

interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

May 1983

Volume 11 Number 2

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| 139 | Arlene W. Saxonhouse | An Unspoken Theme in Plato's <i>Gorgias</i> : War |
| 171 | Mary Pollingue Nichols | The Good Life, Slavery, and Acquisition: Aristotle's Introduction to Politics |
| 185 | Catherine Zuckert | Aristotle on the Limits and Satisfactions of Political Life |
| 207 | Timothy Fuller | Temporal Royalties and Virtue's Airy Voice in <i>The Tempest</i> |
| 225 | Jeffrey Barnouw | The Pursuit of Happiness in Jefferson, and its Background in Bacon and Hobbes |
| 249 | Robert Sacks | The Lion and the Ass: a Commentary on the Book of Genesis (Chapters 35–37) |

interpretation

Volume 11 number 2

Editor-in-Chief Hilail Gildin

Editors Seth G. Benardete • Hilail Gildin • Robert Horwitz
• Howard B. White (d.1974)

Consulting Editors John Hallowell • Wilhelm Hennis • Erich Hula •
Arnaldo Momigliano • Michael Oakeshott • Ellis
Sandoz • Leo Strauss (d.1973) • Kenneth W.
Thompson

Associate Editors Larry Arnhart • Patrick Coby • Christopher A. Colmo
• Maureen Feder • Joseph E. Goldberg • Pamela
Jensen • Will Morrissey • Bradford Wilson

Assistant Editors Marianne C. Grey • Laurette G. Hupman

Design & Production Martyn Hitchcock

Authors submitting manuscripts for publication in
INTERPRETATION are requested to follow the *MLA
Style Sheet* and to send clear and readable copies
of their work. All manuscripts and editorial correspon-
dence should be addressed to INTERPRETATION,
Queens College, Flushing, N.Y. 11367, U.S.A.

Copyright 1983 • Interpretation

Temporal Royalties and Virtue's Airy Voice in *The Tempest*

TIMOTHY FULLER

The Colorado College

The Tempest begins in a tempest which is to say that it begins not only in a storm but in the midst of time. One may thus be reminded that the tempest is both without, imposed by the storm, and the remembrance of things past and hoped for within. The passengers on the storm-tossed ship are characters constituted out of the circumstances of storm and time. But these are not ordinary passengers. Rather, they are, in order of appearance, the ship's master, the boatswain, the King of Naples, and the apparent Duke of Milan. They are all, in greater or lesser degree, "authorities", yet they are all encompassed within the unsought command of the storm itself. Both Alonso the king and Antonio the duke appear first with a question, "Where is the master?" Literally, they wish to know where the ship's master is. However, as the play will show, the master is the storm and hence, in that respect, the master is evident and everywhere; but beyond this the master of the storm is Prospero, who is not evident. It is worth reflection that a king and a duke ask where the master is—neither of these masters is the master here. In these circumstances mastery is ambiguous.

Next in order of appearance is the old councillor Gonzalo, who advises patience to the boatswain, who is angry at the interference of the king and duke. Gonzalo tries to remind him of who they are. This reminder is ineffective because their authority is usurped by the storm and the ship's master. The boatswain says to Gonzalo,

"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" (1.i.20–22).¹

But Gonzalo also has no authority here. On the other hand, he is heartened by the apparent authority of the boatswain who "hath no drowning mark upon him" (1.i.27). The boatswain is contemptuous of the howling of the passengers who are "louder than the weather or our office" (1.i.35). But the recognition of the boatswain's authority is then undercut by the appearance of Sebastian, the brother of the King of Naples, who curses the boatswain to a faretheewell. Sebastian is the first character to appear who is neither an authority nor a

This paper was prepared for delivery at the annual meeting of The Midwest Political Science Association, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 16–18, 1981.

1. All citations from *The Tempest* are from *The Pelican Shakespeare* edition edited by Northrop Frye, 1970. The New Arden Edition, edited by Frank Kermode (London, 1966), has also been consulted.

respector of authority. But this seems to incite Antonio the duke to curse the boatswain as well (1.i.41–42), suggesting that this apparent authority is not necessarily a respector of authority even though he holds it.

As the storm worsens and the need to abandon ship becomes inevitable the King and the Prince pray but Sebastian and Antonio continue to complain and curse. The king and prince have some conventional piety at the threshold of death but Sebastian and Antonio do not. Rather, they abandon the king as the ship breaks apart. Gonzalo affects a certain degree of patience about his own counsel in saying “the wills above be done” (1.i.62).

One may summarize the first scene of the play by saying that it dramatizes the uncertainty of authority in the face of the elements. This reminds us of our temporality or mortality, and that better and worse responses can be made to this drama of uncertain authority. The ship’s master and boatswain respond with habitual skill to their familiar adversity; Gonzalo responds with resignation; the King and the Prince with conventional pieties; and Sebastian and Antonio with fear and self-preserving instinct.

The second scene provides tranquility antithetical to the first scene’s tempestuousness. It opens with a speech of Miranda, the wondering one, who begins, “If by your art, my dearest father” (1.ii.1). The tranquility is presented not only in a rhetoric of reflection and wonder, or philosophically, for philosophy appears in the first scene only tangentially in Gonzalo’s resignation, but also in the unambiguous relation of authority between father and child, and in the sense of command that is implied by reference to Prospero’s “art” But Miranda also exhibits two other characteristics in her first speech: the first is the capacity for suffering empathetically with the victims of the storm; the second is her insistence that if she were a “god of power” she would have used her power to preserve rather than to destroy the ship. The daughter of Prospero anticipates the conclusion to which Prospero himself will come at the end of the play, except that the literal sense in which she seems to speak will be transformed in Prospero’s final realization when he as the precise “god of power” preserves rather than destroys by an act of renouncing the very power which is his. By anticipating in her speech Prospero’s later action, Miranda transforms an abstract proposition about life into a self-enactment in the midst of life. Prospero’s renunciation will be the reality behind Miranda’s desire to use power justly.

