hiawatha's Fasting.

[2] Cf. Alonso's symbolic death under the sea in 'Full fathom five'; and the archetypal motif of 'the night-journey under the sea' as a stage in psychological death-and-rebirth; C. G. Jung, *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, p. 40; *Psychology of the Unconscious*, p. 131; cf. pp. 122–4, 147, 210.

[3] Kermode, op. cit., pp. liii, lxii.

despaired too soon of Caliban, when he found him one upon 'whose nature

Nurture can never stick'.

What nurture could not do, grace can: 'with men this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible'.[1]

In what I have been saying about the place in *The Tempest* of the seasons and their fertility, the generations and regenerations, I have given what account I can of its concern with the ongoing aspect of the cosmic order. It is what belongs to this aspect, if I am not mistaken, that cannot properly be brought under the topic of true sovereignty. In the dramatist's treatment of the hierarchic aspect true sovereignty does single itself out as the governing theme.

Prospero exemplifies it as it should exist in the individual man. From nature he had innate nobility; by self-nurture he acquired the studious and practical arts, and by the ordeal of adversity at the will of Providence he acquired experience. He has learned the self-mastery which enables him to throw his own will on the side of reason.[2] When with his 'nobler reason' he takes part against his 'fury', he exercises the cardinal virtue of temperance (tempering his wrath); and he enjoins it upon Ferdinand and Miranda in the form of chastity between their betrothal and forthcoming marriage.[3] In the sea-peril he had fortitude (another cardinal virtue) in its passive form:

An undergoing stomach, to bear up
Against what should ensue.

For this he owed much to Miranda's 'infant fortitude from heaven', by which he was preserved from despair. Despair, a mortal sin into which Alonso almost falls, is the opposite of the second theological virtue, hope; and besides hope, Prospero has the first theological virtue, faith, constantly acknowledging what he owes to Providence, as when he tells Miranda they came ashore 'by Providence divine'. I do not mean that Shakespeare built the figure of Prospero consciously and schematically on the four cardinal and three theological virtues (though we are not done with them yet): but as categories they were deeply embedded in men's minds, and, I believe, in

[1] Matt. 19: 26.

[2] Cf. Kermode, op. cit., pp. xlviii f.

[3] 'it is as if he were conducting . . . the kind of experiment which depended for its success on the absolute purity of all concerned; and indeed, in so far as his aims were a dynastic marriage and the regeneration of the noble, this was so'. Ibid., p. xlix (see more).

Shakespeare's. They were on hand when a pattern of characterization or of dramatized ideas was taking shape.

True sovereignty is exemplified also in Prospero as the mage, the adept: a virtuous version of what Marlowe's Faustus calls 'the studious artisan'.[1] By contemplative study, purgative experence, self-mastery, and purity of life, Prospero has become an adept in the arts which, through the imaginative intelligence (represented by Ariel) command the minds of men. The means that Prospero and Ariel as his minister employ, include those of Shakespeare the dramatist: drama, poetry, music, dance, and spectacle.[2] That is how we come to feel some analogy between Prospero and Shakespeare, and can believe (without making it the key to the play) that Shakespeare felt some himself.[3] Prospero has become also an adept in natural philosophy (what Chaucer would have called 'Magick naturel', and what partakes of our natural science). Natural philosophy, through the practical intelligence (Ariel again), commands the elements. Finally, Prospero as mage is an adept in philosophic wisdom, needed by Plato's ideal ruler, who will not appear until either kings become philosophers (lovers of wisdom), or philosophers (lovers of wisdom) become kings.[4]

Prospero exemplifies true sovereignty again as the prince, that is the sovereign ruler whether king or duke: the neoplatonic philosopher-king, the Renaissance 'godly prince'. In the Renaissance, it has been said 'the New Messiah was the King'. Prospero has certain godlike attributes, but not because, as some critics have supposed, he is an allegory of God.[5] The Christian God does not begin as an imperfect ruler, nor acquire by ordeal, and only with a struggle act upon, the virtues of a true one. Prospero has his godlike attributes because they are

[1] Cf. ibid., pp. xlvii f.; C. J. Sisson, 'The Magic of Prospero', *Shakespeare Survey*, 11, p. 75.

[2] Wilson Knight (*The Crown of Life*, p. 210) sees Prospero as 'the artist', Ariel as 'the art'. Dwelling on their poetical power, he does not comment on their 'magick naturel'.

[3] The poet Thomas Campbell in *Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*, 1838, seems to have been the first to suggest that Prospero's farewell to his magic art is Shakespeare's to his.

[4] *Republic*, Book VI, 499; cf. Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara* (*John Bull's Other Island and Major Barbara*, 1907, p. 286); C. J. Sisson, op. cit., p. 76.

