

THE BROAKEN STAFF

Shakespeare's last play begins at sea in a wild and chilling storm. We hear the thunder and see the lightning. The sea-spray wets our cheeks and weighted clothing hanes about us limply. Yet there was no storm, and anyone in the audience not taken up by the magic clearly sees that our clothing is as fresh as the moment we stepped out of the house to go to the theater.

The Master of the Ship is the first to speak:

BOATSWAIN!

[I:1:1]

The Boatswain answers:

HERE MASTER; WHAT CHEER?

[I:1:2]

The Master speaks only to the Boatswain, and it is he who is to give to the men the words of the Master. No one else ever hears him. In a manner that begins to remind us of The Lord speaking to Moses from the top of Mount Sinai, The Master says:

GOOD; SPEAK TO TH' MARINHERS. FALL TO'T YARLY,  
OR WE RUN OURSELVES AGROUND. BESTER, BESTER.

[I:1:3-5]

Then The Master, like The Lord of the Christian Old Testament disappears causing both the King and the Duke to demand:

WHERE'S THE MASTER?

[I:1:10 & 13]

When the Boatswain answers

DO YOU NOT HEAR HIM?

[I:1:14]

We again can only think of Moses and his constant reminder "HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD". Again the word can be heard through the mouth of the spokesman. But unlike The Lord, who led His people into the Land of Israel, The Master is more at home in the open sea, and fears nothing but dry land.

The Boatswain, daring to the sea, and fearful of the land has a hearty cheer for his men.

HIGH, MY HEARTS! CHEERLY, CHEERLY MY HEARTS! YARE,  
YARE! TAKE IN THE TOPSAIL. TEND TO THE MASTER'S  
WHISTLE, -- BLOW TILL THOU BURST THY WIND, IF ROOM  
ENOUGH.

[I:1:6-9]

The last phrase means that as long as the storm does not send him too close to the shore, that is, as long as it gives him enough of what sailors call "sea room", it can blow its worst. His orders are flawless, but his almost total command over nature leaves him oblivious to mere convention and thus to all those things that render political life possible. To the royal party itself he says:

HENCE! WHAT CARES THESE ROARERS FOR THE NAME OF KING?  
TO CABIN! SILENCE! TROUBLE US NOT.

[I:1:17-19]

Gonzalo, the honest old Counsellor, for whom I hope we shall learn to have high respect and love, in spite of the fact that we shall be forced to go well beyond him, reflects:

I HAVE GREAT COMFORT FROM THIS FELLOW. METHINKS  
HE HATH NO DROWNING MARK UPON HIM; HIS COMPLEXION  
IS PERFECT GALLOWS. STAND FAST, GOOD FATE, TO  
HIS HANGING; MAKE THE ROPE OF HIS DESTINY OUR  
CABLE, FOR OUR OWN DOTH LITTLE ADVANTAGE. IF  
BE NOT BORN TO BE HANG'D, OUR CASE IS MISERABLE.

[I:1:30-35]

We can well understand Gonzalo. He is thinking of men like Theseus, David, or Wyatt Earp, those who can slay giants or rid the seas of pirates. Without them civil life cannot exist, and yet they themselves can never quite find their way back into that life. There will always be an Ariadne or a Bath Sheba. How can a man who has shown his excellence in that world which knows no law ever place himself under the external rule of other men? Ancient wisdom both Biblical and Greek tends to show those very men who are so needed for the establishment of political life can not themselves be contained within its borders and lead to its ultimate destruction. Yet in the final scene of the Play, we shall meet the Boatswain

again. This time he will indeed be on dry land, but instead of being hanged, we will hear him say:

THE BEST NEWS IS THAT WE HAVE SAFELY FOUND OUR  
KING AND COMPANY...

[V:i:121-122]

What has Gonzalo, noble as he is, over-looked that has made this change possible? Part of our answer may lie in his final speech of the act:

NOW WOULD I HAVE A THOUSAND FURLONGS OF SEA FOR AN  
ACRE OF BARREN GROUND, LONG HEATH, BROWN [FURZE],  
ANYTHING. THE WILLS ABOVE BE DONE! BUT I WOULD FAIN  
DIE A DRY DEATH .

[I:i:69-72]

Gonzalo is as lost at sea as the Boatswain is on land.  
Weaving them together will be part of Prospero's art.

We first see Prospero's Art through the eyes of his daughter, Miranda. We see what they see, we do not see what they do not see. From her we learn that it is a violent art which does not look for the mean, but works by the direct confrontation of opposites.

IF BY YOUR ART, MY DEAREST FATHER, YOU HAVE PUT  
THE WILD WATERS IN THIS ROAR, ALLAY THEM. THE  
SKY, IT SEEMS, WOULD POUR DOWN STINKING PITCH,  
BUT THAT THE SEA, MOUNTING TO TH' WELKIN'S CHEEK,  
DASHES THE FIRE OUT.

[I:ii:1-5]

But we learn more. This is the first opportunity Miranda has had to demonstrate concern for others. The storm has served as part of her education, and she passed through it well, though there is much she still does not understand. In her belief that all perished in the storm, she said:

HAD I BEEN ANY GOD OF POWER, I WOULD HAVE SUNK  
THE SEA WITHIN THE EARTH.

[I:ii:10-11]

These lines contain a remarkable and deep mixture of seeing and of not seeing. No one has been harmed, yet if any harm had been done, her passion would have been right. Will it require a god? Prospero, as we shall see with greater and greater clarity is not a god, though it may be well for her to begin by looking for a god. Then too, although the total ensulfment of the sea within the confines of the earth may not be the best way of weaving sea and earth together, Miranda has vaguely seen the problem raised by Gonzalo and the Boatswain.

