

UNIT

3

THE TEMPEST

STRUCTURE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This chapter shall cover the following main points:

- Learning objectives
- Introduction of the play
- Plot
- Biography of the author
- Themes, symbols and motifs
- Characters
- Analysis of main characters
- Summary and analysis of scenes
- Quotes
- Summary
- Key words
- Review questions
- Further reading

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- Explain the summary of the play.
- Analyze the main characters in the PLAY.
- Discuss about the supernatural elements in the play.
- Write about the themes in the play.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PLAY

Introduction

Records indicate that *The Tempest* was performed before James I on November 1, 1611, but there may also have been earlier performances. *The Tempest* was again performed during the winter of 1612-13 to celebrate the

marriage of Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of King James I. But this play was not printed until it appeared for the first time in the 1623 Folio.

It is relatively easy to date *The Tempest's* composition, since Shakespeare used material that was not available until late 1610: letters from the new Virginia colony in Jamestown and an account of a 1609 shipwreck off Bermuda. Unlike many of Shakespeare's other plays, *The Tempest*, is not drawn from another, earlier literary work. There is no formal source, except for the ideas that the author might have found in reading accounts of the Bermuda shipwreck or the stories emerging from the new colonies, which had been recently established in the New World.

The Tempest as a Romance

The Tempest is a difficult play to categorize. Although it ends in a wedding and thus might be defined as a comedy, there are many serious undertones that diminish the comedic tone. Instead, most modern anthologies of Shakespeare's works list this play as a romance. This separate division of romances includes what are generally labeled as "the problem plays." Along with *The Tempest*, the romances include *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, plays of Shakespeare's later years. These plays were written between 1604 and 1614, just prior to his retirement, when Shakespeare was composing plays that combined romance with some of the darker aspects of life. The romances are plays with the potential for tragedy but in which these tragic elements are resolved.

With *The Tempest*, Shakespeare turns to fantasy and magic as a way to explore romantic love, sibling hatred, and the love of a father for his child. In addition, *The Tempest* examines many of the topics that Shakespeare had focused on in his earlier plays, topics such as the attempts to overthrow a king (*Macbeth*, *Richard II*, and *Julius Caesar*), nature versus nurture (*The Winter's Tale* and *King Lear*), and innocence (*Twelfth Night*).

Although *The Tempest* provides the first masque within a play, the idea of a play within a play had occurred in earlier works, such as *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. In many ways *The Tempest* serves as a culmination of Shakespeare's earlier work, since in this play, he brings many of these earlier ideas together in one work.

Historical and Cultural Context

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the threat of the Black Death (the plague) was diminishing, but it still continued to be a seasonal problem in London, which was overcrowded and suffered from poor sanitation and too much poverty.

A hundred years earlier, Henry VII had formed alliances with neighboring countries and trade was flourishing in London. But the coming

of trade changed the face of England. Instead of a country composed largely of an agrarian culture, England, and especially London, became an important center of trade. There was more wealth, and the newly rich could now afford to escape the congestion of the city. There was a need for large country estates, and so more and more farm land was enclosed.

Displaced rural families fled to the larger cities, where crowding, unemployment, and disease increased with the increase in population. As city life flourished, there was a resulting nostalgia for the loss of country life. In response to this sentimentality, England's poets began to compose poetry recalling the tranquility of rustic life.

Early in the seventeenth century, the masque that comprises much of the fourth act of *The Tempest* was becoming a regular form of court entertainment. Masques were elaborate spectacles, designed to appeal to the audience's senses and glorify the monarch. Furthermore, their sheer richness suggested the magnificence of the king's court; thus they served a political purpose as well as entertained.

It is important to remember that the masque fulfilled another important function, the desire to recapture the past. As is the case with most masques, Prospero's masque is focused on pastoral motifs, with reapers and nymphs celebrating the fecundity of the land.

The masques, with their pastoral themes, also responded to this yearning for a time now ended. The country life, with its abundance of harvests and peaceful existence, is an idealized world that ignores the realities of an agrarian life, with its many hardships. The harshness of winter and the loss of crops and animals are forgotten in the longing for the past.

Elaborate scenery, music, and costumes were essential elements of earlier masques, but during the Jacobean period, the masque became more ornate and much more expensive to stage. Eventually the cost became so great — and the tax burden on the poor so significant — that the masques became an important contributing cause for the English Revolution, and ultimately, the execution of Charles I.

Structure of *The Tempest*

There is really very little plot in *The Tempest*. There is the love story, and then there is the story of two younger brothers who covet their older brothers' titles and possessions. And finally, there is the story of Caliban's plot to murder Prospero. But none of these plots are given much attention or substance; instead, the play is about the complexities of human nature and about reminding the audience that the division between happiness and tragedy is always fragile and must be carefully maintained.

Although *The Tempest* ends with the promise of a wedding, it could just as easily have ended with tragedy. In this play, there are two murder plots and a betrayal to resolve. In a tragedy, these might have ended with the stage awash in blood, as in *Hamlet*, but in *The Tempest*, Prospero's careful manipulation of all the characters and their plans also controls the direction of the action. Prospero's avoidance of tragedy reveals his character's decency and contradicts some critics' arguments that he is an amoral demigod exploiting the natural inhabitants of this island.

The Tempest is unique in its adherence to the three unities. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle argued that *unity of action* was essential for dramatic structure. This meant that a dramatic work should have a clear beginning, middle, and end. The *unity of time* is derived from Aristotle's argument that all the action should occur within one revolution of the sun — one day. The *unity of place* developed later and is a Renaissance idea, which held that the location of the play should be limited to one place. These unities added verisimilitude to the work and made it easier for the audience to believe the events unfolding on stage.

Shakespeare rarely used the three unities, but he uses them in this play, something he has only done in one other play, *The Comedy of Errors*. All the events occur on the island and within one brief three-hour period. Shakespeare needed the three unities, especially that of time, to counter the incredulity of the magic and to add coherence to the plot.

The Tempest, although it is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, still maintains the integrity of the five-act structure. In fact, most Elizabethan theatre adheres to the five-act structure, which corresponds to divisions in the action. The first act is the Exposition, in which the playwright sets forth the problem and introduces the main characters. In *The Tempest*, the first act establishes the nature of Antonio's betrayal of Prospero, and it explains how Prospero and Miranda came to live on the island. This first act also opens with a violent storm, which establishes the extent of Prospero's power. Most of the play's remaining characters also make an appearance in this act.

The second act is the Complication, in which the entanglement or conflict is developed. In *The Tempest*, the conspiracy to murder Alonso is developed, which establishes that Antonio is still an unsavory character. In addition, the audience learns more about Caliban, and Stefano and Trinculo appear, allowing the groundwork for a second conspiracy to be formed.

The third act is the Climax; and as the name suggests, this is when the action takes a turning point and the crisis occurs. In a romance, this is the point at which the young lovers assert their love, although there may be complications. It is important that the way to love not be too easy, and so

in *The Tempest*, Prospero has forbidden contact between Miranda and Ferdinand, although the audience knows this is only a pretense. In this act, the conspiracy to murder Prospero is developed, although the audience knows that Ariel is listening, and so there is no real danger. And finally, the essential climactic moment occurs in this act when Prospero confronts his enemies at the ghostly banquet.

The fourth act is called the Falling Action, which signals the beginning of the play's resolution. In this act, the romance between Ferdinand and Miranda is acknowledged and celebrated with a masque, and Prospero deals with the conspiracy to murder him by punishing Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo.

The fifth act is called the Catastrophe, wherein the conclusion occurs. As the name suggests, this act brings closure to the play, a resolution to the conflict, and the plans for a wedding. As the play draws to a close, Prospero is victorious over his enemies, Ferdinand is reunited with his father, Antonio and Sebastian are vanquished, and Caliban regrets his plotting.

Literary Devices in *The Tempest*

Students of Shakespeare's plays quickly come to appreciate the literary devices that the playwright employs in constructing his plays. For example, most Shakespearean plays contain *soliloquies*, which offer a way for the playwright to divulge a character's inner thoughts. The soliloquy requires that the character must think that he is alone on stage, as he reveals to the audience what he is really thinking. In *The Tempest*, the soliloquy is not used as often as it would be in a tragedy, because the dramatic moments are not as intense. However, Prospero still uses this device, most notably in Act V, when he tells the audience what he has accomplished with the help of magic and that soon he will no longer have need for such devices.

A soliloquy is different from a *monologue*, in which a character speaks aloud his thoughts, but with other characters present. Shakespeare also frequently employs the *aside*, in which the character addresses the audience, but other characters do not hear these words. There is a suggestion of conspiracy in the aside, which allows the audience to learn details that most of the characters on stage do not know. For example, Miranda uses an aside in Act I, Scene 2, when she confides to the audience her concern for her father. The aside is usually assumed to be truthful.

Shakespeare's Language

Shakespeare's Elizabethan language can sometimes intimidate his audience. Shakespeare wrote most of *The Tempest* in verse, using iambic pentameter. *Iambic pentameter* is a literary term that defines the play's meter and the stresses placed on each syllable. In iambic pentameter, each complete line contains ten syllables, with each pair of syllables containing

both an accented syllable and an unaccented syllable. Many Renaissance poets used iambic pentameter because the alternating stresses create a rhythm that contributes to the beauty of the play's language.

Shakespeare also included prose passages in his plays, with prose lines being spoken by characters of lower social rank. Shakespeare uses this device to reveal the complexity of Caliban. In *The Tempest*, Caliban speaks prose when he is conspiring with Stefano and Trinculo, but when Caliban speaks of the beauty of the island, he speaks in verse.

Shakespeare's Elizabethan language can be difficult to understand at first. Use of a Shakespearean glossary and the *Oxford English Dictionary* are two sources that can help in understanding the language, but the biggest assist comes with practice. Reading and listening to Shakespeare's words becomes easier with practice. Reading aloud also helps in becoming familiar with early modern English. With time, the unfamiliar language and the rhetorical devices that Shakespeare employed in writing his texts cease to be strange, and the language assumes the beauty that is hidden within it.

PLOT

A storm strikes a ship carrying Alonso, Ferdinand, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Stephano, and Trinculo, who are on their way to Italy after coming from the wedding of Alonso's daughter, Claribel, to the prince of Tunis in Africa. The royal party and the other mariners, with the exception of the unflappable Boatswain, begin to fear for their lives. Lightning cracks, and the mariners cry that the ship has been hit. Everyone prepares to sink.

The next scene begins much more quietly. Miranda and Prospero stand on the shore of their island, looking out to sea at the recent shipwreck. Miranda asks her father to do anything he can to help the poor souls in the ship. Prospero assures her that everything is all right and then informs her that it is time she learned more about herself and her past. He reveals to her that he orchestrated the shipwreck and tells her the lengthy story of her past, a story he has often started to tell her before but never finished. The story goes that Prospero was the Duke of Milan until his brother Antonio, conspiring with Alonso, the King of Naples, usurped his position. Kidnapped and left to die on a raft at sea, Prospero and his daughter survive because Gonzalo leaves them supplies and Prospero's books, which are the source of his magic and power. Prospero and his daughter arrived on the island where they remain now and have been for twelve years. Only now, Prospero says, has Fortune at last sent his enemies his way, and he has raised the tempest in order to make things right with them once and for all.

After telling this story, Prospero charms Miranda to sleep and then calls forth his familiar spirit Ariel, his chief magical agent. Prospero and Ariel's discussion reveals that Ariel brought the tempest upon the ship and set fire to the mast. He then made sure that everyone got safely to the island, though they are now separated from each other into small groups. Ariel, who is a captive servant to Prospero, reminds his master that he has promised Ariel freedom a year early if he performs tasks such as these without complaint. Prospero chastises Ariel for protesting and reminds him of the horrible fate from which he was rescued. Before Prospero came to the island, a witch named Sycorax imprisoned Ariel in a tree. Sycorax died, leaving Ariel trapped until Prospero arrived and freed him. After Ariel assures Prospero that he knows his place, Prospero orders Ariel to take the shape of a sea nymph and make himself invisible to all but Prospero.

Miranda awakens from her sleep, and she and Prospero go to visit Caliban, Prospero's servant and the son of the dead Sycorax. Caliban curses Prospero, and Prospero and Miranda berate him for being ungrateful for what they have given and taught him. Prospero sends Caliban to fetch firewood. Ariel, invisible, enters playing music and leading in the awed Ferdinand. Miranda and Ferdinand are immediately smitten with each other. He is the only man Miranda has ever seen, besides Caliban and her father. Prospero is happy to see that his plan for his daughter's future marriage is working, but decides that he must upset things temporarily in order to prevent their relationship from developing too quickly. He accuses Ferdinand of merely pretending to be the Prince of Naples and threatens him with imprisonment. When Ferdinand draws his sword, Prospero charms him and leads him off to prison, ignoring Miranda's cries for mercy. He then sends Ariel on another mysterious mission.

On another part of the island, Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, and other miscellaneous lords give thanks for their safety but worry about the fate of Ferdinand. Alonso says that he wishes he never had married his daughter to the prince of Tunis because if he had not made this journey, his son would still be alive. Gonzalo tries to maintain high spirits by discussing the beauty of the island, but his remarks are undercut by the sarcastic sourness of Antonio and Sebastian. Ariel appears, invisible, and plays music that puts all but Sebastian and Antonio to sleep. These two then begin to discuss the possible advantages of killing their sleeping companions. Antonio persuades Sebastian that the latter will become ruler of Naples if they kill Alonso. Claribel, who would be the next heir if Ferdinand were indeed dead, is too far away to be able to claim her right. Sebastian is convinced, and the two are about to stab the sleeping men when Ariel causes Gonzalo to wake with a shout. Everyone wakes up, and Antonio and Sebastian concoct a ridiculous story about having drawn their

swords to protect the king from lions. Ariel goes back to Prospero while Alonso and his party continue to search for Ferdinand.

Caliban, meanwhile, is hauling wood for Prospero when he sees Trinculo and thinks he is a spirit sent by Prospero to torment him. He lies down and hides under his cloak. A storm is brewing, and Trinculo, curious about but undeterred by Caliban's strange appearance and smell, crawls under the cloak with him. Stephano, drunk and singing, comes along and stumbles upon the bizarre spectacle of Caliban and Trinculo huddled under the cloak. Caliban, hearing the singing, cries out that he will work faster so long as the "spirits" leave him alone. Stephano decides that this monster requires liquor and attempts to get Caliban to drink. Trinculo recognizes his friend Stephano and calls out to him. Soon the three are sitting up together and drinking. Caliban quickly becomes an enthusiastic drinker, and begins to sing.