[5] Cf. Churton Collins (though he remains cautious) 'Poetry and symbolism: A Study of *The Tempest*', *Contemporary Review*, 1908; Colin Still, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play: A Study of 'The Tempest'*, 1921. Wilson Knight comments (*The Crown of Life*, p. 230) 'Prospero is . . . a man, not God, and talks like a man of "Providence", "fortune" and so on'.

proper to the adept or white magician, and to God's viceroy, the godly prince,[1] to whom (in the words written by Hand D in *Sir Thomas More*, which we are virtually certain is Shakespeare's)

> . . . God hath his office lent
> Of dread, of justice, power and command
> And to add ampler majesty to this
> . . . hath not only lent . . . his figure,
> His throne and sword, but given him his own name,
> Calls him a god on earth.[2]

As the prince, Prospero has the pre-requisites of true sovereignty from Nature, his birth, which makes him legitimate sovereign, and then right nurture, the importance of which may be gathered, for example, from Erasmus's *Institute of the Christian Prince*, or from a favourite book of Shakespeare's, *The Governour*, by Sir Thomas Elyot. Prospero has acquired also, besides temperance, the other three cardinal virtues. He renders justice to Gonzalo, Ferdinand, and the penitent Alonso, and executes it upon the Men of Sin and upon Caliban and his confederates. This he is able to do because he has learned prudence and active fortitude. He manifests his prudence, his watchful awareness, in taking the opportunity of his 'auspicious star'; in forestalling Antonio and Sebastian's plotted murder of Alonso and Gonzalo; and in recollecting just in time Caliban's plot against himself. He manifests his active fortitude in the strong measures he takes against the Men of Sin, and the even sterner ones against Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, for the true prince must act vigorously against evil.[3] Finally, as prince, Prospero combines his active fortitude and retributive justice with the third and greatest theological virtue—charity, identified with virtue itself when he says

> . . . the rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance;

and exercised in his pardoning of all those by whose 'high wrongs' he has been 'struck to the quick'. Without mercy, the godly prince was not himself, for, to quote Portia,

[1] Cf. C. J. Sisson, op. cit., p. 76: Prospero is 'the learned and philosophical ruler, working justice, righting wrongs, defeating rebellion, in his own right as Vicar of God in his own country.'

[2] *Shakespeare's Hand in 'Sir Thomas More'*, ed. A. W. Pollard, p. 212 (spelling modernized).

[3] 'He must be able to translate knowledge into power in the active life': Kermode, op. cit., p. li.

> . . . earthly power doth then show likest God's
> When mercy seasons justice—

seasons justice, be it noted, not supersedes it; Angelo has right on his side when he claims that he shows pity

> . . . most of all when I show justice,
> For then I pity those I do not know.[1]

But in Prospero and *The Tempest*, mercy, pardon, charity, have the last word.

It is as part of the topic of true sovereignty, also, that *The Tempest* touches upon the problem of civilized and backward peoples encountering in the New World, which historically or sociologically minded critics have sometimes tried to see as the subject of the play.[2] According to *The Tempest* it is right as well as inevitable that a civilized ruler like Prospero, with his sovereign qualities, should rule over a primitive Caliban who is not ruling himself, his own nature. But on the other hand the degenerates from civilization, the 'drunkard' Stephano with his fire-water, the 'dull fool' Trinculo, and still worse the nobleman Antonio, who perverts his nobleman's gifts of resolution, valour, persuasive rhetoric, and an eye for an opportunity, turning them to Machiavellian ends, are far inferior to the primitive Caliban.[3] Shakespeare affords him the dramatic right of speaking from his own point of view:[4]

> . . . this island's mine
> Who first was mine own king,

and, less controvertibly, 'I must eat my dinner'. Shakespeare affords him, too, our sympathy in the pathos of his situation, as he remembers how he was stroked and made much of, and how in return he put his half-savage, half-animal knowledge at Prospero's service. We sympathize, again, with his good qualities, even though they cannot be trusted. He has this response to Prospero's initial kindness. He has his response to music; music can appeal even to beasts lacking reason—to 'unhandled

[1] *Merchant of Venice*, IV. i. 191 f.; *Measure for Measure*, II. ii. 100 f.

[2] Cf. Philip Edwards's review (in *Shakespeare: Select Bibliographical Guides*, ed. Stanley Wells, pp. 127 f.) of the treatments of this topic in O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation*, 1956 (which mingles insight with distortion); Leo Marx, 'Shakespeare's American Fable', *The Machine in The Garden* 1964; and D. G. James, *The Dream of Prospero*, 1967. See Kermode, op. cit., p. xxxvii.

[3] Kermode, op. cit., pp. xxxviii, liii f.