Miranda's next lesson is a lesson in history. It is a very hard lesson, and it contains more than history.

LEND ME A HAND

he says

AND PLUCK MY MAGIC GARMENT FROM ME.

[I:ii:23-24]

This lesson cannot be given by magic and Miranda must come to know that. Thus we see even this early in the play that there is a time when magic must come to an end. Prospero had carefully prepared Miranda for this moment by often beginning to tell her the story, but always concluding with a

STAY, NOT YET.

[I:ii:36]

Prospero's non-magical beginning is to force Miranda to dig deeply into her own memory. She found little, but in looking she had contacted herself and was ready to go on. Old Gonzalo had once made the same appeal to the boatswain:

GOOD, YET REMEMBER WHOM THOU HAST ABOARD.

[I:i:21]

But the only answer was:

NONE THAT I LOVE MORE THAN MYSELF.

[I:i:22]

Gonzalo had forgotten that in the ever present sea there is no past

and no memories.

From Prospero, Miranda who lives alone with her father and one servant, on a desert island, learns that her father had once been the Duke of Milan, but his brother Antonio, with the help of Alonzo King of Naples stole the Dukedom, putting Prospero and his daughter out to sea in an old leaky boat. Gonzalo was in on the plot, but being a noble man, he saw to it that Prospero was provided with clothing and with his books.

Miranda thinks that she has listened well to Prospero's story, and in a way she has, but Prospero does not think so. He continually complains that she is not listening. Perhaps he thinks that she did not fully attend to the words:

I PRAY THEE, MARK ME. I, THUS NEGLECTING WORLDLY  
ENDS, ALL DEDICATED TO CLOSENESS AND THE BETTERING OF  
MY MIND WITH THAT WHICH, BUT BY BEING SO RETIR'D,  
O'ER-PRIZ'D ALL POPULAR RATE, IN MY FALSE BROTHER  
AWAK'D AN EVIL NATURE; AND MY TRUST, LIKE A GOOD  
PARENT, DID BEGET OF HIM A FALSEHOOD, IN ITS CONTRARY  
AS GREAT AS MY TRUST WAS; WHICH HAD INDEED NO LIMIT,  
AS CONFIDENCE SANS BOUND.

[I:ii:88-96]

Perhaps she did not hear him say that the heart of the problem lies not in Antonio, but in his own lack of political action. Perhaps he had read in the Republic that justice would never come to be till kings become philosophers, or till philosophers become kings; but such thoughts only come to a man as an immediate call to action only before Plato's aborted attempt to bring justice to Sicily. After the fiasco in Sicily all this seemed to gain the status of an eternal dream. Good men had better stay out of politics. They can do no good, and can only become corrupted themselves. But now, on the island, political thoughts seem to have returned to Prospero, some two thousand years after Sicily. How? What has happened? We must know more about Prospero and his magic. After telling her the story, Prospero again dons his cloak and gently puts Miranda to sleep.

While Miranda sleeps, let us meet the chief instrument of Prospero's magic, Ariel. Indeed we meet him as a pure means to another's end, though in himself he seems to be completely lacking in any desire other than an all-consuming desire for total liberty. Who is he, and how has such an inversion taken place? Some have called him the spirit of philosophy, others the spirit of poetic imagination.

tion, or poetic inspiration. But all these things seem to narrow. Let us say no more than that he is whatever it is that pulls man beyond the physical needs of himself or of others, whether it be to sing or to dance or to play or to think.

It was his task to perform this great tempest, while making sure that in fact not a hair perished. After his tasks are completed, Ariel begins in turn to give a history lesson to Prospero and again it is given through recollection.

ARIEL:

LET ME REMEMBER THEE WHAT THOU HAST PROMIS'D, WHICH  
IS NOT YET PERFORM'D ME.

PROSPERO:

HOW NOW? MOODY? WHAT IS'T THOU CANST DEMAND?

ARIEL:

MY LIBERTY.

[I:ii:242-245]

Prospero's playfull cajoling and loving promise of freedom are usually enough to win over the good natured Ariel, but this time he is forced to return the history lesson.

HAST THOU FORGOT THE FOUL WITCH SYCORAX  
WHO WITH AGE AND ENVY WAS GROWN INTO A HOOP?

[I:ii:257]

In the days before Prospero had come to the island, there was another worker of magic, one Sycorax, who had enslaved Ariel and forced him to do her bidding. When Ariel, out of his own sense of delicacy would not act upon her commands, she confined him into a cloven pine from which she could not free him. Later she died leaving him in bondage. Ariel must be reminded once a month that if he is unwilling to work for a noble master, he will be captured by an ignoble master. With this, the talk ends. But we are left with a question. How shall we tell the difference between the magic of Prospero, and the magic of Sycorax?

When Ariel leaves and Miranda wakes, we meet Caliban, a savage and deformed slave. He comes in cursing, and lays two charges against Prospero: one, that Prospero has taken the island from him by force, the other, that Prospero's great gift of language has taught him to do nothing but to curse. Caliban's claim always makes us just a bit uncomfortable, since there is something just and right

about it.