Prospero puts Ferdinand to work hauling wood. Ferdinand finds his labor pleasant because it is for Miranda's sake. Miranda, thinking that her father is asleep, tells Ferdinand to take a break. The two flirt with one another. Miranda proposes marriage, and Ferdinand accepts. Prospero has been on stage most of the time, unseen, and he is pleased with this development.

Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban are now drunk and raucous and are made all the more so by Ariel, who comes to them invisibly and provokes them to fight with one another by impersonating their voices and taunting them. Caliban grows more and more fervent in his boasts that he knows how to kill Prospero. He even tells Stephano that he can bring him to where Prospero is sleeping. He proposes that they kill Prospero, take his daughter, and set Stephano up as king of the island. Stephano thinks this a good plan, and the three prepare to set off to find Prospero. They are distracted, however, by the sound of music that Ariel plays on his flute and tabor-drum, and they decide to follow this music before executing their plot.

Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian, and Antonio grow weary from traveling and pause to rest. Antonio and Sebastian secretly plot to take advantage of Alonso and Gonzalo's exhaustion, deciding to kill them in the evening. Prospero, probably on the balcony of the stage and invisible to the men, causes a banquet to be set out by strangely shaped spirits. As the men prepare to eat, Ariel appears like a harpy and causes the banquet to vanish. He then accuses the men of supplanting Prospero and says that it was for this sin that Alonso's son, Ferdinand, has been taken. He vanishes, leaving Alonso feeling vexed and guilty.

Prospero now softens toward Ferdinand and welcomes him into his family as the soon-to-be-husband of Miranda. He sternly reminds

Ferdinand, however, that Miranda's "virgin-knot" (IV.i.15) is not to be broken until the wedding has been officially solemnized. Prospero then asks Ariel to call forth some spirits to perform a masque for Ferdinand and Miranda. The spirits assume the shapes of Ceres, Juno, and Iris and perform a short masque celebrating the rites of marriage and the bounty of the earth. A dance of reapers and nymphs follows but is interrupted when Prospero suddenly remembers that he still must stop the plot against his life.

He sends the spirits away and asks Ariel about Trinculo, Stephano, and Caliban. Ariel tells his master of the three men's drunken plans. He also tells how he led the men with his music through prickly grass and briars and finally into a filthy pond near Prospero's cell. Ariel and Prospero then set a trap by hanging beautiful clothing in Prospero's cell. Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban enter looking for Prospero and, finding the beautiful clothing, decide to steal it. They are immediately set upon by a pack of spirits in the shape of dogs and hounds, driven on by Prospero and Ariel.

Prospero uses Ariel to bring Alonso and the others before him. He then sends Ariel to bring the Boatswain and the mariners from where they sleep on the wrecked ship. Prospero confronts Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian with their treachery, but tells them that he forgives them. Alonso tells him of having lost Ferdinand in the tempest and Prospero says that he recently lost his own daughter. Clarifying his meaning, he draws aside a curtain to reveal Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. Alonso and his companions are amazed by the miracle of Ferdinand's survival, and Miranda is stunned by the sight of people unlike any she has seen before. Ferdinand tells his father about his marriage.

Ariel returns with the Boatswain and mariners. The Boatswain tells a story of having been awakened from a sleep that had apparently lasted since the tempest. At Prospero's bidding, Ariel releases Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano, who then enter wearing their stolen clothing. Prospero and Alonso command them to return it and to clean up Prospero's cell. Prospero invites Alonso and the others to stay for the night so that he can tell them the tale of his life in the past twelve years. After this, the group plans to return to Italy. Prospero, restored to his dukedom, will retire to Milan. Prospero gives Ariel one final task—to make sure the seas are calm for the return voyage—before setting him free. Finally, Prospero delivers an epilogue to the audience, asking them to forgive him for his wrongdoing and set him free by applauding.

THEMES AND SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

The Tempest

THEMES

The Illusion of Justice

Prospero is expelled from his own dukedom when his elder brother rises against him and usurps his powers. The rest of the play is about Prospero plotting on taking the powers back from Alonso. This shows that justice is done if Prospero gets back his throne. However, he keeps Caliban and Ariel his slaves and does not release Ariel despite promises. Prospero uses exploitation and manipulates the situations in his favor, which is contrary to his idea of justice. He uses Ariel against his enemies, as well. When he becomes a merciful monarch, he releases slaves, forgives his enemies, and even abandons using magic. It shows that justice means the happy ending that Prospero establishes by the end of the play.

Superiority of Human Beings

The play revolves around the happy ending and shows the superiority of human beings in a bleak way. When Prospero and his daughter Miranda are stranded on the island, they live there for almost twelve years. Yet, they know how to exploit other humans and creatures for their ends. Ariel is at the beck and call of Prospero, while Miranda deals with Caliban, who tries to attack her. Though Ariel remains faithful, Prospero does not trust him. He believes that he should keep him until they have the means to escape or leave the island.

Allurement of Rule

Human nature loves the romance of allurement in the shape of barren land for adventure as well as an island for the allurement of infinite power. Prospero finds it very easy to rule the island when he has magical powers. Prospero has infinite possibilities of ruling the island all by himself without having resisting subjects. He successfully educates Miranda, his daughter, and exploits Ariel. Caliban protests against Prospero, but this allurement of the rule does not happen. Gonzalo also imagines setting up a utopia over the island for his own rule. Caliban's proposals lights imaginations of Stephano to set up his own government, having full power too. Even his wishful thinking of marrying Miranda brings laughter when he states Trinculo as his future viceroy, along with Caliban.

Power and Exploitation

In the first instance, Antonio exploits power given by Prospero. When Prospero delegates him Milan to him, he uses it to expel the same person from the dukedom. Prospero goes into exile to save his life. When Prospero learns about Ariel, a sprite, he starts exerting his own power on him. This unique magical power gives him opportunities to take revenge from his

enemies. This is another show of power and exploitation. With Ariel, Prospero, also becomes the master of Caliban, the son of a witch, having subhuman nature. Prospero continues exploiting both of these spirits with his magical powers until he changes his heart and learns to forgive his enemies.

Magic

Prospero uses magic to keep himself and Miranda safe using magic. He also controls sprites like Ariel and half-witch, Caliban. The incident of tempest and ship tossed during the storm shows is also magic. In the end, he leaves magic as he learns to forgive and sets Ariel free.

Revenge and Forgiveness

At first, Prospero is shown ruling an island, keeping Ariel and Caliban as a slave. He learns magic from books to exact revenge on his enemies. He is determined to seek justice by taking the rightful place of the duke from which he was overthrown by his brother. This revenge takes him too far as he exploits sprite, Ariel, and witch's son, Caliban. Prospero succeeds in exacting revenge, and he finally forgives his brother. Similarly, when Caliban, too, follows the same path for wrongs and maltreatment by swearing allegiance to Stephano as his new master. Although Prospero shows him the way by the end. Almost all the characters either have conscience or remorse.

Power of Language

Most characters in the play use the power of language to seize power, confuse, confound, convince or manipulate. Prospero stands tall among other characters as he uses superior language. He is good at speaking because he reads books. Through his wit and words, he uses Ariel for his ulterior motives. This even becomes prominent in the case of Caliban, who has not only learned the language but also tries to use it against the mentor Prospero. He clearly curses Miranda telling her that he understands; her father as well as the daughter. When Prospero and Caliban battles for power using language, their speech becomes rhythmic. Caliban tells Prospero that all others hate him for his power of language.

Colonization

When Prospero and his daughter Miranda lands on the island after they are exiled, Caliban and Ariel are the real inhabitants. However, Prospero uses his power and knowledge to display his superiority on the original inhabitants. Due to this colonization, Ariel laments losing his freedom, and Caliban curses that he has learned language from Prospero. They consider Prospero and his daughter as settlers who have colonized

their land. Prospero does not see Caliban fit to rule his island. Caliban also conspires to throw him out of his land to end his rule.

The Supernatural

The existence, power, and use of supernatural powers and supernatural entities are seen in the play. The first sign of the power of the supernatural emerges when Prospero is exiled to the island, and he finds magic. He uses magic to enslave a sprite, Ariel, and then the son of a witch, Caliban. Ariel's presence is entirely supernatural. First, when he brings tempest in the sea, and second is when he causes Ferdinand to fall in love with Miranda at the request of Prospero.

Slavery

Slavery is shown in two ways in the play. At first, Ariel is shown working as a slave under Prospero. He is promised freedom once Prospero achieves justice. He bears through the discomfort and helps Prospero to cause havoc on his enemies. Caliban is also a slave doing other chores for him and Miranda.

SYMBOLS

The Tempest

The tempest that begins the play, and which puts all of Prospero's enemies at his disposal, symbolizes the suffering Prospero endured, and which he wants to inflict on others. All of those shipwrecked are put at the mercy of the sea, just as Prospero and his infant daughter were twelve years ago, when some loyal friends helped them out to sea in a ragged little boat (see I.ii.144–151). Prospero must make his enemies suffer as he has suffered so that they will learn from their suffering, as he has from his. The tempest is also a symbol of Prospero's magic, and of the frightening, potentially malevolent side of his power.

The Game of Chess

The object of chess is to capture the king. That, at the simplest level, is the symbolic significance of Prospero revealing Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess in the final scene. Prospero has caught the king—Alonso—and reprimanded him for his treachery. In doing so, Prospero has married Alonso's son to his own daughter without the king's knowledge, a deft political maneuver that assures Alonso's support because Alonso will have no interest in upsetting a dukedom to which his own son is heir. This is the final move in Prospero's plot, which began with the tempest. He has maneuvered the different passengers of Alonso's ship around the island with the skill of a great chess player.

Caught up in their game, Miranda and Ferdinand also symbolize something ominous about Prospero's power. They do not even notice the others staring at them for a few lines. "Sweet lord, you play me false," Miranda says, and Ferdinand assures her that he "would not for the world" do so (V.i.174–176). The theatrical tableau is almost too perfect: Ferdinand and Miranda, suddenly and unexpectedly revealed behind a curtain, playing chess and talking gently of love and faith, seem entirely removed from the world around them. Though he has promised to relinquish his magic, Prospero still seems to see his daughter as a mere pawn in his game.

Prospero's Books

Like the tempest, Prospero's books are a symbol of his power. "Remember / First to possess his books," Caliban says to Stephano and Trinculo, "for without them / He's but a sot" (III.ii.86–88). The books are also, however, a symbol of Prospero's dangerous desire to withdraw entirely from the world. It was his devotion to study that put him at the mercy of his ambitious brother, and it is this same devotion to study that has made him content to raise Miranda in isolation. Yet, Miranda's isolation has made her ignorant of where she came from (see I.ii.33–36), and Prospero's own isolation provides him with little company. In order to return to the world where his knowledge means something more than power, Prospero must let go of his magic.

MOTIFS

Masters and Servants

Nearly every scene in the play either explicitly or implicitly portrays a relationship between a figure that possesses power and a figure that is subject to that power. The play explores the master-servant dynamic most harshly in cases in which the harmony of the relationship is threatened or disrupted, as by the rebellion of a servant or the ineptitude of a master. For instance, in the opening scene, the "servant" (the Boatswain) is dismissive and angry toward his "masters" (the noblemen), whose ineptitude threatens to lead to a shipwreck in the storm. From then on, master-servant relationships like these dominate the play: Prospero and Caliban; Prospero and Ariel; Alonso and his nobles; the nobles and Gonzalo; Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban; and so forth. The play explores the psychological and social dynamics of power relationships from a number of contrasting angles, such as the generally positive relationship between Prospero and Ariel, the generally negative relationship between Prospero and Caliban, and the treachery in Alonso's relationship to his nobles.

Water and Drowning

The play is awash with references to water. The Mariners enter “wet” in Act I, scene i, and Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo enter “all wet,” after being led by Ariel into a swampy lake (IV.i.193). Miranda’s fear for the lives of the sailors in the “wild waters” (I.ii.2) causes her to weep. Alonso, believing his son dead because of his own actions against Prospero, decides in Act III, scene iii to drown himself. His language is echoed by Prospero in Act V, scene i when the magician promises that, once he has reconciled with his enemies, “deeper than did ever plummet sound / I’ll drown my book” (V.i.56–57).

These are only a few of the references to water in the play. Occasionally, the references to water are used to compare characters. For example, the echo of Alonso’s desire to drown himself in Prospero’s promise to drown his book calls attention to the similarity of the sacrifices each man must make. Alonso must be willing to give up his life in order to become truly penitent and to be forgiven for his treachery against Prospero. Similarly, in order to rejoin the world he has been driven from, Prospero must be willing to give up his magic and his power.

Perhaps the most important overall effect of this water motif is to heighten the symbolic importance of the tempest itself. It is as though the water from that storm runs through the language and action of the entire play—just as the tempest itself literally and crucially affects the lives and actions of all the characters.

Mysterious Noises

The isle is indeed, as Caliban says, “full of noises” (III.ii.130). The play begins with a “tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning” (I.i.1, stage direction), and the splitting of the ship is signaled in part by “a confused noise within” (I.i.54, stage direction). Much of the noise of the play is musical, and much of the music is Ariel’s. Ferdinand is led to Miranda by Ariel’s music. Ariel’s music also wakes Gonzalo just as Antonio and Sebastian are about to kill Alonso in Act II, scene i. Moreover, the magical banquet of Act III, scene iii is laid out to the tune of “Solemn and strange music” (III.iii.18, stage direction), and Juno and Ceres sing in the wedding masque (IV.i.106–117).

The noises, sounds, and music of the play are made most significant by Caliban’s speech about the noises of the island at III.ii.130–138. Shakespeare shows Caliban in the thrall of magic, which the theater audience also experiences as the illusion of thunder, rain, invisibility. The action of *The Tempest* is very simple. What gives the play most of its hypnotic, magical atmosphere is the series of dreamlike events it stages, such as the tempest, the magical banquet, and the wedding masque.

Accompanied by music, these present a feast for the eye and the ear and convince us of the magical glory of Prospero's enchanted isle.

CHARACTERS

Prospero

The play's protagonist, and father of Miranda. Twelve years before the events of the play, Prospero was the duke of Milan. His brother, Antonio, in concert with Alonso, king of Naples, usurped him, forcing him to flee in a boat with his daughter. The honest lord Gonzalo aided Prospero in his escape. Prospero has spent his twelve years on the island refining the magic that gives him the power he needs to punish and forgive his enemies.

Miranda

The daughter of Prospero, Miranda was brought to the island at an early age and has never seen any men other than her father and Caliban, though she dimly remembers being cared for by female servants as an infant. Because she has been sealed off from the world for so long, Miranda's perceptions of other people tend to be naïve and non-judgmental. She is compassionate, generous, and loyal to her father.