A further indication of this is that Prospero, in telling Miranda the full background of their situation for the first time, begins by asking her to “Lend thy hand / And pluck my magic garment from me. So, / Lie there my art” (1.ii.23–25). This is the first occasion for Prospero to renounce his magic art. Underlying the spectacle which causes Miranda’s amazement is a history of events—events not at all magical. Prospero’s command to “be collected” (1.ii.13) is fulfilled through Prospero’s recollection. The laying aside of Prospero’s garment of magical authority is connected to his revelation of the loss

of his authority in Milan. The setting aside of the magic garment is also the setting aside of the childhood illusion about the authoritative parent.

Miranda professes to remember "rather like a dream than an assurance" something of her earliest childhood in Milan. And, as the story begins to be unfolded Miranda wonders whether their coming to the island was a curse or a blessing (1.ii.60–62). To this Prospero answers "both" Literally it is a curse to be exiled, but also a blessing that they were able to survive. But it is, more importantly, the occasion for reflection on the proper order of things.

Thus, the tempest produced in scene i is paralleled by the calmer tempest of recollection in scene ii, which Prospero produces in Miranda as her first confrontation with the ambiguities that wonder produces. Miranda is aware of this insofar as she sees that Prospero's troubled aspect is caused by her "remembrance" of her early childhood (1.ii.64–65). Remembrance is thus a blessing and a curse. But, ultimately, remembering is necessary if one is to have the understanding that is the mark of human wisdom on human things. For, while it is true that Antonio's exercise of the power Prospero entrusted to him "set all hearts i' th' state / To what tune pleased his ear," it is also true that Prospero was the true source of this sad state of affairs. The tempest produced in Miranda is a reflection of the tempest within Prospero himself. Prospero's recollections excite Miranda's. The tempestuousness is constituted out of Prospero's inner intellectual ascent following his actual political descent from first duke in Italy to exile, in juxtaposition to Antonio's assumption of the "outward face of royalty" (1.ii.104), which is a political ascent to being a "god of power" but a descent in the sense of a revelation of the corruption of his soul in endless ambition.

Prospero now sees that Antonio, unlike Prospero, cannot comprehend the thought that a library could be a sufficient dukedom. Thus, Antonio concludes that Prospero is incapable of exercising "temporal royalties". For Antonio, the capacity to exercise temporal royalties seems to be exhibited in endlessly growing ambition. He thus made a pact with the King of Naples that, in return for tribute, the King would support his extirpation of Prospero and Miranda from Milan. Fearing an outcry from the people of Milan, however, the conspirators set Prospero and Miranda adrift in the sea rather than kill them outright, and so they were left "To cry to th' sea" (1.ii.149).

Their eventual safe arrival on this enchanted isle was made possible by the generosity of Gonzalo, who had pity on them, providing them with sustenance both edible and intellectual. Prospero calls this an act of providence, and an act of charity. This remembrance of providential charity is the second instance, following Miranda's innocent charitable instinct, that reinforces the mercifulness that will eventuate from Prospero's recollections of things past.

This moment also marks the occasion of a new beginning for Prospero. What was recollected as prior misfortune is about to turn to his advantage. Fortune is now "bountiful", now his *dear* lady. for she has brought his enemies

to the shore where he currently exercises his authority. The descent from power into humiliation is the premise of the play's beginning but the action of the play proper is, virtually from the outset, an ascent. This structural feature supports the oft-made remark among the critics that this play is, in an important sense, the sequel to *King Lear*; and that the theme of ascent and descent is not only to be found repeatedly within the plays but runs through the Shakespearean corpus generally. (See, for example, D. G. James in *The Dream of Prospero*.) Prospero has been presented with an "auspicious star" whose influence he must court if his fortunes are not forever after "to droop" (1.ii.178-184). But if Prospero's fortunes are not drooping, Miranda's eyelids are, and she perforce retires as Prospero's servant Ariel makes his first appearance.

Ariel reports that he has carried out in precise detail the raising of the storm on the ship as directed by Prospero. He has deposited Ferdinand alone on the isle, dispersed the others about, anchored the ship in a safe and obscure harbor, and put the crew to sleep below deck. The remainder of Prospero's plan must be carried out between 2 P.M. and 6 P.M. The moment of fortune already referred to is reinforced by the compression of time in which all the remaining action is to be undertaken, which, as noted by scholars, is roughly equivalent to the time it takes to perform the play itself.

In the conversation between Prospero and Ariel it turns out that the exile Prospero was preceded on the isle by the exile Sycorax, an evil magician, who is contrasted to the exiled good magician. Ariel has been transferred from serving black magic to white magic—or from serving evil to serving good. If Sycorax had the power to imprison Ariel, Prospero had the power to release him. The release was predicated on service, for a time, to Prospero. Ariel is engaged in working off this indebtedness. And, although the action of the play is to run from 2 P.M. to 6 P.M., the freedom of Ariel is to come after two days (1.ii.229), presumably to give him time to guide all back to Milan.

During the dozen years when Ariel was incarcerated in a pine tree he howled and screamed in such a way as to create a tempest of his own on the isle. Sycorax caused this condition but did not have the power to amend the torment that resulted. What remains is for Ariel to become like a nymph of the sea and to be invisible to all but himself and Prospero. He initiates his invisibility by exiting, whereupon Miranda is bidden to wake up. It is thus clear that Miranda is not at this point to be given sight of Ariel.

She is, however, against her wishes, to be given sight of Caliban, whom she detests as a villain. Caliban is Prospero's slave and is addressed as "earth" (1.ii.314). Caliban presents himself as the ruler of the isle by right as the offspring of Sycorax. Thus, for Caliban, Prospero is the usurper who, as we know, has arrived here because of being usurped. But Caliban had attempted the overthrow of Prospero by raping Miranda in the hope of populating the island with Calibans. This stirs Miranda to curse Caliban. Unable to be imprinted with goodness, Caliban wants to imprint goodness with himself, to

subdue it to his power. To be imprinted with goodness is, for Miranda, to be taught how to speak and, thus, to be able to pursue one's purposes self-consciously. But it would appear that the purposes of Caliban when brought to self-awareness are unsavory to say the least. Caliban's view is that the result of language is knowing how to curse. This might be expected from the offspring of Sycorax.