THIS ISLAND WAS MINE BY SYCORAX MY MOTHER,  
WHICH THOU TAK'ST FROM ME. WHEN THOU CAM'ST FIRST,  
THOU STROK'ST ME AND MADE MUCH OF ME, WOULD'ST GIVE ME  
WATER WITH BERRIES IN IT, AND TEACH ME HOW TO NAME  
THE BIGGER LIGHT, AND HOW THE LESS,  
THAT BURN BY DAY AND NIGHT; AND THEN I LOVED THEE  
AND SHOWED THEE ALL THE QUALITIES O' TH' ISLE,  
THE FRESH SPRINGS, BRINE-PITS, BARREN PLACE AND FERTILE.  
CURSED BE I THAT DID SO! ALL THE CHARMS OF SYCORAX -  
TOADS, BEETLES, BATS, LIGHT ON YOU!  
FOR I AM ALL THE SUBJECTS THAT YOU HAVE,  
WHICH FIRST WAS MINE OWN KING; AND HERE YOU STY ME  
IN THIS HARD ROCK, WHILES YOU DO KEEP FROM ME  
THE REST O' TH' ISLAND.

[I:ii:331-344]

Through out the play, Shakspeare gives us just enough insight into what Calaban might have been like if Prospero had not come along, to make us wonder. At the same time, we see that Calaban could never come to understand why Miranda is not for him, and that will lead to bitterness and ugliness. As we shall see later, there is one thing that Prospero could have done to set Calaban to abandon his desires for Miranda and thereby bring peace to his island, but that is the one thing that Prospero is determined not do.

But it is now time for Miranda to meet Ferdinand, the son of King Alonzo. He enters the stage walking around in a kind of daze. Ariel sings him two songs. Each time his reaction is the same. He remembers something. As we know by now, that's a good sign. One day he will make a fine husband for Miranda though not yet. Ariel's second song goes:

FULL FATHOM FIVE THY FATHER LIES;  
OF HIS BONES ARE CORAL MADE;

THOSE ARE PEARLS THAT WERE HIS EYES:

NOTHING OF HIM THAT DOTTH FADE

BUT DOTTH SUFFER A SEA-CHANGE

INTO SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE.

SEA-NYMPHS HOURLY RING HIS KNELL:

DING-DONG

HARK! NOW I HEAR THEM, - DING-DONG BELL.

[I:ii 397-405]

Ferdinand then says:

THIS DITTY DOES REMEMBER MY DROWN'D FATHER

[I:ii:405]

Ferdinand speaks more truly than he knows. The next time he see his father, the king will be much changed. Alonso is a fine example of the effects of Prospero's Art. If we could only understand the lines

NOTHING OF HIM THAT DOTTH FADE

BUT DOTTH SUFFER A SEA-CHANGE

INTO SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE,

[I:ii:399-401]

we might be able to begin to understand the difference between the old and the new magic.

When Miranda first sees Ferdinand, she thinks that he is divine, and when he first sees her, he takes her to be a goddess. They are, of course, both deeply wrong. Each is very human and they can never be in love till they understand that. However, falling in love may be another matter. They must learn to love each other as human beings, but falling in love may require the almost momentary divinity of magic. The rest of Act One is devoted to Prospero's reduction of Ferdinand to the human.

Though some parts of the next scene have a kind of clarity about them, others remain most obscure, and much of what we have to say regarding it must at best be taken as no more than a tentative approach.

Gonzalo begins by offering solace to the king who believes that his son Ferdinand was drowned in the tempest. He is not, however, so indelicate as to mention the word death, and speaks only of OUR HINT OF WOE. In effect he says that wisdom lies in the realization that there is not much man can do against the sea. One



can only be thankfull for whatever good remains. This view of life which we had already seen in act one, may account for his willingness to participate in the abduction of Proopero twelve years earlier. For him, the best one can do is to make sure that the right book gets into the right hands.

The king's brother, Sebastion, a friend of Antonio, then accuses Gonzalo, whom he will later refer to as SIR PRUDENCE, of thinking like a clock; that is to say, of relying only on prudence and of lacking imagination. We know only too well what Sebastion means by that. In him, imagination is constantly working out schemes of selfinterest narrowly understood. But properly understood, he may have a point. This leads to a disagreement about the color of the island. Gonzalo thinks it is green, Sebastion and Antonio think it tawny. This in turn gives rise to the following:

GON: METHINKS OUR GARMENTS ARE NOW AS FRESH AS  
AS WHEN WE PUT THEM ON FIRST IN AFRIC, AT THE  
MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S FAIR DAUGHTER CLARIBEL TO  
THE KING OF TUNIS.

SEB: 'T WAS A SWEET MARRIAGE, AND WE PROSPER WELL IN OUR  
RETURN.

ADR: TUNIS WAS NEVER GRAC'D BEFORE WITH SUCH A PARAGON TO  
THEIR QUEEN.

GON: NOT SINCE WIDOW DIDO'S TIME.

ANT: WIDOW! A POX O' THAT! HOW CAME THAT WIDOW IN?  
WIDOW DIDO!

SEB: WHAT IS HE HAD SAID "WIDOWER AENEAS" TOO? GOOD  
LORD, HOW YOU TAKE IT!

ADR: "WIDOW DIDO" SAID YOU? YOU MAKE ME A STUDY OF THAT.  
SHE WAS OF CARTHAGE, NOT OF TUNIS.

GON: THIS TUNIS, SIR , WAS OF CARTHAGE.

ADR: CARTHAGE?

GON: I ASSURE YOU, CARTHAGE.

ANT: HIS WORD IS MORE THAN THE MIRACULOUS HARP.

SEB: HE HATH RAIS'D THE WALL AND HOUSES TOO.