[4] Essential for good drama: cf. Bernard Shaw, *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant*, 1898 (1928), II. vii.

colts', Lorenzo tells Jessica.[1] Caliban has his primitive freedom from the base sophistication which, in contrast with the simple poetry frequent in his speech, has vulgarized the language of Stephano and Trinculo, and made them susceptible to the snare of outward finery which he despises. His desire to serve a master of his own free will, and one whom he admires—'I'll not serve him, he is not valiant', he says of Trinculo—is itself sound enough, though in default of judgement, woefully misdirected. Shakespeare, then, does justice to his superiority over Stephano and Trinculo, as also over Antonio, in whom we see how much worse is the choice of sin by the free will,[2] stubbornly set against both chastisement and pardon, than the original sin of Caliban, despite its malice, lust, sloth, and anarchy, which, however, are not as incurable as Prospero has too soon concluded: though I am afraid that it is punishment, according to the play, which has opened the way for the operation of grace.

Before leaving the political aspect of *The Tempest*, observe the spectacle and brief dialogue of Ferdinand and Miranda at chess (an interesting variant of the play-within-the-play technique). Formerly, in the world of rival states, Milan and Naples were at enmity, and Milan fell victim to treachery from Naples. Now, the heirs of the two states are engaged in friendly contest at the traditionally royal game of mimic war. The heir of Naples, accused of treachery ('You play me false'), declares that he would not for the world cheat the heir of Milan, his betrothed; and she declares that if he did she would happily let him. Thus the old hostility and treachery in the world of politics is exorcised by being mirrored in the form of a game, much as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* love-tragedy is exorcised by being enacted in the burlesque form of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', and marital discord exorcised in *The Merchant of Venice* by the innocuous pretence at it on the part of the wives who tax their husbands about the rings.

Widening our view, at the conclusion, to take in the whole development of the play, one can see it as the dance, completed from curtsy to kiss, which has allayed the tempest and sea-peril. The wild waves have now whist; we have been brought from cosmic discord to cosmic harmony; a harmony to which the music Prospero calls for is a fitting prelude. It is a harmony the more authentic because Shakespeare does not overlook the qualifications which truth to the human condition requires.

[1] *Merchant of Venice*, v. i. 71–9.

[2] Cf. Kermode, op. cit., p. liii.

His dramatization of cosmic order is not oversimplified. The Nature which is the groundwork of that order holds the ideal potentialities of earthly paradise depicted by Gonzalo in his commonwealth and Prospero in his masque; but it holds also the devil-born propensities incarnated in Caliban, of which the best one can say is that after chastisement they may yield to grace. Prospero himself must admit responsibility for Caliban, even prior to his potential regeneracy:

> This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.[1]

So far, moreover, as the principle of order is embodied in this world, or in a human life—even a human life that has been, like Prospero's, cultivated to the furthest heights of which humanity is capable—then it is embodied in what is subject to time and death. The cosmos is temporal and 'shall dissolve'; Prospero, true prince, is mortal: every third thought, as is proper, will be his grave.[2] Worst of all, because Man, in order to exist as a moral being, must have free moral choice, he is free to refuse response to admonition, chastisement, and pardon.[3] Wilson Knight has taught us to recognize in Shakespeare's broken feasts the breach of social and personal communion between man and man;[4] the Harpy scene makes plain to the Men of Sin their excommunication from that sacrament, and the means of rehabilitation:

> . . . heart-sorrow,
> And a clear life ensuing.

Yet Antonio and Sebastian attempt to defy the vision of the Harpy. After their wits have been restored to them, Sebastian at least responds as he should to the revelation of Ferdinand, heir of Naples, alive and on loving terms with the heir of Milan; he hails it as 'A most high miracle'. Antonio is silent: apparently, unlike Sebastian, he is unimpressed. Of heart-sorrow he gives no sign; so that (if in these interpretations of his silence we are

[1] The sense of responsibility for Caliban has been a factor, Clifford Leech persuasively suggests (*Shakespeare Survey*, 11, p. 30 n. 9.), in his perturbation on recollecting Caliban's conspiracy.

[2] Not a morbid or disheartened utterance; to modern ears it may seem to express a 'sense of tiredness' (Clifford Leech, op. cit., p. 26), but to Shakespeare's Jacobean audience it would signify the right and natural preparation for dying well, for making a good end.

[3] 'We see in Antonio the operation of sin in a world magically purified but still allowing freedom to the will . . . A world without Antonio is a world without freedom' (Kermode, op. cit., pp. liii, lxii).