It would appear that we have here a confrontation between two first responses to the human condition. One, in Miranda, has been revealed as seeing the noble in the world and being revolted by the ignoble. The fact that, in her innocence, she may not always accurately distinguish one from the other does not alter the point about her disposition. The other response, in Caliban, consists in the heightening of self-assertion as the consequence of self-awareness.

Whether it was Prospero who taught Caliban speech, or Miranda who taught Caliban what Prospero taught her (the matter is disputed by scholars), in the most important sense both Miranda and Caliban are the results of Prospero's tutelage. Prospero has the capacity to unlock both orderliness and disorderliness but, in these two cases, has remained in control of both. On the isle Prospero's rule is both just and competent.

The scene now shifts to Ferdinand, accompanied by the invisible but audible Ariel. The tempest in Ferdinand's soul, a consequence of the supposed loss of his father the king, is allayed by Ariel's music. Ferdinand intuits that the song is in the service of some god of the island. The sweet air calms the waters and also his spiritual frenzy, and he is led on by it. It is no earth-bound sound and it is above him.

Just as Ferdinand is led on by a spirit, so Miranda, on being directed by Prospero to raise her eyes to look on Ferdinand, is taken by what she thinks a spirit—Ferdinand himself. To Miranda, Ferdinand is a divine thing and noble. It is likely that Prospero kept Ariel invisible to Miranda and brought her directly to gaze upon Caliban in order to educate her gazing upon Ferdinand. Thus, Prospero orchestrates the first encounter of Miranda and Ferdinand. Each is returning from an encounter with the distasteful: in Miranda's case the encounter with Caliban; in Ferdinand's case the encounter with a storm-tossed sea and the grief of losing his father. Ferdinand sees Miranda as divine and a goddess—he supposes her the source of the sweet airs he has been hearing. The proper union of male and female is the encounter of the divine within the human and this is not presented as a mistaken perception on the part of either.⁴ It is the conclusion to which Prospero directs them both.

What results is a complex insight into the problem of ruling and being

2. Upon reflection, readers may ask themselves, What is there really divine about this encounter? The answer is that Ferdinand and Miranda respond to each other by interpreting their meeting as the encountering of divinity. Moreover, their response to each other throughout the play is intellectualized and ritualized (they play chess) in a manner unmistakably reminiscent of the neoplatonic attitude that the divine is intimated in those striking human interactions which reveal unplumbed depths of experience, drawing thought beyond all ordinary objects of consideration into the mysteries of conscious life.

ruled. Ferdinand, thinking he has met a goddess of the island, asks if she can direct his conduct there, and if she is a maid. She surprises him by speaking his language. This reminds Ferdinand that, as his father is now apparently dead, he is the leading speaker of that language as the new king, or that he would be if he were at home in Naples (1.ii.422ff.). Thus, divine spirit has recognized divine spirit, or royal person has encountered royal person. Prospero rules Miranda and the King of Naples still rules Ferdinand; nonetheless, their potential marks them for each other, and together they constitute the key to the reconciliation of Milan and Naples that must take place later. Ferdinand at this point understandably thinks of Milan as subordinate to Naples because he thinks Alonso has ruled Antonio. But of course Prospero rules them all on this isle. He will be able to transfer this rule to Miranda and Ferdinand, thus achieving what, for example, Lear could not achieve. Prospero's intention has succeeded, for Ferdinand and Miranda "have changed eyes" and now Ferdinand has ceased thinking of Miranda as a goddess and begun to think her a virgin eligible to be queen of Naples.³ But just as she is not ready to be released from the tutelage of Prospero, so Ferdinand is not yet free of due submission to the old king.

Wishing to keep matters complicated for a time, Prospero accuses Ferdinand of arriving with treacherous intent to usurp Prospero's position. Prospero's threat to imprison Ferdinand draws manly resistance which is immediately overcome by Prospero's hypnotic charm. As with the Duke in *Measure for Measure* Prospero is exemplary of the union of power and justice as is evidenced by his use of power here to unite those who should be together.

The first scene of the second act begins with Gonzalo's speech of consolation: the threshold of death is present for human beings every day—it is "our theme of woe" (11.i.6) as human. But few live through impending mortality to enjoy merriment once more. One ought to weigh sorrow against comfort. Alonso turns this consolation aside, undoubtedly considering the apparent loss of his son, and Antonio and Sebastian make fun of Gonzalo. Just as they showed themselves to no advantage in the opening scene's confrontation with death, so now they seem, having escaped, to have forgotten the ordinary mortality of life which Gonzalo wisely enough has not forgotten. Gonzalo thus remembers, parallel to Prospero, and in remembering the human condition is enabled to see opportunity in it as well as danger, and, more importantly, opportunity of an ennobling sort.

It can be said that Sebastian and Antonio are mindful of opportunities too. However, their notion of opportunity is entirely one of self-assertion and conspiracy. Every occasion of life is the razor edge between life and death—most significantly between the life and death of whatever potential

3. One may note here the coalescence of the divine, the political-legal, and the passionate in a single dramatic moment. A comparison of the method by which this is brought about in *Measure for Measure*, among other plays, would be pertinent.

for nobility there may be in the soul of an individual. How such occasions are used will determine what assessment is to be made of the character enacted and so revealed. Every act is a self-disclosure. But what is disclosed is not only an assessment of what action is required. An action is also a consequence of the understanding that informs the attempt at self-enactment which constitutes the dramatic identity of a character.⁴ As Gonzalo says, "When every grief is entertained, that's offered / Comes to th' entertainer" (II.i.16-17).