ANT: WHAT IMPOSSIBLE MATTER WILL HE MAKE EASY NEXT?

SEB: I THINK HE WILL CARRY THIS ISLAND HOME IN HIS POCKET AND  
GIVE IT HIS SON FOR AN APPLE.

ANT: AND SOWING THE KERNELS OF IT IN THE SEA, BRING FORTH  
MORE ISLANDS.

[III:i:67-94]

There things begin to set a bit foggy. It is clear why Gonzalo, who, as we remember has a great fear of the sea, is surprised that the sea should have been so kind, but it is not clear why he should insist so strongly on the relation between Tunis and Carthage, or between Dido and Claribell. Nor is it clear why this leads Antonio to charge him with utopianism.

HIS WORD IS MORE THAN THE MIRACUOUS HARP.

[III:i:85]

My best guess is that Sebastian and Antonio think that Gonzalo is suggesting that if the death of Dido was, as it were, the original sin behind the fall of Rome, then by returning Dido in the form of Claribell, Alonzo has paid the debt. Sebastian will have none of this, and accuses Alonzo of being the true cause of their present troubles by marrying Claribell to an African. Alonzo accepts that and for the first time feels the weight of a past action. Through Antonio Prospero's magic is at work. But Gonzalo accuses Antonio of speaking in malice. Even if what he says is true this is not the time to add to Alonzo's sufferings. One of the points of utopianism is to bring a plaster to the sore.

Gonzalo then gives his great utopian speech, extolling the wonders and beauties of primitive life. It begins:

HAD I PLANTATION OF THIS ISLE, MY LORD .... AND  
WERE THE KING ON'T.

and ends

BUT INNOCENT AND PURE; NO SOVEREIGNTY.

[III:i:142-153]

As Sebastian is only too quick to point out, utopianism is self-contradictory. At best it can only lead us to a deeper understanding of why things are as they are, but has little power to change them. Gonzalo then answers:

YOU ARE GENTLEMEN OF BRAVE METTEL; YOU WOULD LIFT  
THE MOON OUT OF HER SPHERE, IF SHE WOULD CONTINUE

IN IT FIVE WEEKS WITHOUT CHANGING.

[III:i182-184]

For Gonzalo the only alternative to utopianism is the conquest of nature, but nature is too uncertain and hence cannot be conquered.

At this point, Ariel enters and puts the others to sleep, allowing Antonio to seduce Sebastian into the murder of Alonso and Gonzalo. We must limit our remarks to the fact that the turning point seems to be when Sebastian says:

I DO REMEMBER YOU DID SUPPLANT YOUR BROTHER, PROSPERO

[III:i:270]

A good memory turns out not to be simply good. It still depends upon who remembers what and when. Perhaps the best thing that can be said is that what pops into memory unbidden may reveal character best.

The next scene begins with Caliban on stage alone cursing Prospero for all his pains and aches. The lines are Shakespeare at his best. In them we can see both Caliban's gentility and Prospero's wisdom at the same time though they seem to contradict each other.

The next person to arrive on stage is Trinculo. Caliban falls flat and hides under his cloak hoping to be ignored. Just as the world is green for Gonzalo and tawny for Antonio, for Trinculo it is wet.

THAT SAME BLACK CLOUD, YOND HUGE ONE, LOOKS  
LIKE A FOUL BOMBARD THAT WOULD SHED HIS LIQUOR

[III:ii:20-21]

In fact he ends up climbing in under the cloak with Caliban, whom he takes to be a native struck by lightning, just to avoid the down-pour that no one else ever sees or speaks of. Nor can he always tell the difference between a man and a fish, even when it's less'd like a man, and has fins like arms. Once, when asked how he came ashore, he said:

SWAM ASHORE, MAN, LIKE A DUCK. I CAN SWIM LIKE A  
DUCK I'LL BE SWORN.

[III:ii:132-33]

In short he seems to be a kind of cosmic version of our friend the Boatswain; and we must remember that when the mariners all cried:

ALL LOST! TO PRAYERS, TO PRAYERS, ALL LOST!

the boatswain merely remarked:

WHAT, MUST OUR MOUTHS BE COLD?

[I:i:55-56]

Trinculo does not think much of Caliban either. In the course of his last ten lines, he uses the word MONSTER eleven times. Each is accompanied by its own adjective. The list includes such words as weak, shallow, howling, drunken, perfidious, PUPPY-headed, abominable, and scurvy, but above all, MOST POOR CREDULOUS MONSTER. In contrast, his friend Stephano only uses the word directly of Calaban once. The last line of the act reads:

O BRAVE MONSTER! LEAD THE WAY

[III:ii:192]

But we've not met him yet, so let's go back a bit.

After Trinculo had crept under the cloak with Calaban, Stephano came staggering in singing a scurvy tune. He saw what he took to be a two-headed monster with four legs, but he was not afraid of it. He had saved a whole butt of wine and gives some to one of the heads. In fact it turns out to be Calaban's. The head then says

THAT'S A BRAVE GOD AND BEARS CELESTIAL LIQUOR

I WILL KNEEL TO HIM.

[III:ii:121-122]

Stephano has his wine in a bottle which he made of the bark of a tree with his own hand and which he offers to Calaban again saying:

COME KISS THE BOOK.

[III:ii:145]

I believe that we are to take Calaban's reply as both heart rending and contemptible.

I PRITHEE BE MY GOD.