Ariel

Prospero's spirit helper. Ariel is referred to throughout this SparkNote and in most criticism as "he," but his gender and physical form are ambiguous. Rescued by Prospero from a long imprisonment at the hands of the witch Sycorax, Ariel is Prospero's servant until Prospero decides to release him. He is mischievous and ubiquitous, able to traverse the length of the island in an instant and to change shapes at will. He carries out virtually every task that Prospero needs accomplished in the play.

Caliban

Another of Prospero's servants. Caliban, the son of the now-deceased witch Sycorax, acquainted Prospero with the island when Prospero arrived. Caliban believes that the island rightfully belongs to him and has been stolen by Prospero. His speech and behavior is sometimes coarse and brutal, as in his drunken scenes with Stephano and Trinculo (II.ii, IV.i), and sometimes eloquent and sensitive, as in his rebukes of Prospero in Act I, scene ii, and in his description of the eerie beauty of the island in Act III, scene ii (III.ii.130-138).

Read an in-depth analysis of Caliban.

Ferdinand

Son and heir of Alonso. Ferdinand seems in some ways to be as pure and naïve as Miranda. He falls in love with her upon first sight and happily submits to servitude in order to win her father's approval.

Alonso

King of Naples and father of Ferdinand. Alonso aided Antonio in unseating Prospero as Duke of Milan twelve years before. As he appears in the play, however, he is acutely aware of the consequences of all his actions. He blames his decision to marry his daughter to the Prince of Tunis on the apparent death of his son. In addition, after the magical banquet, he regrets his role in the usurping of Prospero.

Antonio

Prospero's brother. Antonio quickly demonstrates that he is power-hungry and foolish. In Act II, scene i, he persuades Sebastian to kill the sleeping Alonso. He then goes along with Sebastian's absurd story about fending off lions when Gonzalo wakes up and catches Antonio and Sebastian with their swords drawn.

Sebastian

Alonso's brother. Like Antonio, he is both aggressive and cowardly. He is easily persuaded to kill his brother in Act II, scene i, and he initiates the ridiculous story about lions when Gonzalo catches him with his sword drawn.

Gonzalo

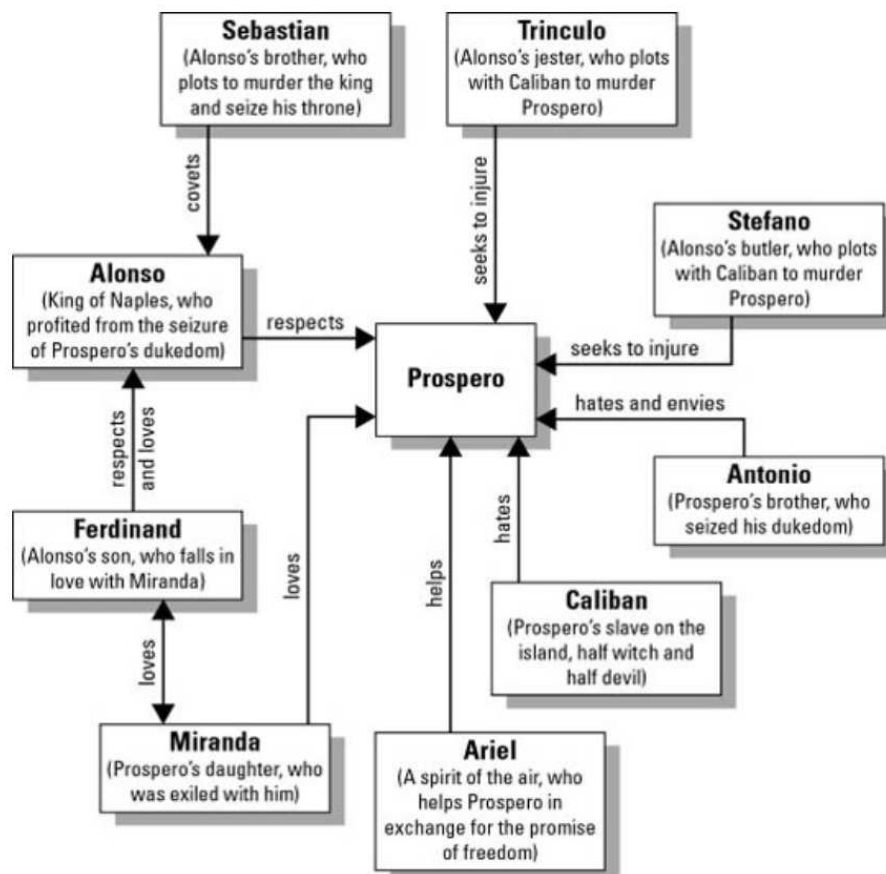
An old, honest lord, Gonzalo helped Prospero and Miranda to escape after Antonio usurped Prospero's title. Gonzalo's speeches provide an important commentary on the events of the play, as he remarks on the beauty of the island when the stranded party first lands, then on the desperation of Alonso after the magic banquet, and on the miracle of the reconciliation in Act V, scene i.

Trinculo & Stephano

Trinculo, a jester, and Stephano, a drunken butler, are two minor members of the shipwrecked party. They provide a comic foil to the other, more powerful pairs of Prospero and Alonso and Antonio and Sebastian. Their drunken boasting and petty greed reflect and deflate the quarrels and power struggles of Prospero and the other noblemen.

Boatswain

Appearing only in the first and last scenes, the Boatswain is vigorously good-natured. He seems competent and almost cheerful in the shipwreck scene, demanding practical help rather than weeping and praying. And he seems surprised but not stunned when he awakens from a long sleep at the end of the play.



ANALYSIS OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Prospero

Prospero is the rightful duke of Milan. Twelve years earlier, he found refuge on this island after his younger brother, Antonio, seized Prospero's title and property. Prospero functions as a god on the island, manipulating everyone within his reach. He is helpless against his enemies until they appear on a ship nearby; but when they are close enough, he can use his magic to create a storm and bring them under his control.

Prospero's magic is the white magic of nature, not the black magic of evil men. This former duke of Milan is a complex personality. Although he refuses to free Ariel and enslaves Caliban, Prospero is really a beneficent ruler, never intending to injure even his enemies. Early in the play, Prospero appears callous and cruel, especially in his treatment of Ariel and Caliban. He is also autocratic in his treatment of Ferdinand, but Prospero realizes that Ferdinand and Miranda will value one another more if there are a few impediments to their courtship.

Prospero's humanity is clearly obvious in his treatment of Antonio, whom he calls traitor but whom he declines to treat as a traitor. Another example of Prospero's goodness is when he stops Alonso from apologizing to Miranda, telling him that there is no need for more amends. By the play's conclusion, it is clear that Prospero is just and fair, in addition to intelligent.

Prospero's dark, earthy slave, frequently referred to as a monster by the other characters, Caliban is the son of a witch-hag and the only real native of the island to appear in the play. He is an extremely complex figure, and he mirrors or parodies several other characters in the play. In his first speech to Prospero, Caliban insists that Prospero stole the island from him. Through this speech, Caliban suggests that his situation is much the same as Prospero's, whose brother usurped his dukedom. On the other hand, Caliban's desire for sovereignty of the island mirrors the lust for power that led Antonio to overthrow Prospero. Caliban's conspiracy with Stephano and Trinculo to murder Prospero mirrors Antonio and Sebastian's plot against Alonso, as well as Antonio and Alonso's original conspiracy against Prospero.

Caliban both mirrors and contrasts with Prospero's other servant, Ariel. While Ariel is "an airy spirit," Caliban is of the earth, his speeches turning to "springs, brine pits" (I.ii.341), "bogs, fens, flats" (II.ii.2), or crabapples and pignuts (II.ii.159–160). While Ariel maintains his dignity and his freedom by serving Prospero willingly, Caliban achieves a different kind of dignity by refusing, if only sporadically, to bow before Prospero's intimidation.

Surprisingly, Caliban also mirrors and contrasts with Ferdinand in certain ways. In Act II, scene ii Caliban enters "with a burden of wood," and Ferdinand enters in Act III, scene i "bearing a log." Both Caliban and Ferdinand profess an interest in untying Miranda's "virgin knot." Ferdinand plans to marry her, while Caliban has attempted to rape her. The glorified, romantic, almost ethereal love of Ferdinand for Miranda starkly contrasts with Caliban's desire to impregnate Miranda and people the island with Calibans.

Finally, and most tragically, Caliban becomes a parody of himself. In his first speech to Prospero, he regretfully reminds the magician of how he showed him all the ins and outs of the island when Prospero first arrived. Only a few scenes later, however, we see Caliban drunk and fawning before a new magical being in his life: Stephano and his bottle of liquor. Soon, Caliban begs to show Stephano the island and even asks to lick his shoe. Caliban repeats the mistakes he claims to curse. In his final act of rebellion, he is once more entirely subdued by Prospero in the most petty way—he is

dunked in a stinking bog and ordered to clean up Prospero's cell in preparation for dinner.

Despite his savage demeanor and grotesque appearance, however, Caliban has a nobler, more sensitive side that the audience is only allowed to glimpse briefly, and which Prospero and Miranda do not acknowledge at all. His beautiful speeches about his island home provide some of the most affecting imagery in the play, reminding the audience that Caliban really did occupy the island before Prospero came, and that he may be right in thinking his enslavement to be monstrously unjust. Caliban's swarthy appearance, his forced servitude, and his native status on the island have led many readers to interpret him as a symbol of the native cultures occupied and suppressed by European colonial societies, which are represented by the power of Prospero. Whether or not one accepts this allegory, Caliban remains one of the most intriguing and ambiguous minor characters in all of Shakespeare, a sensitive monster who allows himself to be transformed into a fool.

Miranda

Characters Miranda

Just under fifteen years old, Miranda is a gentle and compassionate, but also relatively passive, heroine. From her very first lines she displays a meek and emotional nature. "O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer!" she says of the shipwreck (I.ii.5–6), and hearing Prospero's tale of their narrow escape from Milan, she says "I, not rememb'ring how I cried out then, / Will cry it o'er again" (I.ii.133–134). Miranda does not choose her own husband. Instead, while she sleeps, Prospero sends Ariel to fetch Ferdinand, and arranges things so that the two will come to love one another. After Prospero has given the lovers his blessing, he and Ferdinand talk with surprising frankness about her virginity and the pleasures of the marriage bed while she stands quietly by. Prospero tells Ferdinand to be sure not to "break her virgin-knot" before the wedding night (IV.i.15), and Ferdinand replies with no small anticipation that lust shall never take away "the edge of that day's celebration" (IV.i.29). In the play's final scene, Miranda is presented, with Ferdinand, almost as a prop or piece of the scenery as Prospero draws aside a curtain to reveal the pair playing chess.

But while Miranda is passive in many ways, she has at least two moments of surprising forthrightness and strength that complicate the reader's impressions of her as a naïve young girl. The first such moment is in Act I, scene ii, in which she and Prospero converse with Caliban. Prospero alludes to the fact that Caliban once tried to rape Miranda. When Caliban rudely agrees that he intended to violate her, Miranda responds with impressive vehemence, clearly appalled at Caliban's light attitude

toward his attempted rape. She goes on to scold him for being ungrateful for her attempts to educate him: “When thou didst not, savage, / Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes / With words that made them known” (358–361). These lines are so surprising coming from the mouth of Miranda that many editors have amended the text and given it to Prospero. This reattribution seems to give Miranda too little credit. In Act III, scene i comes the second surprising moment—Miranda’s marriage proposal to Ferdinand: “I am your wife, if you will marry me; / If not, I’ll die your maid” (III.i.83–84). Her proposal comes shortly after Miranda has told herself to remember her “father’s precepts” (III.i.58) forbidding conversation with Ferdinand. As the reader can see in her speech to Caliban in Act I, scene ii, Miranda is willing to speak up for herself about her sexuality.

ARIEL

Ariel is a spirit who works in Prospero’s service. Prospero first encountered Ariel soon after landing on the island. He found Ariel trapped in a cloven pine tree and freed the spirit from his prison. In return, Ariel promised to serve Prospero faithfully for a year, after which time Prospero would give Ariel back his freedom. We don’t know how long Ariel has already worked for Prospero when the play begins. Prospero has been on the island for twelve years, so Ariel might have been in his service for many more years than their agreement required. Then again, possibly Prospero freed Ariel from the tree only a year prior to the events of the play. Either way, Prospero’s unwillingness to set Ariel free stems from the fact that Ariel possesses immense power. As the spirit explains in his first lines in the play, not only does he have an impressive range of abilities, but he also commands a host of lesser spirits. Given Ariel’s extraordinary magical abilities, Prospero leans heavily on him to execute his complex revenge plot. Ariel has spent a lot of time around humans and he learned a thing or two about them. In Act V, for example, he appears to take pity on the castaways. He tells Prospero that if he were human his “affections” would be “tender,” convinces Prospero to stop using magic and reconcile with his enemies. Ariel effectively manipulates Prospero by appealing to his humanity, and in doing so he ushers himself closer to freedom.

Ferdinand

Ferdinand is the son of the king of Naples. During the storm, he is separated from the rest of the king’s party. Once ashore, he meets Miranda and falls in love with her. Like Miranda, Ferdinand is honest and kind, a loving son, who will make a loving husband to Miranda. He easily reassures Prospero that he will respect Miranda’s chastity and not violate the trust he has been given. Ferdinand also respects and loves his father. He makes a commitment to marry Miranda while thinking that his father is dead.

When he finds that his father is alive, Ferdinand immediately acknowledges his father's authority and informs his father of his obligation to Miranda. Ferdinand is an honorable match for Miranda, sharing many of the same qualities that his innocent bride displays.

Gonzalo

Gonzalo is among the men cast ashore during the tempest that opens the play. He serves as a counselor to Alonso, the King of Naples, though he once worked in Prospero's service, back when he was Duke of Milan. In fact, Gonzalo helped Prospero and Miranda escape Milan. He filled their shabby boat with food, clothing, and prized books on the magic arts from Prospero's library. The care he took to ensure Prospero and Miranda's survival indicates an innate kindness and compassion that he continues to embody throughout the play. Gonzalo attempts to get other characters to act kindly toward one another. In Act II, for instance, Gonzalo chastises Sebastian for blaming the shipwreck on Alonso. "My lord Sebastian," he says: "The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness / And time to speak it in. You rub the sore / When you should bring the plaster" (II.i.). With these lines, Gonzalo articulates his philosophy that kindness is always more productive harshness.