Gonzalo's stoic spirit is ridiculed by Sebastian and Antonio. The play on "dollar" and "dolor" (II.i.19) reveals the preoccupation of Sebastian as well as Gonzalo's stubborn persistence in trying to console Alonso, who prefers not to be bothered. So also Adrian's attempt to see a delicate climate or temperance on the isle is ridiculed as the sweet smell of the rotting lung or perfumed fen. What's green to Gonzalo is tawny to Antonio. Gonzalo sees them and their garments as refreshed and glossy, not sea-water stained. He refuses to entertain the grief that might be expected in their situation. By contrast, Sebastian, when he turns to Alonso, chides him for insisting on the marriage of his daughter in Tunis against their advice and thus setting in train a series of events which led to their wreck and the loss of Ferdinand. Alonso's fate, looked at in this way, is the result of his own actions and parallels Prospero's. There is a way, then, in which Sebastian has a clearer perception than Gonzalo, who wishes to console, to look on the bright side. Gonzalo is decent but abstract. He speculates that here is a place for a new commonwealth as a natural anarchy, close to nature and without sovereignty. But as Sebastian and Antonio point out, this order without a sovereign would be founded by an act of sovereignty. Thus, "the latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning" (II.i.154). Among other things, this means that innocence in this commonwealth would require innocence of its origins. The extended description given by Gonzalo of his vision is quite clearly of a pre-

4. Michael Oakeshott is invoked here because he expresses a view of conduct remarkably like that of Shakespeare's: "This unresolved and inconclusive character of human conduct is qualified (and not merely concealed) when actions are recognized as self-enactments; that is, when they are understood in terms of the sentiments in which they are performed. There is at least the echo of an imperishable achievement when the valour of the agent and not the soon-to-vanish victory, when his loyalty and fortitude and not the evanescent defeat, are the considerations. But nowhere is it more than a distant echo. Self-enactment (virtuous or otherwise) is itself an episodic and an inconclusive engagement, as *ondoyant* and as full of unresolved tensions as any other — the enacted self is itself a fugitive: not a generic unity but a dramatic identity." Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford, 1975), p. 84.

Self-enactment has to do with "an agent's sentiment in choosing and performing the actions he chooses and performs — the 'motive' of an action is the action itself considered in terms of the sentiment or sentiments in which it is chosen and performed — choosing an action is always meaning to procure a satisfaction in a motive of some sort — an agent thinking as he chooses to think and enacting or re-enacting himself as he wishes to be — what the agent chooses to think is related to his understanding and respect for himself, to the integrity of his character, and not at all to his understanding of a contingent situation to which he must respond by choosing an action." *Op. cit.*, pp. 70-74.

fallen paradise where there would be neither labor nor struggle nor mortality but “all abundance” (II.i.159). But this vision which Gonzalo intends as a further consolation to Alonso is to Alonso “nothing” (II.i.166). This dream-world commonwealth is known by Gonzalo to be nothing, that is, it is a speculative dream. It can be understood in parallel to Prospero’s dream-world commonwealth which he eventually dissolves as a nothing, and perhaps also in parallel to Caliban’s aim to people the island with Calibans. What is envisioned by each is revelatory of the character and motives of each.

Ariel appears and puts Gonzalo and Alonso to sleep. This leaves the field of imagination to Antonio, who sees a crown on Sebastian’s head. Sebastian cannot tell whether Antonio is awake or dreaming. He sees that they are in a dreaming state while awake. Antonio, on the other hand, accuses Sebastian of not exercising his imagination and thus allowing his fortunes to die while he lives, or slumber while he wakes (II.i.210).

One might conclude at this point that every character in the play is the embodiment of his dream within the larger dream of life. Idyllic and Machiavelian dreams are presented here in the common context of the larger dream of life which overrides them all. Each character makes a world for itself where its manifestation of itself would be safe or appropriate. Sebastian recognizes this by retorting that Antonio’s speech to him is snoring. Who then is awake and who asleep?

But this turns into a distinction between Antonio’s ambition, which is to increase Sebastian’s stature threefold—to be the teacher of ambition—and Sebastian’s confession of laziness. Sebastian’s natural tendency is to ebb (II.i.216–17), but his ebbing encourages Antonio’s ambitiousness. Antonio will teach Sebastian ambition in a way reminiscent of the manner in which, so to speak, he taught Prospero about ambition by overthrowing him. The man of ambition looks for opportunities to realize ambition. For now, Antonio can realize his ambition through Sebastian. This moment of grief for Alonso and resignation for Gonzalo is a new beginning for Antonio. With Ferdinand and Claribel out of the way, Antonio wishes that he were Sebastian (II.i.260–61).

But as Sebastian takes Antonio’s meaning he remembers that Antonio overthrew Prospero. This should be a source of discomfort to Sebastian. However, Antonio uses it as a means to persuade Sebastian: “True. / And look how well my garments sit upon me, / Much feater than before. My brother’s servants / Were then my fellows; now they are my men” (II.i.266–68). Antonio thinks that power *makes* the man—this is his dream—whereas the play seems to be saying that power *shows* the man for what he is. One notes also that, whereas in Gonzalo’s dream there would be a natural anarchy, or a spontaneous equality of men and women, Antonio’s dream is of tyranny and distinction in his favor. His dream is consistent with his action. This disturbing turn of events prompts Sebastian to remind Antonio of his “conscience” Antonio confesses that “I feel not this deity in my bosom” (II.i.271–72). Not only is Antonio an atheist

with respect to the claims of conscience but he has no kindred or brotherly feeling: "Here lies your brother, / No better than the earth he lies upon" (II.i.274-75). Antonio's contempt and ambition are a full realization of his Machiavellian character. He seems to be what he is because he has an enormous capacity to forget his own mortality or to be unimpressed by it. He can, in short, see the mortality in all others but not in himself. He is parallel to Caliban in wishing to populate the world only with his own image, but because, unlike Caliban, he has the attributes of full humanity, he is a lower character than Caliban because he has the capacity to dissemble in order to exploit the reality of the human condition. If Alonso is no better than the earth he lies upon, which, in one sense, is certainly true of human beings, then for Antonio it is also true that Prospero is no more alive than the books he studied in seclusion. Caliban at least recognizes that there is power in books (III.ii.89-90).