[III:ii:152]

At any rate, this is what brings forth all those MONSTER remarks from Trinculo; Calaban on the other hand makes what I find to be a rather moving speech to his god.

I PRITHEE, LET ME BRING THEE WHERE CRABS GROW;

AND I WITH MY LONG NAILS WILL DIG THEE PIG-NUTS,

SHOW THEE A JAY'S NEST AND INSTRUCT THEE HOW TO

SNARE THE NIMBLE MARMOSET. I'LL BRING THEE  
TO CLUST'RING FILBERTS AND SOMETIMES I'LL GET THEE  
YOUNG SCAMELS FROM THE ROCK. WILT THOU GO WITH ME?

[II:ii:171-176]

But as they leave he goes out singing:

'BAN, 'BAN CA-CALABAN  
HAS A NEW MASTER, GET A NEW MAN  
FREEDOM! HIGH-DAY! HIGH-DAY! FREEDOM!  
FREEDOM! HIGH-DAY! FREEDOM!

[II:ii:188-191]

For Calaban, to be free is to have a new master, a god!

Act three begins by taking up the same subject, freedom and slavery, but this time from the point of view of love. As part of his humanization of love, Prospero has imposed upon Ferdinand Calaban's job of log-man. The action is a kind of see-saw in which Miranda learns to question law and Ferdinand learns to obey it. Ferdinand is willing to accept what he will later call his WOODEN SLAVERY on account of his love for Miranda.

The term WOODEN SLAVERY not only reminds us of the loss, it also must remind us of Ariel's WOODEN SLAVERY and Calaban's slavery to the wooden bottle and hence to books. All these Ferdinand will accept for Miranda.

She, on the other hand, out of compassion, first tries to persuade him to rest a bit although she is fully aware of her father's command. Then she goes as far as to wish that lightning had burnt the logs. Then, in a manner that even reminds us of Antonio's argument, she says:

MY FATHER IS NOW HARD AT STUDY; PRAY  
NOW, REST YOURSELF

Later she tries to persuade Ferdinand to let her carry the loss, and finally she actually breaks her father's hest and reveals her name to Ferdinand.

Prospero, who was secretly looking on said only

HEAVEN RAIN GRACE

UPON THAT WHICH BREEDS BETWEEN 'EM

We must now return to our comedians who are no longer quite so comic. By means of his book, that is to say, his bottle, Stephano has completely succeeded where Prospero had failed. Caliban has become a dutiful subject. He has given up all claim to Miranda, whom he will win for his god by delivering Prospero up to be killed.

Then Ariel who has been present but invisible begins to lure them with tabor and pipe. Shakespeare then does a very strange thing. He chooses this moment to give Caliban some of the most beautiful lines in the play. Let me read them to you.

BE NOT AFRAID. THE ISLE IS FULL OF NOISES,  
SOUNDS AND SWEET AIRS, THAT GIVE DELIGHT AND HURT NOT.  
SOMETIMES A THOUSAND TWANGLING INSTRUMENTS  
WILL HUM ABOUT MINE EARS, AND SOMETIME VOICES  
THAT, IF I THEN HAD WAK'D AFTER LONG SLEEP,  
WILL MAKE ME SLEEP AGAIN; AND THEN, IN DREAMING,  
THE CLOUDS MIGHT OPEN AND SHOW RICHES  
READY TO DROP UPON ME, THAT, WHEN I WAK'D  
I CRIED TO DREAM AGAIN.

[III:ii:143-152]

Shakespeare's world is a crazy multi-colored world. We may have to leave Caliban one day or even beat him, but Shakespeare also wants us to know what we will have lost. But Shakespeare will not let us rest with that. Ariel describes the last scene by the following words:

.. THEN I BEAT MY TABOR;  
AT WHICH, LIKE UNBACKED COLTS, THEY PRICK UP THEIR EARS,  
AND ADVANCE THEIR EYELIDS, LIFTED UP THEIR NOSES  
AS THEY SMELT THE MUSIC.

[IV:i:175-179]

We have been duped, and Shakespeare has sent us napping, so that we might catch ourselves taking for beauty what has become bent over like a hoop. We have not noticed that though Caliban may once have had a certain charm, the son of the old magic is the one of

whom it will be said:

AND AS WITH AGE HIS BODY UGLIER GROWS,  
SO HIS MIND CANKERS.

[IV:i:291-292]

We must now return to the king's party. Old Gonzalo is tired, and Alonso has given up all hope. Then strange figures appear bringing in a banquet. With gentle action they invite everyone to come eat. Then they depart.

All are amazed, Gonzalo too, but in a different way from the others. He wonders at their gentility and their kindness. But to him they are certainly people of the island. Gonzalo is not in need of magic, and so for him there is no magic.

Suddenly the banquet disappears, and in its place stands Ariel dressed as a harpy. In part he says:

YOU ARE THREE MEN OF SIN, WHOM DESTINY,  
THAT HATH TO INSTRUMENT THIS LOWER WORLD  
AND WHAT IS IN'T, THE NEVER-SURFEITED SEA  
HATH CAUS'D TO BELCH UP YOU;

[III:iii:53-56]

and later in the same speech,

BUT REMEMBER--  
FOR THAT'S MY BUSINESS TO YOU -- THAT YOU THREE  
FROM MILAN DID SUPPLANT GOOD PROSPERO;  
EXPOS'D UNTO THE SEA, WHICH HATH REQUIT IT,  
HIM AND HIS INNOCENT CHILD; FOR WHICH FOUL DEED  
THE POWERS DELAYING, NOT FORGETTING, HAVE  
INCENS'D THE SEAS AND SHORES, YEA, ALL THE CREATURES,  
AGAINST YOUR PEACE. THEE OF THY SON, ALONSO,  
THEY HAVE BEREFT; AND DO PRONOUNCE BY ME

LING'RING PERDITION, WORSE THAN ANY DEATH  
CAN BE AT ONCE, SHALL STEP BY STEP ATTEND  
YOU AND YOUR WAYS; WHOSE WRATHS TO GUARD YOU FROM -  
WHICH HERE, IN THIS MOST DESOLATE ISLE, ELSE FALLS  
UPON YOUR HEADS - IS NOTHING BUT HEART'S SORROW  
AND A CLEAR LIFE ENSUING.