For all that Gonzalo represents a beacon of kindness, he's also somewhat naïve. For instance, when he tries to cheer Alonso up at the top of Act II, his words only offer cold comfort: "Beseech you, sir, be merry. You have cause, / So have we all, of joy, for our escape / Is much beyond our loss" (II.i.). Alonso, who believes he's just lost his son to the sea, doesn't find Gonzalo's cheerful words very consoling, despite their good intentions. Gonzalo's naïveté also provides a source of amusement for Antonio and Sebastian, who talk circles around him and laugh at his expense. Yet Gonzalo may not be as naïve as these two cynics believe. He knows he's an object of ridicule, but he remains steadfast in the face of their inconstancy. At one point, when Antonio tells him not to get upset on account of their jokes, Gonzalo responds maturely: "No, I warrant you, I will not adventure my discretion so weakly" (II.i.). Ultimately, with the reconciliation that concludes the play, Gonzalo's kindness wins out over his companions' cynicism.

Alonso

Alonso is the king of Naples. When he believes that his son has died, Alonso is grief-stricken. Later, he is overjoyed to find Ferdinand still alive. Alonso bears some responsibility for the events in Prospero's life, because Antonio would not have acted without Alonso's agreement. However, when confronted with his responsibility, Alonso is genuinely repentant for the pain he caused Prospero in the past. Alonso's concern for his son's safety

and his deep grief when he thinks his son is dead help to construct an image of Alonso as a good and loving father who has made mistakes in the past. The quickness with which he accepts Miranda as his daughter, as well as his attempts to apologize to her, also reinforce the image of Alonso as a good and just king.

Antonio

As Prospero's younger brother, Antonio is motivated by envy and by a desire to create trouble. He is now the fraudulent duke of Milan and is still actively engaged in plotting rebellion. His actions against Prospero were not sufficient to satisfy his ambitions, and now, Antonio convinces Sebastian to murder his brother. Although he may be frightened when confronted with the spirits and later Prospero, Antonio reveals no sign of remorse for the actions he has committed.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF SCENES

Summary

The Tempest opens in the midst of a fierce storm. The location is a ship at sea, with a royal party on board. As the sailors fight to save the ship, several of the royal passengers enter, and Alonso, the king, demands to know where the master (captain) is to be found. The boatswain, worried that the passengers will interfere, orders them to go below deck. The king's councilor, Gonzalo, reminds the boatswain that he is speaking to the king, but the boatswain points out that if the king really has so much power, he should use it to quell the storm. If he lacks this power, the royal party should go below decks, as the boatswain orders. The royal party exits, presumably to go below deck to seek shelter.

Within moments, however, Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo have returned topside again, much to the boatswain's annoyance. With Sebastian and Antonio cursing him, the boatswain continues in his efforts to save the ship. Soon, however, the sailors enter with laments that the ship is lost. Fearing that they will all soon die, Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo elect to join the rest of the royal party below decks, where they will pray for their survival.

Analysis

The opening confrontation between Gonzalo and the boatswain reveals one of the most important themes in *The Tempest*: class conflict, the discord between those who seize and hold power and those who are often the unwilling victims of power. When confronted by members of the royal party, the boatswain orders that they return below deck. He is performing his job, and to stop in response to Alonso's request for the master would be foolish. The boatswain cares little for Alonso's rank as king and asks, "What cares

these roarers for the name of king?" (15 — 16). The king has no protection from the storm simply because of his rank, because the storm has little care for a man's social or political position. In response, Gonzalo urges the boatswain to remember that the king and his party are the passengers. The implication is that the boatswain should also remember that his social rank makes him subservient to the royal party, regardless of the circumstances. Gonzalo's words are a clear reminder that even in the midst of a storm, class or status remains an important part of life. However, the boatswain is not intimidated and responds that the royal party should "use your authority," to stop the storm (20-21). As far as the boatswain is concerned, all men are equal in a storm and all equally at risk.

Alonso seems to understand that the captain is the ship's final authority, at least initially. His original request for the master reflects his belief that the master is in charge of the ship, and that, as passengers, he (as king) and his retinue fall under the captain's authority. But alarm at the severity of the storm and frustration at the boatswain's order to go below decks causes the king's party to fall back on the rules of land — the king is the final authority. The boatswain's telling Gonzalo that the king should use his authority to stop the storm is a reminder that the king has no authority under these circumstances. Although he can control men (although not always with absolute certainty), even the king cannot control nature.

The storm and the subsequent rebellion on ship is a metaphor for the rebellion occurring in English society. In the Elizabethan and Jacobean world, English society was defined by its class system, in which individuals were born into specific classes by divine right. In the natural order of things (that is, the order defined by God), therefore, the aristocracy is superior. Although the characters of *The Tempest* are depicted as Italian in origin, their experiences and conflicts are English. Indeed, the passengers, who never forget that they are socially superior to the crew, need to be reminded that, during a storm, the captain of the ship is the final authority.

Furthermore, in the period just prior to the composition of *The Tempest*, English society had been rocked by political, social, and religious conflicts. The Gunpowder Plot (1605), for example, serves as an illustration of the conflict between the Protestant James and his Catholic subjects. The goal of the Roman Catholic conspirators was to murder James and kill the members of both houses of Parliament; fortunately for James, the plot failed. The social unrest in England, however, was exacerbated by James' extravagant spending on court entertainment, especially the lavishly staged masques, and the contrast between the poor and the rich became even more evident. Although James subjects lived in severe poverty, their

burden was increased as they were taxed to pay for the king's masques. In response, unrest grew and would erupt several years later into revolution.

There are many tempests to be explored during the course of *The Tempest*. In addition to class conflict, there are also explorations into colonialism (English explorers had been colonizing the Americas) and a desire to find or create a utopian society. The storm scene that opens *The Tempest* establishes nature as an important element of the play and emphasizes the role of nature in society. Other tempests will be revealed in subsequent scenes, such as the emotional tempests that familial conflict creates (consider the conflict between Antonio and Prospero, and the coming conflict between Sebastian and Alonso); the tempests of discord (consider Caliban's dissatisfaction and desire for revenge) and of forbidden love (consider the romance between Miranda and Ferdinand). Finally, there are the tempests caused by the inherent conflict between generations. So, although *The Tempest* might correctly be called a romantic comedy, the title and the opening scene portend an exploration of conflicts more complex than romantic.

Act I: Scene 2

Summary

Scene 2 opens on the island, with Prospero and Miranda watching the ship as it is tossed by the storm. Miranda knows that her father is creating the storm, and she begs him to end the ship's torment and her own, since she suffers as she watches the ship's inhabitants suffer. Prospero reassures his daughter that his actions have been to protect her. He also tells Miranda that she is ignorant of her heritage; he then explains the story of her birthright and of their lives before they came to be on the island.

Prospero begins his story with the news that he is the duke of Milan and Miranda is a princess. He also relates that he had abdicated day-to-day rule of his kingdom to his brother, Antonio. Prospero admits that books held more attraction than duties, and he willingly allowed his brother the opportunity to grasp control. But Antonio used his position to undermine Prospero and to plot against him. Prospero's trust in his brother proved unwise, when Antonio formed an alliance with the king of Naples to oust Prospero and seize his heritage. Prospero and his daughter were placed in a small, rickety boat and put out to sea. A sympathetic Neapolitan, Gonzalo, provided them with rich garments, linens, and other necessities. Gonzalo also provided Prospero with books from his library. Eventually, Prospero and Miranda arrived on the island, where they have remained since that time.

When he finishes the tale, Prospero uses his magic to put Miranda to sleep. The sprite, Ariel, appears as soon as Miranda is sleeping and reports

on the storm, the ship, and the passengers. Ariel relates everyone, except the crew, was forced to abandon ship. Ariel tells Prospero that the passengers have been separated into smaller groups and are on different parts of the island; that the ship, with its sleeping crew, is safely hidden in the harbor; and that the remainder of the fleet, thinking that the king is drowned, has sailed home. Ariel then asks that Prospero free him, as had been promised. But Prospero has more need of his sprite and declares that Ariel's freedom must be delayed a few more days.

When Ariel leaves, Prospero awakens Miranda and beckons Caliban, the son of the witch, Sycorax. Caliban has been Prospero's slave, but he is insolent and rebellious and is only controlled through the use of magic. Caliban claims the island as his own and says that Prospero has tricked him in the past. Prospero is unmoved, claiming that Caliban is corrupt, having tried to rape Miranda. Prospero threatens and cajoles Caliban's obedience, but Caliban's presence makes Miranda uneasy.

After Caliban leaves, Ariel enters with Ferdinand, who sees Miranda, and the two fall instantly in love. Although this is what Prospero intended to have happen, he does not want it to appear too easy for Ferdinand, and so he accuses Ferdinand of being a spy. When Prospero uses magic to control Ferdinand, Miranda begs him to stop.

Analysis

Prospero tells Miranda their history as a way to inform the audience of this important information. In addition, the audience needs to know what events motivate Prospero's decision to stir up the storm and why the men onboard the ship are his enemies — several share responsibility for Prospero's isolation. By sharing this information, Miranda — and the audience — can conclude that Prospero is justified in seeking retribution. At the very least, Prospero must make Miranda sympathetic to this choice. It is also important that Prospero gain the audience's sympathy because his early treatment of both Ariel and Caliban depict him in a less than sympathetic light.

Ariel and Caliban are both little more than slaves to Prospero's wishes, and, in the initial interactions between Prospero and Ariel and Prospero and Caliban, the audience may think Prospero callous and cruel. He has clearly promised Ariel freedom and then denied it, and he treats Caliban as little more than an animal. The audience needs to understand that cruel circumstance and the machinations of men have turned Prospero into a different man than he might otherwise have been. But Prospero's character is more complex than this scene reveals, and the relationship between these characters more intricate also.

During the course of the story, Prospero repeatedly asks Miranda if she is listening. This questioning may reveal her distraction as she worries about the well-being of the ship's passengers. Miranda is loving toward her father, but at the same time, she does not lose sight of the human lives he is placing at risk. However, his questioning is equally directed toward the audience. Prospero also wants to make sure that the audience is listening to his story, since he will return to the audience in the Epilogue and seek their judgment.

It is clear from Prospero's story that he had been a poor ruler, more interested in his books than in his responsibilities. Prospero, therefore, is not entirely blameless in the events that occurred in Milan. Antonio could not so easily seize power from an involved and attentive ruler. This information mitigates Antonio's actions in seizing his brother's place and is important because this play is not a tragedy. In order for the comedic or romantic ending to succeed, none of the villains can be beyond redemption or reconciliation. It is equally important that Prospero not be beyond redemption. Prospero must be heroic, and this he cannot be if he is perceived as vengeful. Ariel reassures the audience (as well as Prospero) that the ship and its crew have been saved and the passengers are safely on the island. No one has been hurt or lost at sea.

In addition to relating the past, this act also helps define the main characters and anticipate the future. Prospero has been injured, and he intends to serve justice on his captives. He delves in magic and has developed powers beyond those of his enemies. He is also intelligent enough and strong enough to control the spirits on the island; for example, he can control Caliban, who is not without power of his own. Prospero uses the magic of nature, a white, beneficent magic that does no harm. He does not use the black magic of evil. Prospero has learned of this magic, not through the use of witches or evil spells (as did the witches in *Macbeth*), but through his studies. Prospero's white magic has supplanted the black, evil magic of Caliban's mother, Sycorax, because Prospero, himself, is good.

Any initial concern that the audience might have because of Caliban's enslavement evaporates at the news that he attempted to rape Miranda. His subsequent behavior will further prove his character, but he can be redeemed, and his redemption is necessary if the play is to succeed. Furthermore, Caliban, who is initially bad and represents the black magic of his mother, serves as a contrast to the goodness of Ferdinand and Miranda. The young lovers are instantly attracted to one another, each one a mirror image of the other's goodness. It is their goodness that facilitates the reconciliation between Prospero and his enemies. In this reconciliation lies Ariel's freedom and Caliban's redemption.

Act II: Scene 1**Summary**

This scene opens with all the passengers from the ship, except for Ferdinand, gathered on stage. Gonzalo begins with a speech celebrating their survival of the storm and their relative safety on the island, but King Alonso cannot be cheered because he is sure that his missing son, Ferdinand, has drowned. In the meantime, Antonio and Sebastian whisper among themselves and belittle both Alonso's grief and Gonzalo's cheer.

When Antonio and Sebastian join the general conversation around the king, they make no attempt to soothe him. Instead, they tell Alonso that he should not have permitted his daughter to marry the African. Sebastian tells Alonso that, had he not permitted the marriage, the royal party would not have been at sea and, thus, never in the storm. In short, Ferdinand would still be alive if Alonso had acted properly. These are harsh words to the grieving father, and Gonzalo gently chastises Sebastian for his insensitivity.

Ariel now enters, unseen by the group on stage, and puts all of them to sleep, except for Sebastian and Antonio. Left awake, Antonio and Sebastian devise a plot in which Sebastian will seize his brother's crown, much as Antonio had years earlier seized his brother's title and property. Although Sebastian has some concerns of conscience, Antonio dismisses such worries and urges action while everyone is asleep. Sebastian needs little convincing, and with Antonio, the two draw their swords and advance on the sleeping king and his party.

At this moment, Ariel takes action. He awakens Gonzalo in time to prevent the murders. Antonio and Sebastian quickly concoct a story to explain their drawn swords, warning of great noise, as if from bulls or lions. Alonso is easily convinced of his brother's sincerity, and the scene ends with the royal party leaving the stage in search of Ferdinand.

Analysis

This act better defines the personalities of the king's party and more clearly establishes the good characters from the bad. Alonso's first thought is for his son's well-being. In Act I, Prospero's tale of Alonso's complicity in his personal tragedy created an image of an uncaring ruler, one who was willing to overlook Antonio's deceit as long as it was beneficial to the king. But now, the picture is that of a grief-stricken father, beyond comfort. Alonso says little, but Gonzalo's efforts to care for and cheer his king, and the efforts of Adrian and Francisco to comfort their king, reflect well on Alonso's character.

Gonzalo's character is also realized in more depth than in Act I, where his attention was focused on the storm and on the boatswain's insolence.

Beyond the efforts to comfort and reassure his king, Gonzalo relates a vision of a utopian society. In this society, he would be king. There would be no commerce or law and no servant class. No one would grow food, and no one would work. Nature would simply create all that men needed. This vision reveals that Gonzalo, too, has some concerns about authority and privilege. In Gonzalo's vision, there would be no inherited wealth, and land would not be enclosed. Thus, there would be no aristocracy and no country estates. In short, the source of many of the conflicts that exist in English society would be eliminated. Gonzalo wants the authority that Alonso holds, since Gonzalo would be king in this visionary world, but he lacks the impetus to put his dreams into actions, as Antonio and Sebastian would do. In spite of his dreams of personal grandeur, Gonzalo is capable of seeing the positive aspects of their situation. He alone realizes that their survival of the storm is an achievement. He is thankful that they have landed on such a lovely island, and he remains hopeful that Ferdinand has survived. Gonzalo's outlook is positive in many ways, but his utopian dream indicates that there is a complexity to his personality. On the surface he appears happy with his situation, but his dreams of being king reveal that he is not completely satisfied with his lot in life.