The earth of which all humanity is constituted is made human in the self-enactment of the dreams which imprint the earthiness with form. Who controls the teaching of form to matter will make a difference. Sebastian, a slothful fellow who describes himself as "standing water" (II.i.216), that is matter, will be imprinted here with Antonio's form of ambition. His quick submission to Antonio's plans is explained by the fact that the submissive, passive type, low in ambition, is easily persuaded. Having little imaginative vision of self-enactment, he can live on that of another. The watery Sebastian is properly slothful and phlegmatic. Thus Antonio's case becomes his precedent (II.i.284). Alonso's sleep shall be like Prospero's study. Neither study nor grief can be comprehended by the ambitious or the slothful. The alliance of ambition and sloth is a powerful source of wickedness in the ordering of human affairs.

Now Ariel intervenes to rouse Gonzalo and thus return the favor Gonzalo extended to Prospero, and Gonzalo and Alonso, being saved, set off to search for Ferdinand. The second scene of Act II plays Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano. Caliban's first real look at Stephano and Trinculo (II.ii.114) convinces him that they are "fine things" This is parallel to Miranda's first look at Ferdinand and offers the proper comparison of noble to base innocence. Caliban thinks they are from the moon and he will conduct these "gods" on a tour of the island. He prefers their drink to Prospero's servitude. They, believing themselves the only survivors, now plan to inherit this island kingdom. Caliban shows his slavish nature in wishing to submit himself to yet a new master.

In the meantime, Act III, scene i, opens with the enslaved Ferdinand, whose burdens are nothing when redeemed by the thought that he is serving Miranda. She reveals her name to him, against her father's command, and Ferdinand opines that she is flawless and the first such a one that he has met. She thinks his form outstrips all imagination and says so, thus again departing from her father's commands to honor discretion. He reveals that, though a log-man now, in actuality he is a prince.

There follows a series of professions in which each seeks to be the servant of the other. Love induces self-tempering and marks the contrast to the ambitious Antonio and slothful Sebastian who are incapable of love or self-restraint. Love is the bondage that is free (III.i.89).⁵

We are immediately reminded of the bondage that is not free by the re-appearance of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo at the outset of Act III, scene ii. Caliban entreats Stephano to overthrow Prospero so that Stephano can rule and favor Caliban. Freedom here is equated with self-assertion once more. Again we have presented what might be called the tyrannical imagination as opposed to the noble imagination suffused by charity. But the conspiracy is constantly being upset by the presence of Ariel's airy voice, which makes it appear that Caliban is simultaneously attacking Trinculo, thus setting the conspirators against each other. Ariel speaks in Trinculo's voice and thus causes Stephano to drive Trinculo further away from him. Caliban then proposes that they murder Prospero in his sleep, so that Stephano will be able to rule, to possess Miranda and to create offspring for the island. Thus Caliban will achieve his own aspiration vicariously. Caliban is to Stephano as Antonio is to Sebastian.

But Ariel is intervening again and playing tunes which cause fright. Caliban counsels calmness because the isle is "full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not" (III.ii.130). These sounds orchestrate Caliban's sleeping and waking and his description spurs Stephano's desire to rule. However, Caliban reminds him that the condition of this rule is the destruction of Prospero. But it would appear that the sweet sound of the isle might disappear with the destruction of Prospero. There is nothing in the speech of Caliban to suggest that the sweet sound of the isle is not dependent on Prospero and Ariel even though, of course, Caliban dissociates the sound from Prospero's rule. When Caliban dreams, he dreams of riches that drop from the clouds, but he does not understand that the dream of riches is fulfilled in living surrounded by the sweet harmonies of just rule. Thus, not surprisingly, he believes that the sweet riches he already enjoys are inferior to what would come if the "dreams" were to become "realities" in the reign of Stephano. Caliban cannot learn the deeper lesson of dreaming, and thus also cannot appreciate the rule of the just, which would be to live encompassed in the harmonious imagination. If this action is a metaphor for the dramatic art itself, as seems likely, then it may also be said that Caliban cannot appreciate the rule of the poetic as what distinguishes the human being from mere earth.

Act III, scene iii, brings us back to Alonso's party. The scene opens with both Gonzalo and Alonso weary from wandering in a maze. Alonso tells Gonzalo, "Sit down and rest. / Even here I will put off my hope, and keep

5. For Antonio, self-restraint is only concealed ambition. For Sebastian, there is only the inertia that prevents attempting much. For the former, everything is permissible; for the latter, most things are too much trouble.

it / No longer for my flatterer: he is drowned" (III.iii.6–8). This is noticeably a prefiguring of Prospero's renunciation speech in Act V, scene i, and reminds one of Prospero's first renunciation in Act I, scene ii. That the "sea mocks / Our frustrate search on land" (III.iii.9–10) indicates not only the literal situation as it appears to Alonso, but also indicates the dream world of the island's relation to the stormy condition of temporal, human existence, whose undulation mocks the powers of the human imagination to order the world in its own image. That this is intimated in the attitude of Gonzalo and Alonso is dramatized by the contrast immediately made with the attitude now shared between Antonio and Sebastian.

Immediately following that dramatic contrast a new harmony and sweet music arise, accompanied by a banquet. Typically, Gonzalo and Alonso are refreshed and inspired, while Sebastian and Antonio respond with touristic amusement. The appearing shapes are, to Alonso, more gentle and kind than human beings. And, in an aside, Prospero editorializes that Alonso speaks well because some there are worse than devils. The gentle but monstrous shapes vanish but the food remains, and Alonso lapses back into his despairing thought that "the best is past" (III.iii.51), which contrasts usefully with Antonio's past as "prologue" (II.i.247). One is led to reflect that Prospero, in a manner very reminiscent of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, has arranged things so that at this moment in the drama the wicked see opportunity where the decent see only cause for despair, and that this arrangement must be emblematic of a providential ordering that one would naturally associate with the name of Prospero. Underlying the perceived order is another order but it is one only intimated in the vanishing moments of time. If it is true, as Seneca remarked, that the good differ from God only in the element of time, reflection compels the thought that our vision of right order is fleeting and *ondoyant* while the divine would almost certainly be firm and constant. But this is also connected to the poetic insight which underlies the play and connects the human condition to Shakespeare's art. For it is poetic vision which discovers something of great constancy in the midst of endless becoming. One may agree with Douglas Peterson that "time in the Renaissance cosmology is only the measure of motion, a condition rather than an agent,"⁶ and go on to say that poetic vision in responding to the intimations of immortality is agency *par excellence*. If, following Hooker, we were to admit that time "neither causeth things nor opportunities of things, although it comprise and contain both" (*Ecc. Pol.* II.383), we would be led on to think that time is suffused with being because time is the human experience which, in its fleetingness, excites unavoidably the thought of the eternal. On the other hand, we will also note that the providential design here is Prospero's and that it will come to an end with the ending of the play. The constancy of the poetic vision is itself, after