[III:iii:67-82]

In each case it is the sea that has revolted and takes its  
revenge.

After the harpy vanishes and the table is gone, Gonzalo remembers nothing, but Alonzo is shaken. He remembers only a singing of the wind and the lone word PROSPERO, but that is enough to cause him to remember his own guilt as if from his own memory and to see its relation to the drowning of his son.

Prospero then goes to visit the young ones. To Ferdinand he says:

...I

HAVE GIVEN YOU HERE A THIRD OF MINE OWN LIFE  
OR THAT FOR WHICH I LIVE;

[IV:i:2-5]

We also remember that when he was speaking to Miranda as they were standing together looking down on the wreck of the ship, Prospero had said to her:

I HAVE DONE NOTHING BUT IN CARE OF THEE,  
OF THEE MY DEAR ONE, THEE MY DAUGHTER,

[I:ii:16-17]

We conclude that his magic was no more than one third of Prospero's life. We further suspect that it was the whole of Sycorax, and there in the difference may lie.

Ariel enters, and with Prospero, presents SOME VANITY OF HIS ART. It is a play with three spirits, Iris, Ceres, and Juno. Iris, who describes and praises the richness of Ceres's bountiness, invites her in the name of Juno the Queen to come to the grass-plot. Ceres answers with equal grace, but wants to know why she has been



summoned. When she hears that it is to celebrate a contract of true love, she has some reservations. She has forsworn the company of Venus and her blind boy because he plotted the means by which DUSKY DIS had got her daughter. But agrees to come when she hears that:

MARS' HOT MINION IS RETURN'D AGAIN;

HER WASPISH-HEADED SON HAS BROKE HIS ARROWS

SWEARS HE WILL SHOOT NO MORE, BUT PLAY WITH SPARROWS

AND BE A BOY RIGHT OUT.

[IV:i:98-101]

The play presents the final end of the struggle between Venus and Ceres which has kept the world apart for over two millena.

Ferdinand and Prospero talk a bit and Ferdinand says:

LET ME LIVE HERE EVER;

[IV:i:122]

Instead of telling Ferdinand directly that his wish cannot be granted, he says:

SWEET NOW, SILENCE!

JUNO AND CERES WHISPER SERIOUSLY,

THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE TO DO; HUSH AND BE MUTE,

OR ELSE OUR SPELL IS MARR'D.

[IV:i: 124-127]

Then Iris tells us what this serious business is.

YOU NYMPHS, CALL'D NAIADS, OF THE

WAND'RING BROOKS,

WITH YOUR SEDG'D CROWNS AND EVER-HARMLESS LOOKS,

LEAVE YOUR CRISP CHANNELS, AND ON THIS GREEN LAND

ANSWER YOUR SUMMONS; JUNO DOES COMMAND.

COME, TEMPEATE NYMPHS, AND HELP TO CELEBRATE

A CONTRACT OF TRUE LOVE; BE NOT TOO LATE.

[IV:128-133]

Again we see, as in the case of the boatswain, the answer lies in making room on the land for the men of the water. If this is not done, all will have been in vain. Again we are assured that the sea-beings can become EVER-HARMLESS.

Nymphs and reapers come and dance as Iris continues to speak. Suddenly Prospero remembers the conspiracy on his life, and he himself mars the spell by crying:

WELL DONE! AVOID. NO MORE!

[VI:1:42]

The children are upset, but Prospero comforts them by saying:

YOU DO LOOK, MY SON, IN A MOV'D SORT,  
AS IF YOU WERE DISMAYE'D. BE CHEEFUL, SIR,  
OUR REVELS NOW ARE ENDED. THESE OUR ACTORS,  
AS I FORETOLD YOU, WERE ALL SPIRITS, AND  
ARE MELTED INTO AIR, INTO THIN AIR;  
AND, LIKE THE BASELESS FABRIC OF THIS VISION,  
THE CLOUD-CAPP'D TOWERS, THE GORGEOUS PALACES,  
THE SOLEMN TEMPLES, THE GREAT GLOBE ITSELF,  
YEA, ALL WHICH IT INHERIT, SHALL DISSOLVE  
AND, LIKE THIS INSUBSTANTIAL PAGEANT FADED,  
LEAVE NOT A RACK BEHIND. WE ARE SUCH STUFF  
AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON, AND OUR LITTLE LIFE  
IS ROUNDED WITH A SLEEP.

[IV:1 146-159]

For the first time, Shakespeare begins to draw the analogy between his own art and the art of Prospero. We shall see the analogy grow through out the next act. We can now understand the implications of Caliban's opening of Act II.