In contrast, Antonio and Sebastian's characters are developing as unpleasant and arrogant. Their sarcastic asides counter Gonzalo's good humor. They justly point out the flaws in Gonzalo's utopian dream, but they go beyond pointing out the flaws to compete between themselves to see who can devise the cruelest ridicule of both Alonso and Gonzalo. The two are reminiscent of schoolboys, who giggle and whisper in the back of a classroom, in defiance of their teacher. And like schoolboys, Antonio and Sebastian are capable of cruelty, as when they tell Alonso that had he not married his daughter to the African, they would not be on this journey and Ferdinand would not be drowned. They are more than thoughtless and cruel, since they are also capable of forming a conspiracy to murder their king and Sebastian's brother.

Sebastian and Antonio's action hearkens back to the scene between the boatswain and Alonso in Act I. Alonso is king and represents authority. To plot his murder and to seize the crown is to usurp authority given by God. In England, the idea that a king was anointed by god was a crucial point in maintaining authority over the people. To kill God's representative on earth was a rebellion against the highest authority in the heavens. These two conspirators seek greater freedom and power than they are entitled to, and so they plot a coup. However, they forget that they are stranded on this island, with no kingdom to assume. Their plot to make Sebastian king neglects to ask king of what? They are far from Naples, with little expectation of rescue. Indeed, they never mention rescue, and thus, their

plot to murder the king and seize his title would make Sebastian king of nothing.

The blending of illusion and reality, which was created in Act I with the imaginary storm, is carried forward in this scene, with Gonzalo's observation that their clothing is unharmed by the salt water, appearing as it did before the storm occurred. Gonzalo envisions a utopia, but the impossibility of such a thing happening is best illustrated by Antonio and Sebastian's plot. Even when there is no reason to plot a murder, they do so. It is in their nature, and one reason why Gonzalo's vision lacks reality is simply because it neglects to consider human nature, which fails to bow to illusion.

The party's whole existence on the island is an illusion and nothing is as it appears. Behind the scene and watching and manipulating all the action is Prospero. Although he never appears in this scene, he is very much present, functioning as a god-like entity. Antonio and Sebastian's swords are stayed because a higher authority prevents their actions. Prospero functions as a god would, protecting the innocent and guiding the action. However, Prospero is not a god, and that, perhaps, is the greatest illusion of all.

Act II: Scene 2

Summary

The scene opens with Caliban cursing Prospero. When he hears someone approach, Caliban assumes it is one of Prospero's spirits, coming to torture him once again. Caliban falls to the ground and pulls his cloak over his body, leaving only his feet protruding. But instead of Prospero, the king's jester, Trinculo, enters. Trinculo is looking for shelter from the coming storm when he sees Caliban. With his body partially covered with the cloak, Caliban appears to be half man and half fish, or at least that is Trinculo's initial impression. Trinculo immediately sees the possibilities that this find presents. He can take this "monster" back to civilization and display it, charging admission to spectators who want to view this aberration of nature. Yet after touching Caliban, Trinculo decides that his "find" is not half man-half fish, but an islander. With the coming storm, Trinculo decides to seek shelter under Caliban's cloak.

The king's butler, Stefano, enters, clearly drunk. Stefano stops at the sight of the object on the ground, covered with a cloak and with four legs sticking out. Like Trinculo, Stefano immediately sees the financial possibilities that such a creature offers back home. But all of Stefano's poking has alarmed Caliban, who thinks that he is about to experience a new form of torture, beyond what Prospero has provided.

After pulling the cloak from Caliban's head, Stefano begins to pour wine into Caliban's mouth. Trinculo emerges from under the cloak and, happy to find another survivor of the storm on the island, joins Stefano and Caliban in drinking wine.

Caliban drunkenly watches the happy reunion of Stefano and Trinculo and decides that Stefano is a god, dropped from heaven. Caliban swears devotion to this new "god," and the three leave together, amid Caliban's promises to find Stefano the best food on the island.

Analysis

For the first time, the audience is given a close look at Caliban, who appeared only briefly in Act I. He appears now, cursing Prospero, and so, the depth of Caliban's animosity is quickly evident. He is very frightened by Prospero, whom he both cowers before and hates. Prospero has made Caliban his slave. The island was originally Caliban's, and he lived under no man's control.

Although Caliban blames Prospero for all his troubles, it is clear that nature, itself, has turned against him. In his soliloquy that opens this scene, Caliban admits that the animals on the island make faces at him, bite him, and hiss at him. This he blames on Prospero, reasoning that he controls all nature. Every noise is thought to be a spirit, sent by Prospero to torture him. Caliban represents nature, unfettered by man's domesticity — nature, as it appears untouched by corrupt forces. And yet Caliban is not totally innocent. Prospero has already told the audience of Caliban's attack on Miranda. His behavior recalls the undisciplined nature of wild animals rather than that of natural man. He has not been civilized to the rules of social discourse and, instead, functions as the animals in the forest do — obeying the instincts of nature.

If Caliban represents the most basic elements of nature, then Stefano and Trinculo represent how low civilized men can sink without self-control. Both men are opportunists, ready to exploit the new "man" they discover under a cloak. Both Stefano and Trinculo share the same initial thought — how to make money from a being as unusual in appearance as Caliban. They immediately see the potential in exhibiting him as a freak of nature.

Of course, Shakespeare is commenting on a real phenomena in English society: the exhibition of American Indians, transported back to England from the new colonies in Virginia. Elizabethan entrepreneurs quickly saw a profit in the "natural" people who inhabited the Americas. These Native Americans were brought to England and displayed for profit. Most quickly succumbed to diseases for which they had no natural immunity. But more of these natural people were readily available, and so the trade continued

for some time. Stefano and Trinculo's thinking reveals them to be little more than charlatans, out to make a quick profit.

Stefano and Trinculo readily fall into agreement with Caliban and plot to commit murder because they think there is a profit to be made. But there is another reason, as well. Stefano enjoys his new status as Caliban's god. He delights in the adoration, the reversal of fortune. He has gone from butler to god and sees it as a huge improvement in status. Just as Sebastian and Antonio expect power as a reward for violent behavior, the butler and the court jester would like power with a minimal amount of effort. If murdering Prospero will make them kings of the island, they are ready to do Caliban's bidding. Of course, just as Sebastian and Antonio were being watched, so too are these three drunken conspirators.

This scene involves low comedy, the kind of slapstick that depends more on actions than words. Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo are funny because the audience thinks their efforts ridiculous. Trinculo is dressed as a clown, and Trinculo rode the storm to safety in a wine cask. Although Sebastian and Antonio's plot might represent real danger to Alonso (if Prospero were to permit it), Trinculo and Stefano's plot can only represent impotence. Their plan to murder Prospero and ravish Miranda is doomed from the start, and the audience is always aware of this. In their drunkenness, they are ineffectual and thus can be enjoyed. In Caliban's innocence, he has allied himself with buffoons. He bribes his accomplices with promises of choice foods and is too unsophisticated to realize that these men would also enslave him if given the opportunity. Stefano and Trinculo represent the worst that civilization has to offer — debauchery and absurdity.

Act III: Scene 1

Summary

Ferdinand enters carrying a log, which he claims would be an odious task except that he carries it to serve Miranda. His carrying of the logs is a punishment but one he willingly accepts because thoughts of Miranda make the work seem effortless.

Miranda enters and, when Ferdinand will not rest, offers to take up his chore so that she might force him to rest, but Ferdinand refuses. Although she was instructed not to reveal her name, Miranda impulsively divulges it to Ferdinand. Ferdinand, for his part, has known other beautiful women, but he admits to having never known one as perfect as Miranda. Miranda confesses that she has known no other women, nor any other man, except for her father. Now, she would want no other man except for Ferdinand. At this, Miranda remembers that she has been instructed not to speak to their guest and momentarily falls silent. When Ferdinand avows that he would

gladly serve her, Miranda asks if he loves her. At his affirmative reply, Miranda begins to weep. She tells Ferdinand that she is unworthy of him but will marry him if he wants her. He quickly agrees, and the couple finally touch, taking each other's hands, as they pledge their love.

Prospero has been listening, unseen. He acknowledges Miranda and Ferdinand's natural match as being "Of two most rare affections" (75), but he has other plans that need his immediate attention, and so he turns to his books and other waiting business.

Analysis

This scene leaves no doubt that Prospero is the absolute ruler of his small island. Ferdinand is set to the same task as Caliban, carrying logs. Although he is a prince, Ferdinand must bow to the same authority that Caliban, a slave, observes. Even Miranda is not exempt from Prospero's rule. She is not supposed to speak to Ferdinand. Moreover, she is not permitted to even give him her name, although she does. As part of Prospero's power, he must pretend to oppose the romance between Miranda and Ferdinand; however, the audience knows that Prospero is not opposed to such a union, and in fact, he had hoped that they would love one another. But Prospero must maintain the illusion that he is in absolute control, and so, he imposes rules to guarantee his authority.

In part, Prospero is playing the role that any father must play when his daughter has a suitor. Protecting Miranda's worth is tied to protecting her virginity; thus, he watches the courtship, unseen. Miranda is an obedient daughter, as proved by her dismay when she forgets herself and reveals her name to Ferdinand. But she is also a young woman in love, and when her father is occupied, she immediately looks to release Ferdinand from his labors.

Miranda has no experience with people. She has never seen another woman and does not know that she is beautiful. She has no experience with men, other than her father and Caliban. Because of her isolation, she has developed no artful skills at flirting, and when Ferdinand tells her that he loves her, Miranda weeps. Their love scene is sweet and tender, and without artifice. Prospero watches this exchange, not just to control its outcome, but to protect his only child. Miranda is more vulnerable than most young women, and she needs a strong father to protect her. As such a strong authority figure, Prospero is well suited to protect Miranda from any dangers that this new experience might present. But his watchful observances also recall the godlike control that he has exercised over every other individual being and every action that has occurred on the island.

This loving scene serves as a bridge between two scenes of low comedy. Wedged just before and just after, this romantic interlude reminds

Shakespeare's audience of the contrast between the pure and tender love of Ferdinand and Miranda and the debauchery of Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo. Ferdinand's labors are willingly accepted, because Miranda's mere presence fills all his work with pleasure. This happy labor contrasts to the cursing that opened the previous scene, when Caliban also carried logs. Ferdinand and Miranda's love embodies an ideal love, one in keeping with the expectations of nature. There is gentle humor and genuine heartfelt feelings, and there are none of the artificial trappings of conventional courtship.

Both Ferdinand and Miranda express their feelings honestly and with dignity. Their encounter adds something important that had been missing — authentic nobility of manner. Their nature, or breeding, has led them to behave with deportment, as would be expected of the children of the aristocracy. Both young lovers behave in a responsible manner that was missing from their fathers' lives. Thus, Ferdinand and Miranda fulfill the promise of reconciliation, which is an important element of this play. The plotting and betrayal of the fathers is atoned for by their children. For this to work successfully, Alonso and Prospero's children must be elevated far above their fathers in both decorum and honor.

Act III: Scene 2

Summary

This scene returns to Stefano, Trinculo, and Caliban — all of whom are now very drunk. Caliban has a plan to kill Prospero and elicits help from his new friends. As Caliban explains that he is the rightful owner of the island, Ariel arrives and listens attentively. Caliban explains that they must burn Prospero's books, and after Prospero is dead, Stefano can marry Miranda, which will make her his queen of the island. Trinculo agrees to the plot.

Ariel resolves to tell Prospero of the plot against him. When the drunken men begin singing, Ariel accompanies them on a tabor and pipe. The men hear the music and are afraid, but Caliban reassures them that such sounds are frequently heard on the island. Stefano finds the idea of free music a strong promise of his success on the island, and three drunken conspirators follow the sounds of the music offstage.

Analysis

Caliban represents untamed nature in conflict with civilization. He intuitively understands that Prospero's power comes from his books; thus the books are to become the first victims of his rebellion. Prospero's books represent oppression to Caliban because all that Prospero's civilization and books have to offer is slavery. Although Caliban might be considered an uneducated savage by Elizabethan accounts (and perhaps by modern

accounts, as well), he existed quite happily on the island before Prospero's arrival. Civilization transformed Caliban from freedom to slavery, and he has received little benefit from Prospero's tutelage; even Caliban's use of language is limited to little more than cursing. Because civilization has failed Caliban, he quickly turns to the first possible source of help to appear: Stefano and Trinculo, the lowest forms of civilized behavior.

Caliban's island paradise is not all that different from Gonzalo's ideal natural world. Both Caliban and Gonzalo see their ideal worlds as untouched by the confinements of civilization. In both visions, nature provides whatever is needed, and mankind has little effect on the island's existence. But there is one substantial difference. Where Gonzalo would make himself king, Caliban dreams of living in peaceful isolation, with no king to abuse him. Yet, to secure his freedom from Prospero, Caliban would subordinate himself to Stefano, who would take Prospero's place as ruler.

Caliban is unable to appreciate that the crass butler, whom he has elevated to a god, would be a worse god than Prospero has been. After all, upon first finding Caliban, Stefano pulled Caliban's head back, forced open his mouth, and poured wine down his throat. His exploitation of Caliban, including the plan to exhibit him as a money-making proposition, reflects little concern for Caliban's well-being. Although Prospero's enslavement of Caliban also raises questions of propriety, his stated reasons are to restore order to the island. However, Prospero's sense of order ignores Caliban's needs. Caliban does not need civilization and its artifacts, education, and language to satisfy his needs. So desperate is Caliban to escape Prospero's oppression, that he would effectively trade one god for another: Prospero for Stefano. But Caliban appears unable or unwilling to comprehend this component of his plot. The murder of Prospero is his immediate concern, and he gives little thought to what might follow.

Caliban's plot to murder Prospero offers a parallel to Antonio's plot to murder Alonso. Caliban enlists the assistance of Stefano and Trinculo, just as Antonio enlists the support of Sebastian. Each group of conspirators ignores reason and logic. At the moment, they are all isolated on the island, with little hope or expectation of rescue. Alonso's murder will render no gain for Antonio or Sebastian, since Sebastian would be king of nothing. In a parody of Antonio's plot, Prospero's murder will provide little benefit for Caliban, except to trade one ruler for another and, perhaps, slavery for worse abuse. But both plots illustrate the potential for violence that exists in all levels of society, whether in the aristocracy of Naples or in the natural beauty of an isolated island.