6. Douglas L. Peterson, *Time Tide and Tempest, A Study of Shakespeare's Romances* (San Marino, 1973), p. 17.

all, fleeting and not constancy unqualified. To quote Peterson again, "All temporal things actively participate in the eternal. On the other hand, to be more sharply aware of process is to be more sharply aware of its remorselessness and of the precariousness and dependency of one's existence upon it."⁷

This new precariousness which denies the possibility of ignoring the temporal in an act of contemplation intimates the superiority of poetic vision to philosophic or theological vision, superiority not in seeing further than philosophy or theology but in seeing as creatures of crumbling dust must see: "A breath thou art, / Servile to all the skyey influences . . . Thou art Death's fool" (*Measure for Measure*, III.i.8–11). Humanity is free not to be not temporal, but free to choose in self-enactment its visions, and by such visions to be known after the occasions of their initial appearance have passed, and the instigators with them. It is a question of seeing a universe in a grain of sand, of seeing substantiality in the merest momentary contiguity of goings-on. Time is duration to be endured. Self-enactment is enduring according to an agent's self-understanding. Prospero drags his opponents into confrontation with time as duration but in the shelter of the island. The reduction in complexity of life thus achieved allows the dramatic evocation of the timeless presence in the midst of time. It also permits the revelation and assessment of the characters. What distinguishes one character from another is the use each character makes of time. Nobility of response is connected to seeing the contingency of the human condition as persistently occasioning the necessity of love and forgiveness. What Prospero will finally achieve is the extension of the occasions of the right use of temporality by the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, as almost all commentators have noticed. What has changed from *Measure for Measure* to *The Tempest* is that the poetic vision has become the rule of restraint on the enchanted isle instead of the resurgent law of Vienna.⁸

Such agency is to be seen as teasing constancy out of nothingness, and in this way is the mark of the play itself. The play may be understood as an

7. *Op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.

8. The reader may wonder to what extent this is a specifically Christian interpretation of the play's action. It is true that the virtues of love and forgiveness are specifically associated with Christianity. It is also true that there are many occasions of Christian symbolism in Shakespeare's play which cannot be dismissed as mere ironies. However, what these usages meant to Shakespeare this author is unable to say with conviction despite having examined many commentaries on this point. What is unmistakable is the dominance of poetic vision in *The Tempest*, and the relation of poetic vision to a profound confrontation with temporality, contingency, human failing, mortality, and reconciliation. At the very least it would seem that Shakespeare explored the connection between wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice on the one hand; and faith, hope, and charity on the other. He could not have done this without exploring Christian themes and ideas. It does not seem likely Shakespeare could have achieved the profundity he did, in fact, achieve by a merely ironic negation of the tradition which rested on the Augustinian meditation on the intimation of the eternal in the temporal—a tradition which itself rested on an affinity for Plato's complementary account of what human experience must inevitably involve.

“emblematic narrative”,⁹ that is, it is an imitation of action, or it is a reconstruction of human action from the perspective of the virtue implicitly possible in human action but not normally directly seen. It is seeing human action from above so to speak. The high characters are ritualized vis-à-vis the low characters who are realistic or cynical or simply semiconscious. Thus every moment of time is the eternal moment and the task is to see that that is so. Every moment is thus a promise and a peril, for at every moment the human agent is caught between merely temporal royalties and virtue's airy voice.

Prospero's vision is a momentary unification of these themes before time sweeps all before it. But on the other hand, the play is the remembrance of a vision and a sign of its repetitive presence in all moments of human endurance. It is the fleeting glimpse of the unity of the real and the ideal which at the outset of the play had been hopelessly separated as the discrepancy between Milan and Antonio on the one hand, and the dukedom of the library on the other.

In this reflective moment in the midst of time none of the realities of the human condition is denied, but what is asserted positively is that any moment can be the occasion for a deeper vision—what is to be seen never alters but it must be transmitted through the visible and transitory self-enactment of agents.

At any rate, Ariel returns now to make the banquet vanish, and he reveals himself as the minister of Fate demanding of Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio repentance and from this point on an innocent life. He disappears in a clap of thunder. Prospero praises Ariel's work and has reached the height of his power: “My high charms work, / And these, mine enemies, are all knit up / In their distractions: they now are in my pow'r” (III.iii.88–90). In this hypnotic state Alonso thinks the clouds, the winds and the thunder pronounce the name of Prospero. The tempest has now revealed itself as Fate and a call to remembrance and hence repentance. Thus, Alonso assumes that the loss of Ferdinand is the recompense for his alliance with Antonio against Prospero. Ferdinand is bedded in the ooze and now Alonso wishes to join him: “I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded / And with him there lie mudded” (III.iii.100–102). The confrontation with the ethereal has driven Alonso towards the insensate mud.

Now Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio confront their own guilt. This is their second encounter with the tempest. The first brought them to the island, the second to self-awareness.

By contrast the first scene of Act IV begins with Prospero, Ferdinand and Miranda, in a situation where Prospero is beginning to release Ferdinand from his thralldom. Ferdinand has been tried and found good. Prospero admonishes Ferdinand to be chaste. Ferdinand makes a stirring speech for honor and for “quiet days, fair issue, and long life” (IV.i.24). With a few minor

9. Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

lapses of passion Ferdinand and Miranda look to be composed, and now Ariel will produce the masque.