HIS SPIRITS HEAR ME

AND YET I NEEDS MUST CURSE. BUT THEY'LL NOR PINCH,

FRIGHT ME WITH URCHIN-SHOWS, PITCH ME I' TH' MIRE,

NOR LEAD ME, LIKE A FIREBRAND, IN THE DARK

OUT OF MY WAY, UNLESS HE BID 'EM;

[III:2 3-7]

That can be said of Shakespeare, but it cannot be said of Plato. The Philosopher, precisely because he writes for the few, must rely upon interpreters and popularizers to effect the world. But they can pinch and fright and pitch into the mire those whom Plato himself would not have treated so. But perhaps there is a way in which the Philosopher can become a king. Perhaps he must become a poet. The Poet writes for a much larger audience, and in that sense may be said to rival even the Bible. But if the Poet is to avoid the problems raised by Plato in the *Ion*, he must write in such a way as to enlighten and set free rather than to mystify and hold in bondage. But is not magic the only tool the Poet has at his command? Such are the problems that led Shakespeare to reconsider the Republic two thousand years after Sicily.

But how can the Poet be a king? Is he not rather a king of nothings? His palaces and temples are all made of cloth and go back into their boxes at night. When the show is over the actors go home, but where do the characters go? Even the theater and the racks that hold the shoes and the hats that go on the men and the boys that play the kings and the fools, one day they will all be gone. Surely we will be forced to reconsider the problem later.

Soon before meeting Caliban, Prospero turned to Ariel and said:

THAT WAS WELL DONE, MY BIRD.

[VI:i:184]

And again after the encounter he said:

SHORTLY SHALL ALL MY LABOURS END, AND THOU

SHALT HAVE THE AIR AT FREEDOM. FOR A LITTLE

FOLLOW, AND DO ME SERVICE.

[VI:i:265-267]

Ariel's freedom will be mentioned again no less than four times in Act Five, and emerges as the second goal of Prospero's project. It is tempting to think that we have here found the other two thirds of Prospero's life - the political, the sub-political, and the realm above the political. At any rate, at the end of the play, Prospero

says of Calaban,

THIS THING OF DARKNESS I ACKNOWLEDG MINE.

[IV:i:275]

At this point in the play however he can only say:

A DEVIL, A BORN DEVIL, ON WHOSE NATURE  
NURTURE CAN NEVER STICK; ON WHOM MY PAINS,  
HUMANELY TAKEN, ALL, ALL LOST, QUITE LOST;  
AND AS WITH AGE HIS BODY UGLIER GROWS,  
SO HIS MIND CANKERS. I WILL PLAGUE THEM ALL,  
EVEN TO ROARING.

[IV:i 188-193]

The only thing that Prospero can do for Calaban is to show him that his god is beneath him. To distract the would-be murderers from their goal, Ariel lays the court clothing out under a tree. Stephano and Trinculo fight over them, but Calaban who wants to get on with the murder looks on at his god in disgust. Being un-nurtured, he is at least not attracted by saudy clothing.

All of these threads come together in Act Five. We pick it up with Prospero's great soliloquy:

YE ELVES OF HILLS, BROOKS, STANDING LAKES,  
AND GROVES,  
AND YE THAT ON THE SANDS WITH PRINTLESS FOOT  
DO CHASE THE EBBING NEPTUNE, AND DO FLY HIM  
WHEN HE COMES BACK; YOU DEMI-PUPPETS THAT  
BY MOONSHINE DO THE GREEN SOUR RINGLET'S MAKE,  
WHEREOF THE EWE NOT BITES; AND YOU WHOSE PASTIME  
IS TO MAKE MIDNIGHT MUSHROOMS, THAT REJOICE  
TO HEAR THE SOLEMN CURFEW; BY WHOSE AID,  
WEAK MASTERS THOUGH YE BE, I HAVE BEDINN'D

THE NOONTIDE SUN, CALL'D FORTH THE MUTINOUS WINDS,  
 AND 'TWIXT THE GREEN SEA AND THE AZUR'D VAULT  
 SET ROARING WAR; TO THE DREAD RATTLING THUNDER  
 HAVE I GIVEN FIRE, AND RIFTED JOVE'S STOUT OAK  
 WITH HIS OWN BOLT; THE STRONG-BAS'D PROMONTORY  
 HAVE I MADE SHAKE, AND BY THE SPURS PLUCK'D UP  
 THE PINE AND CEDAR; GRAVES AT MY COMMAND  
 HAVE WAK'D THEIR SLEEPERS, OP'D, AND LET 'EM FORTH  
 BY MY SO PORTENT ART.

[V:I 33-50]

Much of it is taken directly from Ovid, though Shakespeare shows himself perfectly willing to change whatever had to be changed. But perhaps we can see some of the reasons why Shakespeare may have picked it. First, it is addressed to those in whom we have been most interested all the time - all who are willing to flirt with Neptune, though they do not know how to live with him. It is also addressed those DEMI-PUPPETS WHO BY MOONSHINE MAKE THE GREEN SOUR RINGLETs, the grass-plot where Ceres and Juno can meet.

With the help these people, whom he calls weak masters because although they are ready to live in a new world, they cannot bring it into being, he has BEDIM'D THE NOONTIDE SUN, AND CALLED FORTH THE MUTINOUS WIND. Calaban once said:

ALL THE INFECTIONS THAT THE SUN SUCKS UP FROM  
 FROM BOGS, FENS, FLATS LIGHT ON PROSPERO.

[III:ii:1]

In this play even the sun, that by whose light we see all things can become infected, and must for a time be bedimed. He has called forth the mutinous wind. Prospero had once turned to Ariel and said:

HAST THOU, WHICH ART BUT AIR, A TOUCH, A FEELING  
 OF THEIR AFFLICTIONS.