Caliban, himself, is filled with contradictions. On one hand, he is brutal, instructing Stefano to "Bite him [Trinculo] to death" (32). Caliban also describes in detail his plans to murder Prospero by "knock[ing] a nail

into his head" (59). Later, Caliban gives his co-conspirators many choices of ways to murder Prospero, from striking him on the head to disemboweling him to cutting his throat. Any means is acceptable, and, as a reward, Caliban casually promises them Miranda. The brutality of Caliban's plan is countered with the poetry of his descriptions of the island:

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 sometimes voices
That if I then had waked after long sleep
Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

The songs that Caliban describes and the beauty of his dreams reveal a humanity that is lacking in his descriptions of the murder plot. Caliban is more than a wild beast of the island, and his personality is more complex than his brief scenes have thus far disclosed. The plot to murder Prospero is Caliban's rejection of civilization. He finds no alternative to brutality, if it will free him of the oppression of civilization. The natural beauty of the island permeates Caliban's world, but he is able to separate this beauty from the violent acts that he plans. In Caliban's world, there is no incongruity in the existence of both poetry and barbarity.

Act III: Scene 3

Summary

The royal party has searched futilely for Ferdinand and collapses, exhausted upon the beach. Unknown to the royal party, Prospero arrives and watches their actions. Within a few moments, a number of ghostly shapes arrive and with them, a lavish banquet. After gesturing to the party that they should approach and eat, the spirit shapes depart. The royal party is incredulous, but they are also hungry and ready to eat. Yet Ariel appears, disguised as a harpy. He makes the banquet disappear and accuses Antonio, Sebastian, and Alonso of being the instruments of sin. Although the men draw their swords, they are frozen in place by magic and unable to lift up their arms. The king is shaken by what he has seen and heard, and he flees, as do Antonio and Sebastian. Worried that they might do themselves harm, Gonzalo sends Adrian and Francisco to watch them.

Analysis

This scene provides the climax of Prospero's plan and the denouement of Antonio's many plots. Antonio, Sebastian, and Alonso are powerless against Prospero's magic. Their plotting against him — and Antonio and

Sebastian's subsequent plotting against Alonso — is ineffectual in the face of Prospero's greater power. This is the moment of revenge that Prospero has awaited for 12 long years, and he offers no clue what form the punishment will take. However, because he has encouraged Miranda and Ferdinand's love, it is clear that any retribution directed toward Alonso will not be severe, since he would not risk his daughter's happiness in such a way. That is not the case, however, for Sebastian and Antonio, who have every reason for concern.

As he has from the beginning, Ariel carries out Prospero's wishes efficiently and effectively. Ariel, who projects delicacy and eagerness in all that he does, is a spirit of the air. He is eager to be free, and his freedom has been promised in two days, at the conclusion of this mission. Ariel is eager to please Prospero, who freed him from Sycorax, the witch who had imprisoned him in a tree for refusing to do her bidding. Although he wants his freedom in exchange, Ariel approaches his tasks with enthusiasm, quickly doing what is asked and reporting promptly any activities that he observes. Earlier, Ariel had reported the plot to murder Prospero, and now he assists in punishing Prospero's enemies. Ariel's obedience is an important symbol of Prospero's humanity because he ameliorates Prospero's role on the island and humanizes the action that he takes against his old adversaries. Finally, Ariel's willing obedience of Prospero's wishes stands in stark contrast to Caliban's cursing and plotting against the same master.

This scene illustrates the deep disparity between what is real and what is imagined. The disappearing banquet was never real, although it briefly appears so to the hungry captives. Ariel appears briefly as a harpy, a mythical creature with a vulture's wings and claws and the face of a woman, yet it is not Ariel's voice that speaks but a deep voice that seems to come from the heavens. Neither the harpy nor the voice is real. None of this is real, and all of it is carefully staged, a theatrical spectacle designed to frighten and punish Prospero's enemies. Prospero is the puppet-master, carefully pulling the strings and manipulating the action. But he remains unseen and, like the deep voice and the banquet, even this scene is illusionary. His victims cannot know that Prospero waits, unseen in the wings. All that is real is the madness that this confrontation has evoked in the three sinners.

Act IV: Scene 1

Summary

Prospero, acknowledging that he has been harsh, now promises a reward that will rectify the young lovers' momentary suffering. Recognizing Ferdinand and Miranda's love for one another — they have passed the

trials that Prospero has set before them — he offers Miranda to Ferdinand as his wife. Prospero next calls Ariel to help stage a celebration of the betrothal. The celebration includes a masque, presented by the spirits of the island.

Suddenly Prospero remembers the three conspirators who have set out to murder him and calls a halt to the masque. He then summons Ariel, who reports that he led the three men, all of whom are very drunk, through a briar patch and into a filthy pond, where he left them wallowing. Prospero instructs Ariel to leave garish clothing on a tree to tempt the men.

Soon Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo appear, foul smelling and wet. Stefano and Trinculo lament the loss of their bottles but are much cheered when they see the clothing hanging nearby. The two ignore Caliban's pleas to continue on their mission and his warnings that their hesitation will lead Prospero to catch them. At that moment, Prospero and Ariel enter with spirits, disguised as hunters and hounds. The three conspirators flee, with the spirits in pursuit. Prospero, acknowledging the power he now holds over all his enemies, promises Ariel that he shall soon be free.

Analysis

Within a few minutes of the opening of this scene, the betrothal is complete, and Miranda and Ferdinand's future has been determined to Prospero's satisfaction. The virtue and honor of these young people transcends the actions of their fathers and, in this betrothal, lies the redemption of their families. (According to Elizabethan custom, marriages consisted of three separate elements. The first was the betrothal, with it announcement of a promise to wed and the acknowledgement of the family's permission for the union to take place. The second part consisted of the wedding, with a religious ceremony that united the couple and bound them together under church law. The final part to the marriage was the consummation, the physical union of the couple through sexual intercourse.)

For the first time, Prospero can fully reveal his true nature. Finally, there is no need to be punitive or autocratic, and he can simply enjoy his daughter's happiness. For these few moments, the audience can witness what Prospero is like without the weight of revenge or control motivating his actions. Even in his gentleness and goodwill toward Ferdinand, Prospero does not forget that he is still Miranda's father, and as such, he is responsible for her until she is safely wed. Consequently, a significant amount of time is spent warning Ferdinand that he must control his lust until the wedding takes place. Prospero warns the young man that "barren hate, / Sour-eyed disdain, and discord," will be his reward if he cannot control his lust (IV.1, 19-20). All of this is in keeping with the expected

parental role. Miranda is even more innocent than most young women, having had none of the socialization that other young women would experience. Because of her isolation, she is more vulnerable, and her father is aware of her purity of heart. However, he is also a father, facing the imminent loss of his only child, and so his excessive warnings to Ferdinand to control his lust are to be expected.

The betrothal ceremony is sealed with a masque, and, in keeping with the motif of reality and illusion, this masque draws on mythical goddesses and on Greek and Roman mythology. The goddesses are selected for their symbolism and connections to nature and represent the promise of fertility and fecundity, heavenly harmony, and an eternal springtime of love. As the goddess of the rainbow, Iris is the promise of spring rains leading to a bountiful harvest. As a messenger from Juno, she also represents the gods' blessing on this betrothal. When Juno appears, her presence affirms the blessing of the heavens, and since Juno is the goddess of marriage and childbirth, her presence is the promise of a happy union for the couple and a blessing of many children. Finally, Ceres' appearance also promises nature's blessing on this marriage. Together, the goddesses are the promise of celestial harmony, fruitful harvests, and eternal seasons without winter. Venus, with her emphasis on abandon and sexual love is deliberately excluded, since the focus of the masque is on honorable marriage.

The pastoral tradition focuses on a nostalgic image of the peace and simplicity of the life of shepherds and other rural folk in an idealized natural setting. Pastoral poetry is characterized by a state of contentment and a focus on the contemplative life. As is the case with most masques, Prospero's masque focuses on these pastoral motifs, with reapers and nymphs celebrating the fecundity of the land. The land is green, the harvesters sunburned, and the harvest worth celebrating. Love is innocent and romantic and not sexual. The country life, with its abundance of harvests and peaceful existence is an idealized world that ignores the realities of country life with its many hardships. But a wedding masque is not the time to remind the young couple of the possible hardships that they will face. Instead, Prospero focuses on the blessings of a happy marriage and the contentment that Ferdinand and Miranda will bring one another.

At the conclusion of the masque, Prospero addresses Ferdinand and tells him that "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on" (IV.1, 156-57). This is a reminder that the masque, with all its heavenly creatures, is not real. Like the masque, life, too, will come to its inevitable end. Prospero reminds Ferdinand that each man's life is framed by dreams. The evidence of that life, with its earthly possessions, is only temporary. Again, this points to the role of the young couple as redeemers for their father's sins. Alonso, and through him, Antonio and Sebastian, have placed too much

emphasis on worldly possessions and titles. Even Prospero, with his focus on books, has forgotten that they are also only temporary vestiges in this life. This reminder that corporeal riches are only temporary also seems to be directed toward Stefano and Trinculo.

Many scholars and critics would like to see Shakespeare's autobiographical presence in Prospero's words. Those who think that Shakespeare is allowing Prospero to speak his farewell to the stage find "Our revels now are ended" to be a poignant reminder of the temporal plight of all men's lives. Since *The Tempest* comes near the end of Shakespeare's career and life, it is very tempting to read autobiography into Prospero's words. Still, his words may only be an impassioned reminder for each man to value life and accept its temporal limitations.

At the scene's end, Prospero must shrug off the mantle of fatherhood and assume the cloak of ruler and deal with the three conspirators who plot his death: Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo. The punishment that Ariel reports is more nuisance than painful, another reminder that Prospero's retribution includes no serious injuries. Aside from a few scratches, the trip through the briar patch and the putrid pond only injure the men's pride. Even the spirit hunters and dogs that give Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo chase are little more than air, not capable of causing their prey any harm. This mild punishment reflects Prospero's inherent good nature and his willingness to forgive his enemies. He will make them suffer for their plotting, but he will do them no real injury. Although it was not always clear earlier in the play, by this act, Prospero's true nature, his goodness and his humanity, have become clear to the audience.

Act V: Scene 1

Summary

This scene opens with Ariel revealing to Prospero that Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio are remorseful, worried, and desperate. Gonzalo is worried and grief-stricken at his king's pain. Prospero reassures Ariel that he will be compassionate in dealing with his enemies and asks that Ariel bring the group to him. While he is waiting for the king and his party to appear, Prospero soliloquizes about what he has accomplished with magic and, at the soliloquy's end, promises that he will now give up his magic, bury his magic staff, and drown his magic book at sea.

Almost immediately, Ariel enters with the royal party, who appear to be in a trance, and places them within the magic circle that Prospero had earlier drawn. With a few chanted words, the spell is removed. Prospero, clothed in the garments of the duke of Milan — his rightful position — appears before them. In a gesture of reconciliation, Prospero embraces Alonso, who is filled with remorse and immediately gives up Prospero's

dukedom. Gonzalo is also embraced in turn, and then Prospero turns to Sebastian and Antonio. Prospero tells them that he will not charge them as traitors, at this time. Antonio is forgiven and required to renounce his claims on Prospero's dukedom.

While Alonso continues to mourn the loss of his son, Prospero relates that he too has lost his child, his daughter. But he means that he has lost her in marriage and pulls back a curtain to reveal Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. Ferdinand explains to his father that he is betrothed to Miranda and that this event occurred while he thought his father dead. Alonso quickly welcomes Miranda and says he will be a second father to his son's affianced. At the sight of the couple, Gonzalo begins to cry and thanks God for having worked such a miracle.

Ariel enters with the master of the boat and boatswain. Although the ship lay in harbor and in perfect shape, the puzzled men cannot explain how any of this has occurred. Alonso is also mystified, but Prospero tells him not to trouble his mind with such concerns. Next, Ariel leads in Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo, who are still drunk. Prospero explains that these men have robbed him and plotted to murder him. Caliban immediately repents and promises to seek grace. The three conspirators, who have sobered somewhat since confronted with Prospero and the king, are sent to decorate Prospero's cell. Prospero invites his guests to spend the night with him, where he will tell them of his adventures and of his life during these past 12 years. Ariel's last duty to Prospero is to provide calm seas when they sail the next morning.

Analysis

This final scene indicates the extent of Prospero's forgiveness and provides an example of humanity toward one's enemies. Before he confronts his enemies, Prospero tells Ariel that "The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (27-28). That is, it is better to forgive than to hate one's enemies. This is the example that Prospero provides in reuniting everyone in this final scene. When he emerges from his trance, Alonso moves quickly to embrace Prospero, and just as quickly, he renounces his claims to Prospero's dukedom. This is the behavior the audience expects of Ferdinand's father, and it is what Prospero requires to resolve this conflict. Ferdinand is an honorable young man, filled with love and charity, and it is reasonable to expect that he learned these values from his father, even if his father has, on occasion, forgotten them. Alonso is honestly delighted in Ferdinand's engagement and welcomes Miranda with authentic grace. It is to be predicted that he is happy at recovering his son, but he is also clearly pleased to have gained a daughter. These spontaneous actions reveal that Alonso is as humane and honest as Prospero.

It is equally clear that Antonio and Sebastian each lack the humanity of their respective brothers. No apology is forthcoming from Antonio, and Sebastian thinks that Prospero is very likely the devil. Antonio never directly addresses Prospero, not even to justify his previous actions. And although both Prospero and Miranda might have died when cast out on to the sea some 12 years earlier, Antonio has no words for his niece. In spite of the obvious absence of regret from his brother, Prospero is true to his promise and seeks no revenge against Antonio. There is no reason to assume that shame restrains Antonio from speaking, and in all likelihood, he only regrets having been caught. Although Prospero warns his brother that he might still charge him with treason in the future, this warning is unlikely to restrain such a recalcitrant as Antonio.

Prospero's humanity is clearly obvious in his treatment of Antonio, whom he calls traitor but whom he declines to treat as a traitor. Critics and audience might be tempted to label Antonio as an unnatural brother, as would also be true for Sebastian. But their cruelty only indicates that nature provides for both goodness and evil. In the Christian world of the Shakespeare's time, evil is chosen, not destined, and nature provides for all outcomes, those who are virtuous and their counterparts, those who are corrupt. Hence, evil siblings are as natural as good siblings. Although the self-serving behavior of Antonio and Sebastian may be despicable, they are still a part of the natural world.

Caliban is also from the natural world, although as the child of a witch and devil. He is certainly different from the other humans on the island, but in this final scene, he displays more humanity than many of Prospero's "civilized" enemies. Antonio's only remark in this whole scene is to suggest that Caliban provides an opportunity to make money (V.1, 268-69). Antonio and Sebastian echo Stefano and Trinculo's earlier notion of exhibiting Caliban for profit, and in doing so, they reaffirm the impression that even the upper classes can be as lacking in morals as the two examples of the lower class, a butler and a court jester. Caliban, however, has risen above his companions and willingly admits his errors. In admitting his fault, Caliban proves himself more honorable than those who are socially his superior, Antonio and Sebastian.