The masque duly celebrates fertility and the cooperation of sky and earth in the lives of Ferdinand and Miranda. Ferdinand wishes to think these are spirits, but Prospero foreshadows what is to come by remarking, "Spirits, which by mine art / I have from their confines called to enact / My present fancies" (IV.i.120–22). Ferdinand understandably wishes for time to stand still now for the fair thing it has revealed. But time will not stand still, for at the moment of harvest in the wearying August of the masque, Prospero's fancy shifts to Caliban's foul conspiracy (IV.i.140). In the regime of Prospero the visions of the island shift with his fancy. This confirms the view that *The Tempest* is the story of the interior drama of the "dream of Prospero". "Prospero had played with the thought of human life as a masque, beautiful, majestic, transient: but it would not do. It is instead a bitter drama of good and evil."¹⁰ "In the end the choice is between himself affirming the spiritual sources of society, the dependence of the temporal and the secular upon the eternal and the sacred, and a society which rejects supernatural sanctions and in the event rejects morality itself."¹¹ The return to human affairs, in short, is not to the Machiavellian perspective but to a comprehensive view leading to moderation: He ne'er is crowned / With immortality who fears to follow / Where airy voices lead. Prospero's remembrance of Caliban's conspiracy is, naturally, the occasion for remembering the general atmosphere of conspiracy Prospero has inhabited, and, necessarily, in the end, the fact that he himself has conspired against the conspirators. This memory produces a tempest in Prospero's own mind now which is evident to Ferdinand. But Prospero dismisses him and in reflecting on Caliban recognizes a limit to his imaginative power to transform the stuff of which human beings are formed. Caliban's is a nature which Prospero's nurture cannot perfect. Thus, Caliban and his co-conspirators now creep up on Prospero's dwelling like animals and are driven out by spirits in the form of hunting dogs chasing prey.

Now all Prospero's enemies are at his mercy, and the sixth hour has been reached. The king and his followers have become penitent and this is sufficient for Prospero. He shall choose virtue over vengeance and relinquish his magical powers. The king's party has been reduced to something less than human under Prospero's spell. They thus lie foul and muddy, at the ebb tide of their humanity. As they are gradually led back into the human condition the flood of reason overcomes their muddiness. Their humiliation is the prerequisite to repentance which is the beginning not of their degradation but of their ascent to some semblance of virtue. That there is virtue in Alonso has been strongly intimated for some time, and this is the case in his first reunion with Prospero. Gonzalo is of course virtuous. Sebastian and Antonio may be held by some

10. D. G. James, *The Dream of Prospero* (Oxford, 1967), p. 136.

11. James, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

virtue because of Prospero's threat to reveal their abortive conspiracy against Alonso.

Now Prospero plays on Alonso's apparent loss of Ferdinand by saying he has lost his daughter without saying that he has lost his daughter to Ferdinand. This serves to remind Alonso of his separation from his daughter Claribel. But having had this bitter joke the restored Duke of Milan now produces Ferdinand.

The play's conclusion is contained in Gonzalo's reflection that in one voyage "all of us" have found "ourselves / When no man was his own" (v.i.209-13). "Prospero transvalues the wickedness and torment on his isle into the stuff of dreams. . . . Possibly the last evil for Prospero abides in cynicism, the Antonio malady. Antonio is, like Iago, an antipoetic mind who sees the world in parts instead of by total vision." In this dilemma the eternal is only, paradoxically, a momentary solution within the terms of the human condition. The incipient lawlessness of humanity can be subdued "only for a moment in a scene created by a wholly poetic consciousness."¹² The enacted self is itself a fugitive; not a generic unity but a dramatic identity.

There are, however, a number of additional considerations: it would be difficult to study *The Tempest* without remarking its evanescence both in theme and structure, and most commentators have done so. To this point, the discussion has proceeded in an attempt to be faithful to that quality in the play, and to be mindful of the centrality of Prospero's sentiment that the fabric of his vision is "baseless" (iv.i.151), that the human condition is an "insubstantial pageant" (iv.i.155). On the other hand, it must be reaffirmed that there *is* a fabric and a pageant, and their reality is not constituted in their materiality. This certifies the connection between Shakespeare and the ancient roots of philosophy and theology, and leaves no doubt that Shakespeare presents both a conception of excellence or nobility as real, and also a forthright account of the difficulty of achieving these qualities. Since that achievement is intuitive and/or intellectual, it is a matter of seeing and, in *The Tempest*, poetic seeing.

It has been suggested earlier that, within the specific terms of this play, poetic seeing is superior to philosophical or theological seeing. To the extent that is so in *The Tempest*, it is because the art of seeing the "insubstantial" seems to demand poetic seeing, and, if proof were needed, *The Tempest* itself is proof, provided one suspends a prejudice against the sheer possibility of such seeing. The rank of characters in the play is based on the vision, or lack of it, which they possess, and on the degree to which they can learn, when given a fresh chance, to see what previously they had not seen. This is, of course, true in the highest degree of Prospero and thus is reminiscent of Duke Vincentio's insight in *Measure for Measure*.

12. Wylie Sypher, *The Ethic of Time, Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* (New York, 1976), pp. 205-6.

On the other hand, there is a clear difference of tone between *The Tempest* and *Measure for Measure*. *Measure for Measure* is more earthbound and has a more obvious political teaching about the value of domestic or familial orderliness for the maintenance of political order in a condition of moderate virtue (between the extremes of the dissolution of the suburbs and divine perfection which, on earth, devolves into mere rules).

Does this mean that Shakespeare, in moving, by a long route not described here, from *Measure for Measure* to *The Tempest*, has gradually abandoned solid political teaching for a dependence on poetic imagination as a kind of consolation for the imperfectibility of the mortal, human condition? There is much evidence to suggest otherwise.