[4] *The Crown of Life*, pp. 215 f.

right to agree with Kermode) although being disarmed he is spared, he can enjoy forgiveness only so far as that is possible without repentance.[1]

To ignore these qualifications is to find the concluding harmony facile. To mistake them for more than qualifications is to suppose the harmony falsified by them. On the contrary they authenticate it; they show that Shakespeare did not create it with his eyes shut.[2] They do not contradict the fact that by Prospero's acquisition and exercise of true sovereignty, and by the progressive cycle, in which a new generation is born and helps redress the troubles of the old one, good has been brought out of evil. Prospero's fault in Milan has proved a *felix culpa*; the shipwreck he presided over, a happy shipwreck.[3]

> Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue
> Should become Kings of Naples? O, rejoice
> Beyond a common joy! and set it down
> With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage
> Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
> And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
> Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
> In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
> When no man was his own.

The Tempest is remarkable for its concentration and dramatic unity—the way each scene, each person, each utterance, each theme gives to and receives from every other;[4] and for the richness of this marvellous world of reduplicated cross-reflections, created from comparatively simple units. Shakespeare has taken fairly simple characters and situations,[5] and interrelated them so as to throw his themes into relief, and to dramatize a profound and complex interpretation of life. Yet it is not the themes and interpretation of life, abstracted from the drama, which are rich and moving. They are rich and moving as we meet them in the drama: that, alone, makes them speak to us in all their living

[1] Kermode, op. cit., p. lxii.

[2] It is 'poetic honesty' says Wilson Knight, that 'leaves Antonio's final reformation doubtful' (op. cit., p. 213).

[3] Cf. Edwards (*Shakespeare Survey*, 11, pp. 6f.; Kermode, op. cit. v. i. 205 n., and pp. xxv, l, lix, lxi.

[4] The 'extraordinary echoic nature of the play' (notes Edwards in *Shakespeare: Select Bibliographical Guides*, p. 128) is well illustrated in R. A. Brower's study of its metaphoric patterns in his *The Fields of Light*.

[5] e.g. even Prospero 'cannot do more than typify' (Wilson Knight, op. cit., p. 208); Miranda 'is sufficiently successful' as 'a symbolic figure' (Tillyard, op. cit., p. 55).

complexity; that, alone, makes them not an expositor's despair, but a theatre-audience's delight. Certainly the play is a 'new myth', its plot a fable, the themes a drama of ideas; it uses symbols to convey a meaning which reverberates far beyond the story.[1] But the fable is not an allegory; the ideas are 'ideas-in-poetry'; the symbols far more potent as themselves than as what they can be translated into.[2] Besides, one must not misrepresent the tone of the play, making it sound portentous, or at least too solemn, a risk I have run in treating it as drama of ideas. The fable, for all its depth of meaning, has a charm which pleases children and uninstructed adults. The structure, for all its strength, does not obtrude through the poetic or comic texture of the surface. As an object fashioned by an artist, *The Tempest* can be described in words written by Virginia Woolf about a different work of art. It is 'beautiful and bright on the surface . . . with one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing: but beneath, the fabric [is] clamped together with bolts of iron'.[3] For all the firmness and profundity, the delight of romance is never lost. It includes not only the romance of Prospero's and Ariel's white magic, but the romance belonging, in Elizabethan imaginations and in ours, to the discoveries in the New World, and the adventures of the voyagers: the *Sea Venture* was the name of the ship whose wreck on the 'still-vex'd Bermoothes', 'reputed, a most prodigious and enchanted place' was part of the inspiration of the play.[4]

Yet if one finds in *The Tempest* nothing but the delight of romance, that delight will be apt to pall, and the play begin to be despised as nothing but poetical dreams, or worse still as 'a weary pantomime',[5] like *The Magic Flute* in the evil days indignantly recollected by Bernard Shaw. *The Tempest* and the *Flute* are works of the same order. Each remains mere extravaganza, mere idle fantasy and fairy-tale, except (as Shaw implies of the *Flute*) 'to those who see in [it] a real drama of which their own

[1] Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Last Phase*, pp. 2 f., 193 f., 248–50, 257 f., 270, 272; Edwards in *Shakespeare Survey*, 11, pp. 11 f.

[2] Edwards, op. cit., p. 12, quoting 'ideas-in-poetry' from Kermode, op. cit., p. lxxxviii.

[3] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 1927 (1964), p. 194.

[4] Cf. Kermode, op. cit., Appendix A (accounts of the *Sea Venture* shipwreck and what followed); Walter Raleigh, *The English Voyages*, 1928, 'III. The Influence of the Voyages on Poetry and Imagination', especially pp. 164–5, 178, 180–6; Cawley, 'Shakespeare's Use of the Voyagers', P.M.L.A. xli, 1926.

[5] Kermode, op. cit., p. lxxxviii (of course dissenting).

lives form part'.[1] Those who do see *The Magic Flute* and *The Tempest* in that way, will feel in them (as Peter Alexander says of *The Tempest*[2]) 'a sense of infinity'.

[1] *Music in London*, ii, 127, 201.
[2] *Shakespeare's Life and Art*, 1939 (1946), p. 214.