Caliban is often celebrated as a natural man, one who is unspoiled by civilization. And yet, he easily embraces the worse that civilization has to offer. When exposed to Stefano and Trinculo, Caliban embraces their drunkenness and, in return, entices them to help plan a heinous crime. Many critics justify Caliban's actions by pointing to Prospero's persecution of Caliban. But nowhere in this play does Shakespeare validate this kind of revenge. Prospero may enslave Caliban, but he does not threaten his very existence. Certainly there is no way to justify slavery, and Shakespeare

makes no attempt to do so. In the end, Prospero leaves Caliban to his island and to the natural world that he craves. The conclusion is about redemption, the personal redemption that so many of the participants reach. Caliban's regret during this final scene indicates he, too, has found the way to reconciliation.

Gonzalo is one of the few participants who has no need to ask forgiveness nor any cause to regret his actions. Upon discovering that Ferdinand is alive and that he is betrothed to Miranda, Gonzalo quite properly thanks God, who has "chalked forth the way" (206). Gonzalo also sees the irony in Miranda's offspring inheriting all that was her father's and all that belongs to his enemy. He also observes that there is much that has been restored: Ferdinand to his father, and with him, a wife. But there is more. Prospero's dukedom has been restored, as has the ship and all its missing crew. Yet more important than people or objects, other essential components of civilized society have been restored: authority, harmony, and order.

Even before this reconciliation scene occurs, Prospero has promised to put aside his magic and dispose of his magic book and staff, which are the source of his power. He has used magic to work in concert with nature, not to control or evoke evil. Now that he has his enemies under his control, Prospero permits compassion to replace magic. This putting away of his magic also signifies that Prospero's game is at an end. He has used magic to restore harmony and now needs it no more. The play ends with the promise of Ariel's freedom and the restoration of Prospero to a life filled with all that nature and God intended.

Act V: Epilogue

Summary

Prospero, who is now alone on stage, requests that the audience free him. He states that he has thrown away his magic and pardoned those who have injured him. Now he requires that the audience release him from the island, which has been his prison so that he might return to Naples. The audience's applause will be the signal that he is freed. Prospero indicates that his forgiveness of his former enemies is what all men crave. With the audience's applause, Prospero leaves the stage.

Analysis

The Epilogue is often used to tie up loose ends and clarify any issues that remain unresolved. However, this epilogue does not provide the answers that the audience might expect. For instance, the audience never learns what is to become of Caliban or what will happen to Antonio and Sebastian. Few scholars ponder such questions. Instead, there has been a great deal of speculation on whether Prospero's farewell to magic is

intended to announce Shakespeare's retirement from the stage. When Prospero asks the audience to free him from his imprisonment, is it instead the voice of Shakespeare asking the audience to free him from his craft?

Certainly, there are parallels between Prospero and Shakespeare to consider. Both are manipulators; Prospero manipulates everyone on the island, and Shakespeare manipulates the characters he creates and the plots he devises. Both create entertainment, Prospero the masque and Shakespeare his plays, and both are intent on retiring. It is easy to look at Prospero's words and imagine Shakespeare mouthing them as he retires from the stage. But such parallels do not necessarily reveal how the author was, could be, or wants to be. The words on the page, or now spoken before an audience, do not tell the author's intentions or tone. To attribute Prospero's words to Shakespeare's own life may be a fallacy. After the completion of Prospero's story, Shakespeare did continue to write, composing parts of three more plays. It would be unwise to focus solely on *The Tempest* as somehow representative of Shakespeare's farewell to the stage and thus overlook the many other important strengths of the play.

QUOTES

1. *You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!* (I.ii.366–368)

This speech, delivered by Caliban to Prospero and Miranda, makes clear in a very concise form the vexed relationship between the colonized and the colonizer that lies at the heart of this play. The son of a witch, perhaps half-man and half-monster, his name a near-anagram of “cannibal,” Caliban is an archetypal “savage” figure in a play that is much concerned with colonization and the controlling of wild environments. Caliban and Prospero have different narratives to explain their current relationship. Caliban sees Prospero as purely oppressive while Prospero claims that he has cared for and educated Caliban, or did until Caliban tried to rape Miranda. Prospero's narrative is one in which Caliban remains ungrateful for the help and civilization he has received from the Milanese Duke. Language, for Prospero and Miranda, is a means to knowing oneself, and Caliban has in their view shown nothing but scorn for this precious gift. Self-knowledge for Caliban, however, is not empowering. It is only a constant reminder of how he is different from Miranda and Prospero and how they have changed him from what he was. Caliban's only hope for an identity separate from those who have invaded his home is to use what they have given him against them.

2. *There be some sports are painful, and their labour
Delight in them sets off. Some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone, and most poor matters
Point to rich ends. This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me as odious, but
The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead
And makes my labours pleasures. (III.i.1-7)*

Ferdinand speaks these words to Miranda, as he expresses his willingness to perform the task Prospero has set him to, for her sake. *The Tempest* is very much about compromise and balance. Prospero must spend twelve years on an island in order to regain his dukedom; Alonso must seem to lose his son in order to be forgiven for his treachery; Ariel must serve Prospero in order to be set free; and Ferdinand must suffer Prospero's feigned wrath in order to reap true joy from his love for Miranda. This latter compromise is the subject of this passage from Act III, scene i, and we see the desire for balance expressed in the structure of Ferdinand's speech. This desire is built upon a series of antitheses—related but opposing ideas: “sports . . . painful” is followed by “labour . . . delights”; “baseness” can be undergone “nobly”; “poor matters” lead to “rich ends”; Miranda “quickens” (makes alive) what is “dead” in Ferdinand. Perhaps more than any other character in the play, Ferdinand is resigned to allow fate to take its course, always believing that the good will balance the bad in the end. His waiting for Miranda mirrors Prospero's waiting for reconciliation with his enemies, and it is probably Ferdinand's balanced outlook that makes him such a sympathetic character, even though we actually see or hear very little of him on-stage.

3. *[I weep] at mine unworthiness, that dare not offer
What I desire to give, and much less take
What I shall die to want. But this is trifling,
And all the more it seeks to hide itself
The bigger bulk it shows. Hence, bashful cunning,
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence.
I am your wife, if you will marry me.
If not, I'll die your maid. To be your fellow
You may deny me, but I'll be your servant
Whether you will or no (III.i.77–86)*

Miranda delivers this speech to Ferdinand in Act III, scene i, declaring her undying love for him. Remarkably, she does not

merely *propose* marriage, she practically insists upon it. This is one of two times in the play that Miranda seems to break out of the predictable character she has developed under the influence of her father's magic. The first time is in Act I, scene ii, when she scolds Caliban for his ingratitude to her after all the time she has spent teaching him to speak. In the speech quoted above, as in Act I, scene ii, Miranda seems to come to a point at which she can no longer hold inside what she thinks. It is not that her desires get the better of her; rather, she realizes the necessity of expressing her desires. The naïve girl who can barely hold still long enough to hear her father's long story in Act I, scene ii, and who is charmed asleep and awake as though she were a puppet, is replaced by a stronger, more mature individual at this moment. This speech, in which Miranda declares her sexual independence, using a metaphor that suggests both an erection and pregnancy (the "bigger bulk" trying to hide itself), seems to transform Miranda all at once from a girl into a woman.

At the same time, the last three lines somewhat undercut the power of this speech: Miranda seems, to a certain extent, a slave to her desires. Her pledge to follow Ferdinand, no matter what the cost to herself or what he desires, is echoed in the most degrading way possible by Caliban as he abases himself before the liquor-bearing Stephano. Ultimately, we know that Ferdinand and Miranda are right for one another from the fact that Ferdinand does not abuse the enormous trust Miranda puts in him.

4. *If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak
And peg thee in his knotty entrails till
Thou hast howled away twelve winters. (I.ii)*

In response to Ariel's concern that Prospero will not grant him freedom for his faithful service, Prospero reminds Ariel of how he saved him from the witch Sycorax and then issues this threat. The violence of this threat illustrates both Prospero's bad temper and his domineering nature. Clearly, Prospero does not tolerate disobedience from his inferiors, and he relies on threats of cruelty to keep those under his command in line.

5. *If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar
That beasts shall tremble at thy din. (I.ii)*

Prospero directs these harsh words toward Caliban, who has just resisted his command to fetch sticks for a fire. Prospero once again demonstrates his willingness to use (and perhaps indicates his history of using) magic for cruel purposes. These words also recall something Prospero said earlier in the scene, when he reminded Ariel of the torment

he suffered under Sycorax's rule: "Thy groans / Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts / Of ever angry bears" (I.ii.). Prospero's implication that he would make Caliban suffer just as Sycorax made Ariel suffer suggests that little separates Prospero from that "foul witch" (I.ii.).

6. *If thou dost break her virgin-knot before*

*All sanctimonious ceremonies may
With full and holy rite be ministered,
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
To make this contract grow, but barren hate,
Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
That you shall hate it both. (IV.i.)*

With this long-winded sentence, Prospero informs Ferdinand as to what will happen should his soon-to-be son-in-law attempt to have sex with Miranda before they get married. Unlike with Prospero's other threats, which indicate just how capable of cruelty he is, this threat illustrates his protective nature. When he says that premarital sex will sow "disdain" and "discord" in their marriage and render their relationship "barren," he does not really mean it. Instead, Prospero uses such strong words so that Ferdinand understands how precious his daughter is to him.

7. *I prithee*

*Remember I have done thee worthy service,
Told thee no lies, made thee no mistakings, served
Without or grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise
To bate me a full year. (I.ii.)*

Ariel addresses these words to Prospero, emphasizing his loyalty in the hopes that his master will at last grant him his freedom. This moment reveals that Ariel has worked for Prospero not of his own will, but rather as an indentured servant. The way in which Ariel phrases his request for freedom so carefully and indirectly also sheds light on the degree to which he fears Prospero. Despite being a spirit with great abilities, Ariel is ultimately no match for Prospero's deep learning in the magic arts and must therefore obey his command.

8. *I'll swear upon that bottle to be thy true*

subject, for the liquor is not earthly. (II.ii.)

Caliban utters this oath to Stephano after enjoying his first taste of alcohol. Filled with amazement and wonder at the "celestial liquor" (II.ii.), Caliban calls Stephano a "brave god" (II.ii.) and swears fealty to the

mysterious newcomer. A subtle irony is at play in this moment, particularly given Caliban's violent rejection of Prospero as a figure of power. With regard to Caliban's previous rejection of a man who wields power of celestial proportions, it seems surprising that he would so quickly kneel to another man simply because that man offers a divine beverage.

9. *I prattle*

*Something too wildly, and my father's precepts
I therein do forget. (III.i.)*

Miranda says these lines to Ferdinand immediately after confessing her attraction to him. In this confessional moment, she fears that she has disobeyed her father's wishes, and perhaps that she has even betrayed him by claiming that she "would not wish / Any companion in the world but you [i.e., Ferdinand]" (II.ii.). Once again, Miranda's fear indicates her father's power. However, this moment is also ironic, given that Miranda's affection for Ferdinand has actually fulfilled her father's wishes. Though unbeknownst to her, Prospero is eavesdropping on this exchange and he approves of her disobedience.

10 *Mark his [Antonio's] condition and th' event. Then tell me*

If this might be a brother. (I.ii.)

Prospero says these words to Miranda in his account the story of his exodus from Milan. Prospero draws on the language of kinship to emphasize the gravity of Antonio's betrayal. Although Antonio's plotting with Alonso constitutes treason, the fact that Antonio was his brother made the transgression even more devastating. Antonio's act of treason serves as a model on which Shakespeare builds other examples of treasonous behavior in the play.

11. *Th' occasion speaks thee, and*

*My strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head. (II.i.)*

Antonio utters these words to Sebastian when the other members of their retinue have fallen asleep due to Ariel's charm. Although Antonio appears simply to be reminding Sebastian of his noble heritage, he is in fact implying that Sebastian should expedite his ascendance to the throne by killing his brother in his sleep, thereby becoming the King of Naples. Sebastian initially seems aghast at Antonio's suggestion, but he quickly grows amenable to the idea and joins the treasonous plot.

12. *Yea, yea, my lord. I'll yield him [Prospero] thee asleep*

Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head. (III.ii.)

Caliban speaks these words to Stephano, whom he has convinced to assassinate Prospero and take control of the island. Although Caliban's desire to "knock a nail" into Prospero's head echoes the other plots of treason in the play, it differs in the sense that Prospero and Caliban are not related. Thus, Caliban and Stephano's plot does not constitute a familial betrayal. However, the basic motivation for the murder plot remains the same as the others, since Caliban maintains that Prospero has unjustly laid claim to the island over which he—Caliban—should rule.

13. *Admired Miranda!*

Indeed the top of admiration, worth

What's dearest to th' world! (III.i.)

Ferdinand exclaims these words after Miranda tells him her name, which is also a Latin word that means "admirable" or "wonderful." As someone who has received the education of a noble, Ferdinand would know Latin, so it's not surprising that he comments on the meaning of Miranda's name. Yet his phrase "Admired Miranda" turns out to be more than just a pun, as he goes on to proclaim her supreme virtue in comparison to other women he has known: "But you, O you, / So perfect and so peerless, are created / Of every creature's best!" (III.i.).

14. *I perceive these lords*

At this encounter do so much admire

That they devour their reason and scarce think

Their eyes do offices of truth, their words

Are natural breath. (V.i.)

In these lines, Prospero comments on the sense of wonder that has affected Alonso and his retinue during their time on the island. The basic sense of these lines is that Alonso and company have seen so much to "admire" (i.e., to wonder at) that they have lost the ability to think clearly. This is why they seem unable to believe their eyes when they seem to see Prospero in the flesh in the final act of the play. In this quote, "wonder" appears to have a negative effect, concealing truth (or at least obscuring it) rather than revealing it.

15. *O wonder!*

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world

That has such people in 't! (V.i.)

Miranda declares these words near the end of the play, just after Prospero draws back the curtain to reveal Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess. In this moment Alonso sees that his son is still alive, and Ferdinand

has the same revelation about his father. Uttered in the midst of this highly emotional moment, Miranda's words embody the kind of optimism that characterizes her role in the play. In addition to the fact that her name means "wonder" in Latin, Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand represents optimism about new beginnings and the possibility of a more prosperous future.