In the first place, the theme of proper marriage is maintained in *The Tempest* in a semidivine presentation. Ferdinand and Miranda are united in their vision of each other and reinforced by the vision of cooperation between earth and sky in the marriage masque. But this is done in a way that remains consistent with *The Tempest's* internal integrity and thematic cohesion. In the second place, Prospero's descent from power which is repaired by an ascent in wisdom, and his eventual return to his proper post in Milan armed with a more comprehensive vision, echoes Shakespeare's recurrent theme of suffusing the human moral order with a larger vision that leads to the moderation that only those of comprehensive and sober understanding can display.

The Tempest may then be seen as Shakespeare's greatest effort to achieve a philosophical expression of the thought that consistently underlies his teaching on moral and political life. This play seems to assert that generic unity is subsumed in dramatic identity. But what does it mean to say that? Does it mean that nothing persists? On the contrary, it is quite clear that if there is not something in the poetic vision that persists, the emphasis on nobility, excellence, and sober judgment could not confront us so clearly as it does.

Rather, we must say that no human agent of such poetic seeing persists. To the extent that the vision of *The Tempest* is specifically Prospero's vision, or, for that matter, specifically Shakespeare's, it must be "rounded with a sleep," dissolving to "leave not a rack behind" (iv.i.154ff.). To the extent that the vision of *The Tempest* is not only Prospero's or Shakespeare's, but is instead at least a mysterious presence in the text itself, it obviously must persist. However, its presence in the text depends on its continued potential for being seen by successive observers.

But this potential depends in some measure on the observers themselves who will know what they are being expected to see. Implied, therefore, is a "practice" of seeing which can persist but which must be reaffirmed on every occasion by those who see, thus distinguishing themselves from those who do not see. In this way *The Tempest* may be understood as a teaching of the highest sort, and necessarily reminiscent, in its own idiom, of the experience of the Platonic presentation of Socrates. To see in this sense is to put into practice a vision of human conduct but, simultaneously, to avoid the reduction

of such vision to a set of rules which, in the temporality of human things, cannot with any certainty be of permanent value in guiding human beings through the vicissitudes of historical existence. It is the vision to which one subscribes rather than a command which one must obey. There is a fundamental optimism in this understanding that what is to be seen can be seen despite the conspiracy against it, and that it can be reaffirmed in every passing moment. It is thus a vision which seeks to hold together the moral autonomy of human beings in the exercise of their agency, with the possibility of a conception of what human agency should lead to and look like providing an elusive, but real, standard of judgment. It is this which Prospero must carry back to Milan and pass on to Ferdinand and Miranda.

The purity or admirability of motives will not release us from the dangers of misadventure in the mutable and uncertain circumstances in which we must try to act on those motives. On the other hand, the nature of our motives, insofar as they may be revealed to us, undoubtedly affects our judgment of the actions that proceeded under their guidance. Prospero's misadventure in originally relinquishing his political responsibilities is of a different sort from Antonio's in perverting his political responsibilities.

Furthermore, Prospero's misadventure leads to a greater, more comprehensive understanding symbolized by his two renunciations of power: the first inadvertent and the second by choice under conditions of unlimited power. Prospero's initial motives betray limited perception, subject to revision and improvement, but not wickedness or malevolence. Antonio's motives are wicked and, in the event, unimproved and apparently unimprovable. Antonio's ambitiousness can only be magnified or diminished as circumstances dictate. It cannot be transformed or transposed into a different urging.

Of Caliban, it might be said that his motives are unsettled. They are somewhere between instinct and reflective maturity. They lack the deliberateness which would permit us to judge with certainty how far he might be able to advance. Antonio is unambiguous in this sense, and lower.

The question will, of course, arise as to whether talk of the higher and the lower, the base and the noble, the admirable and the despicable, the benevolent and the malicious, makes sense if self-enactment is the self-chosen sentiment of the actor—whence comes this apparently independent standard by which to assess motives? For Shakespeare, it seems to come from an awareness of the comprehensive range of possible motives for human beings to apprehend and choose among. The range is real and imposes itself upon us. It is natural, if by natural is meant the unsought but unavoidable conditions human experience imposes upon human reflection. But it is not only natural. The range of motives is also orderly and cannot be expressed otherwise than in terms of better or worse. Thus, we may be flooded by many possible motives but we are not permitted to be unaware of their implications in a moral sense.

Finally, it may be remarked that no hierarchy among the better motives

is apparent. This is true enough. But what is decisive is the revelation of character in respect, first, of better or worse motives, and second, of the arrangement achieved by each well-disposed individual of the better motives (including consideration of the comprehensiveness of the range of motives so arranged). Usually, Shakespeare personifies the standard in a character who is both well-disposed and exhibiting an extensive array of worthy motives in an orderly manner. The hierarchy of the virtues thus depends on the dramatic vision in each play.

The relative importance of the various good motives will depend in each case on the contingent conditions the play imposes on the characters. The relative equality of the virtues does not prevent a hierarchical arrangement among them, but does require different arrangements in different cases. The coherence of the moral order struck in each case is crucial. For, in preserving coherence among the good things in the midst of life's contingency, one does not diminish one virtue for the sake of another. On the contrary, one calls upon one virtue for the sake of virtue altogether. Were this not the case, contingency would overwhelm virtue. The good man must have the cunning of virtue if he is to outwit the deceptions of the wicked and remain resilient to the endlessness of temporality. Surely, *The Tempest* is about this if it is about anything.

From this point of view, the "Epilogue" of *The Tempest* takes on a significant dimension: Prospero's charms are now overthrown, and he is reduced to the faint strength at the disposal of any human being in confrontation with temporality. But if he is not to be "confined" but "Sent to Naples" it will depend on the audience, that is, it will depend on their appropriation of his vision to resubstantiate it as his successors. Their gentle breath must fill his sails or else his project fails. The task of seeing now falls to them. Of course, his dramatic task was "to please", and he wishes to be applauded. In addition, he wishes to persist in the persistence of their pleasure. In the meantime, the play has taught us something about the rank of pleasures. Thus, while the audience can see what it wants to see, the play has provided a precept for seeing better. To insist that this is not a political teaching would be to insist that the dreams of politics are not encompassed by the dream of life.