[V:i:21-22]

We therefore know that under the reign of the foul witch Sycorax, that air had become a mutinous wind which she confined into a cloven pine. Throughout the play we have seen Prospero call forth that mutinous wind.

The war between the GREEN SEA AND THE AZUR'D VAULT, described so well by Miranda in Act One, was the condition under which we came to recognize both the virtues of the boatswain and the need for reconciling him to Gonzalo.

With regard to the line about JOVE'S STOUT OAK, we have already seen the relation between books and trees, and why the new status of the written word requires a reconsideration of the Platonic position.

GRAVES AT MY COMMAND

HAVE WAK'D THEIR SLEEPERS, OP'D AND LET 'EM FORTH

BY MY MOST POTENT ART.

[IV:i:48-50]

And indeed they have - the graves of Caesar, of Antony, and of the Kings of England from John to Henry. Prospero began with a mixture of reminding and telling Miranda who she had been. The History Plays give us a past. But as he points out in the Prologue to Henry Fifth, He cannot CRAM WITHIN THE WOODEN O THE VERY CASQUE THAT DID AFFRIGHT THE AIR AT AGINCOURT, but we must PIECE OUT HIS IMPERFECTIONS WITH OUR THOUGHT. Like Miranda, we cannot learn from Shakespeare unless we are willing to strain within ourselves for the way.

In the History Plays, Shakespeare presents us with a past which we can become part of as it becomes a part of us. It is a past full of those that we can admire, or laugh at, or fear, or love. Through them we begin to learn the meaning of words like Courage, Honor, Nobility, and their opposites. Our new past not only establishes for us a way of life, it also gives us a language in which to think about our fellow men. Each of them begins to have an un-derived character in himself. If to be a king in the highest sense is to lay down his country's foundations, and establish its ways, then perhaps Shakespeare was the only true king that England has ever known.

I should like to suggest that innate character and hence the possibility of noble is the grass-plot upon which Gonzalo and the Boatswain can meet.

But the speech goes on.

BUT THIS ROUGH MAGIC

I HERE ABJURE, AND, WHEN I HAVE REQUIR'D

SOME HEAVENLY MUSIC, WHICH EVEN NOW I DO,

TO WORK MINE END UPON THEIR SENSES THAT

THIS AIRY CHARM IS FOR, I'LL BREAK MY STAFF,

BURY IT CERTAIN FATHOMS IN THE EARTH,

AND DEEPER THAN DID EVER PLUMMET SOUND  
I'LL DROWN MY BOOK.

[V:I 50-57]

The passage reads something like the one we looked at before about the globe dissolving and leaving not a rack behind. But now every thing looks new, as if even the magic itself had undergone some wonderous sea-change. The dissolving of the globe, the breaking of the staff, and the drowning of the book, they are no longer sad, but turn out to be the true goal of the art. Let us look more closely.

What does it mean for a book to be drowned or for a staff to be broken and buried; for a book to enter into the depths of things but no longer to be visible? I believe that he means that if we see nobility as having its origins in a play by a man named William Shakespeare rather than in the world itself, then his project indeed would have failed. The difference between the old magic and the new magic is simply in knowing when to disappear.

But how much success does Shakespeare believe his project will have? This is the question faced in the Epilogue.

PLEASE YOU, DRAW NEAR.  
NOW MY CHARMS ARE ALL O'ERTHROWN  
AND WHAT STRENGTH I HAVE'S MINE OWN,  
WHICH IS MOST FAINT. NOW, 'TIS TRUE,  
I MUST BE HERE CONFIN'D BY YOU,  
OR SENT TO NAPLES. LET ME NOT,  
SINCE I HAVE ANY DUKEDOM GOT  
AND PARDON'D THE DECEIVER, DWELL  
IN THIS BARE ISLAND BY YOUR SPELL;  
BUT RELEASE ME FROM MY BANDS  
WITH THE HELP OF YOUR GOOD HANDS.  
GENTLE BREATH OF YOURS MY SAILS  
MUST FILL, OR ELSE MY PROJECT FAILS,

WHICH WAS TO PLEASE. NOW I WANT  
SPIRITS TO ENFORCE, ART TO ENCHANT,  
AND MY ENDING IS DESPAIR,  
UNLESS I BE RELIEV'D BY PRAYER,  
WHICH PIERCES SO THAT IT ASSAULTS  
MERCY ITSELF AND FREES ALL FAULTS.  
AS YOU FROM CRIMES WOULD PARDON'D BE,  
LET YOUR INDULGENCE SET ME FREE.

What does he mean by the line:

BUT RELEASE ME FROM MY BANDS  
WITH THE HELP OF YOUR GOOD HANDS  
GENTLE BREATH OF YOURS MY SAILS  
MUST FILL, OR ELSE MY PROJECT FAILS  
WHICH WAS TO PLEASE.

[EP:9-12]

Certainly he means to clap, to yell bravo, and to indulge ourselves in the enjoyment of his play. But he may mean more than that. He may mean that if his play does not effect our lives in what we do with our hands, and what we say with our gentle breath, for the rest of our lives, then the honor and the nobility will simply go back into their boxes at night along with the gorgeous palaces and the solemn temples. But perhaps he does only mean to clap and to yell bravo. Perhaps he does indeed think that we become good by enjoying the good.

Shakespeare wrote the Tempest and then, true to his word, Shakespeare wrote no more.