SUMMARY

Act I

The play begins on a ship, with a ship-master and a boatswain trying to keep the ship from wrecking in a tempest. Alonso, King of Naples, is on board, as are his brothers Antonio and Sebastian. Alonso comes above deck merely to give the mariners an unnecessary order; the boatswain begs the nobles to keep below deck during the storm, so that the men can do their jobs without distraction. However, Antonio and Sebastian take the opportunity to make rude and sarcastic remarks to the good boatswain, and can do nothing to help. A spell comes over all on board, and the mariners all flee in desperation; the nobles on deck decide that all is lost without the sailors, and go below deck to say goodbye to their king.

Miranda and Prospero are revealed on the island; Miranda laments that a shipful of men must have died in the tempest, but her father reassures her that none were hurt, and that the tempest was of his own doing. Upon Miranda's request, Prospero begins to tell her of his history, and how they came upon the island; Miranda was very young when she left the island, and cannot remember anyone but her father, not even her dead mother. Prospero tells her how his kingdom was usurped by his brother Antonio, while Prospero was distracted by his studies, and how the king of Naples supported Antonio's rule. Antonio then cast Prospero and Miranda out of Milan, and ordered both of them killed; however, Prospero tells his daughter how the good councilor Gonzalo arranged for them not to be killed, which led to their landing on the island.

Prospero declares his intention of reclaiming his dukedom, and that the tempest and his brothers' shipwreck on the island are part of this plan. Ariel makes his first entrance, and declares that Prospero's bidding has been perfectly performed, and none of the party are harmed; the sailors are still upon the ship, while the King and his companions have been scattered about the island. Ariel reminds Prospero of his promise to free Ariel, and Prospero impresses upon him how much more generous a master he believes himself to be than Sycorax.

Caliban enters, stating his claim to the island that comes through his mother Sycorax; Prospero's teachings, for whatever reason, have failed

upon Caliban, and Caliban retains his more primitive nature, for which Prospero and Miranda despise him. Ferdinand stumbles upon Miranda, and they immediately fall in love, due to Ariel's magic; but Prospero decides to make him a servant, and will put him to hard tasks about the island.

Act II

King Alonso has landed on the island, with his brothers Sebastian and Antonio, noblemen Adrian and Francisco, and the councilor Gonzalo. Gonzalo tries to console Alonso upon their good fortune of surviving the shipwreck - but Alonso is grieved - not only because his son Ferdinand is missing and presumed dead, but because he was returning from his daughter's wedding in Africa, and fears he will never see her again because of the distance. Antonio and Sebastian show great skill with mocking wordplay, and use this skill to stifle Gonzalo and Adrian's attempts to speak frankly to the rest of the party. Ariel's magic makes the party fall asleep, with the exception of Antonio and Sebastian.

A strange seriousness, of Ariel's doing, falls upon Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio begins to concoct a plan to get his brother the kingship, which will be much easier if Ferdinand, the current heir, really is dead; and since Alonso's daughter is very far away in Tunis, Sebastian might be able to inherit the crown with only two murders, those of Alonso and Gonzalo. Ariel, however, hears the conspirators' plan, and wakes Gonzalo with a warning of the danger he is in. Ariel intends to let Prospero know that the conspiracy has indeed been formed as he wished, and Prospero in turn will try to keep Gonzalo safe, out of appreciation for his past help in preserving the lives of Prospero and Miranda.

Caliban curses Prospero, as another storm approaches the island; he takes the storm as a sign that Prospero is up to mischief, and hides at the approach of what he fears is one of Prospero's punishing spirits. [Trinculo](#), Alonso's court jester, finds Caliban lying still on the ground and covered with a cloak, and figures him to be a "dead Indian"; but, the storm continues to approach, so he also hides himself, using Caliban's cloak as a shelter, and flattening himself on the ground beside Caliban's prostrate form.

Alonso's drunken butler, [Stephano](#), enters, drunk and singing, and stumbles upon the strange sight of the two men under the cloak; he figures, in his drunken stupor, that Trinculo and Caliban make a four-legged monster. Caliban, in his delirium, thinks that Stephano is one of Prospero's minions, sent to torment him; Stephano thinks a drink of wine will cure Caliban of what ails him, and bit by bit, gets Caliban drunk as well. It takes Stephano a while to recognize his old friend, Trinculo, whom Caliban seems to be ignoring. Because of Stephano's generosity with his "celestial

liquor," Caliban takes him to be some sort of benevolent god; much to Trinculo's disbelief, Caliban actually offers his service to Stephano, forsaking the "tyrant" Prospero. Stephano accepts the offer.

Act III

Ferdinand has been made to take Caliban's place as a servant, despite his royal status; and though he does not like Prospero, he does the work because it will benefit his new love, Miranda. Ferdinand and Miranda express their love for each other, and both express their desire to be married - though they have known each other for less than a day.

Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban are drinking; Trinculo and Sebastian continue to insult Caliban, though Caliban only protests against Trinculo's remarks, and tries to get Stephano to defend him. Caliban begins to tell the other two about the tyranny of his old master, Prospero, and how he wants to be rid of Prospero forever; Ariel enters, causes further discord among the group, and gets Caliban to form a murder plot against Prospero. Caliban promises Stephano that if Prospero is successfully killed, he will allow Stephano to be ruler of the island, and will be his servant. He also promises that Stephano will get Miranda if the plot is successful - Ariel leaves, to tell Prospero of these developments.

Alonso, Adrian, Francisco, Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo are still wandering about the island, and Alonso has finally given up any hope of his son Ferdinand being alive. Antonio and Sebastian decide to make their murderous move later that night, but their conspiracy is interrupted by Prospero sending in a huge banquet via his spirits, with he himself there, but invisible. They are all amazed, but not too taken aback that they will not eat the food; but, as they are about to eat, a vengeful Ariel enters, taking credit for their shipwreck, and makes the banquet vanish. Alonso recognizes Ariel's words as being of Prospero's pen, and the great guilt of Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian begins to take them over, at the thought of Prospero being alive, and so nearby.

Act IV

Prospero stops Ferdinand's punishment, and decides to finally give Miranda to him, since he has proven his love for her through his service. Prospero accepts the union, but issues them a warning; if Ferdinand takes Miranda's virginity before a ceremony can be performed, then their union will be cursed. Ferdinand swears to Prospero that they shall wait until the ceremony to consummate their marriage, and then Prospero calls upon Ariel to perform one of his last acts of magic. A betrothal masque is performed for the party by some of Prospero's magical spirits; Juno, Ceres, and Iris are the goddesses who are represented within the masque, and the play speaks about the bounties of a good marriage, and blesses the happy

couple. This act of magic so captivates Prospero that he forgets Caliban's plot to kill him; for a moment, he almost loses control, but manages to pull himself out of his reverie and take action.

Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo come looking for Prospero, and swipe a few garments of Prospero's on their way. Caliban still wants very much to kill Prospero, and carry out this plot; however, Trinculo and Stephano are very drunk, as usual, and prove completely incapable of anything but petty theft. Prospero catches them - not difficult, since they are making a huge amount of noise--and sends Ariel after them as they flee.

Act V

Prospero finally has all under his control; Ariel has apprehended Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio, and they are all waiting for Prospero's judgment. Finally, Prospero makes up his mind against revenge, and makes a speech that signifies his renunciation of magic; the accused and the other nobles enter the magic circle that Prospero has made, and stand there, enchanted, while he speaks. Prospero charges Alonso with throwing Prospero and his daughter out of Italy, and Antonio and Sebastian with being part of this crime. Prospero announces Ariel's freedom after Ariel sees the party back to Naples, and Ariel sings a song out of joy. Alonso and Prospero are reconciled after Alonso declares his remorse and repents his wrongs to Prospero and Miranda, and Prospero finally wins back his dukedom from Antonio. Prospero, perhaps unwillingly, also says that he forgives Antonio and Sebastian, though he calls them "wicked" and expresses his reservations about letting them off the hook.

After despairing that his son is dead, Alonso finds out that his son Ferdinand is indeed alive, and the two are reunited; then, Ferdinand and Miranda's engagement is announced, and is approved before the whole party by Alonso and Prospero. Gonzalo rejoices that on the voyage, such a good match was made, and that the brothers are reunited, and some of the bad blood between them is now flushed out. Ariel has readied Alonso's boat for their departure, and the boatswain shows up again, telling them about what happened to all of the sailors during the tempest.

Caliban apologizes to Prospero for taking the foolish Stephano as his master, and Prospero, at last, acknowledges Caliban, and takes him as his own. Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban's plot is exposed to the whole group, and is immediately forgiven. Prospero invites everyone to pass one last night in the island at his dwelling, and promises to tell the story of his and Miranda's survival, and of the devices of his magic. The play ends with Prospero addressing the audience, telling them that they hold an even greater power than Prospero the character, and can decide what happens next.

- **abstemious** moderate, especially in eating and drinking; temperate. Prospero is warning Ferdinand once again about resisting lust before the wedding occurs.
- **amain** at or with great speed; here, Miranda's peacocks fly quickly.
- **bark** any boat, but especially a small sailing ship.
- **bass my trespass** Here, meaning that the condemnation (my trespass) was uttered in a deep bass voice. The thunder proclaimed his sin, according to Alonso, like a noise from the heavens.
- **Bermoothes** refer to the Bermudas, a common word to describe tempests and enchantments.
- **betid** happened or befell; here, it means that nothing has happened to the boat's inhabitants.
- **boatswain** the ship's petty officer, in charge of the deck crew, the rigging, anchors, boats, and so on.
- **bombard** a large leather container meant to hold liquor.
- **bourn** a limit; boundary. Here used to mean that no land would be divided among landowners.
- **bring a corollary** here, meaning to bring too many spirits rather than not enough.
- **Br'rlakin** "By your ladykin"; a reference to the Virgin Mary.
- **case** here, prepared.
- **chaps** jaws. Stefano is telling Caliban to open his jaws and drink more.
- **coragio** take courage (Italian).
- **dowle** small feather.
- **dropsy** a disease characterized by the accumulation of fluid in the connective tissues, resulting in swelling.
- **drowning mark** refers to a mole, located on the boatswain's face, the appearance of which was thought to portend a person's manner of death. In this case, the boatswain's mole appears to be the type that predicts a death by hanging.
- **extirpate** to pull up by the roots. The reference here is to Prospero and Miranda's being forced from their home and country.
- **feater** more graceful. Here, Antonio's new rank — and clothes that befit it — looks graceful on him.
- **foil** to keep from being successful; thwart; frustrate.

- **foison** plenty; here, specifically, an abundance of produce.
- **frippery** here, an old clothing shop.
- **furtherer** an accomplice.
- **genius** either of two spirits, one good and one evil, supposed to influence one's destiny.
- **hereditary sloth** the natural inclination of a younger brother to be lazy, according to Sebastian, who sees the lack of a hereditary title as a reason to achieve nothing on his own.
- **hest** [Archaic] a behest; a bidding; an order. Miranda was commanded not to reveal her name.
- **hollowly** here, insincerely.
- **inch-meal** inch by inch. Here, Caliban hopes for Prospero's fall.
- **inveterate** firmly established over a long period.
- **jerkin** a short, closefitting jacket, often sleeveless.
- **kibe** a chapped or ulcerated sore, esp. on the heel. If Antonio's conscience were a sore on his foot, Antonio might put on a slipper.
- **a living drollery** probably a puppet-show with live actors.
- **long spoon** alluding to an old proverb that a man must have a very long spoon to eat with the devil. Stefano thinks that Trinculo is a ghost.
- **maid** here, handmaiden, a woman or girl servant or attendant.
- **mantle** to enclose or envelop.
- **merely** [Obs.] absolutely; altogether; here, it means that they are completely cheated of their lives by drunkards.
- **moon-calf** [Obs.] a monstrosity; a misshapen creature born under the moon's influence.
- **murrain** a disease of cattle.
- **patch** [Archaic] a court jester; any clown or fool
- **Phoebus' steeds** the mythological horses that drew the chariot of the sun. Here, the suggestion is that they are lame from the long day and overriding.
- **pie** a fool.
- **rapier** a slender two-edged sword used chiefly in thrusting.
- **rate** opinion.
- **requite** to make return or repayment to for a benefit, injury, and so on; reward.

- **roarers** noisy and unruly waves; here so called because they care little for royal rank.
- **Scamels** The meaning is uncertain but thought to be either shellfish or rock-inhabiting birds.
- **sickle-men** reference to nymphs disguised as harvesters.
- **Signories** domains or city-states in Northern Italy, subject to the rule of a lord or signior.
- **subtleties** here, the illusions.
- **surety** a person who takes responsibility for another. Miranda will be Ferdinand's guarantee.
- **swabber** the sailor who washes the ship and keeps the decks clean.
- **tawny** brownish-yellow; here used to mean that the sun has turned the ground a parched brown color.
- **teen** injury or harm. Prospero worries about the trouble that he has created for Miranda.
- **tight and yare** sound and ready. The ship is ready to sail.
- **too massy** unable to move. Here, through magic, the men are paralyzed.
- **trident** a three-pronged spear used by a gladiator in ancient Roman gladiatorial combats and by the Greek god of the sea, Neptune.
- **troll the catch** to sing the round lustily or in a full, rolling voice
- **trumpery** something showy but worthless; here, the gaudy clothing designated as bait for the three conspirators.
- **twain** two. Ferdinand refers to himself and his father as but two of the victims of the storm.
- **unbacked** not broken to the saddle: said of a horse.
- **vanity** reference to an illusion or trick that Prospero has created.
- **Wallets** here, meaning wattle, the fleshy, wrinkled, often brightly colored piece of skin that hangs from throat of a turkey.
- **wezand** windpipe.
- **wooden slavery** being compelled to carry wood.
- **yarely** briskly or smartly. Here the boatswain is instructing the sailors to move quickly or the ship will be pushed aground by the storm.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- Who is Miranda?

- Who is Prospero? How does he know that everyone has survived the storm?
- How did Prospero and Miranda come to be on the island?
- Who is Ariel? Why should he be grateful to Prospero, and just do what he's told?
- Who was Sycorax? How does Prospero feel about her? Are there any parallels between Sycorax's story and Prospero's?
- Who is Caliban? What is his attitude towards Prospero's control of the island?
- What event led Prospero to start treating Caliban as his slave?
- Why does Miranda think that Ferdinand might be a "spirit"?
- How does Prospero treat Ferdinand? How is this treatment like and unlike the treatment of Caliban?
- What kind of society would Gonzalo like to found on the desert island? What is the reaction of his companions?
- What do Antonio and Sebastian want to do to Alonso and Gonzalo? Why? What does Antonio mean when he says, "What's past is prologue" (II.i.254)?
- The Harpies are characters from classical mythology who punish a bad king by always destroying his meals with their filth. What role do the Harpies play in III.iii? Why is Gonzalo the only character who doesn't see and hear the speech given by Ariel in the form of a Harpy?
- What is Prospero's major admonition to Ferdinand and Miranda? Why do you think he is so concerned about this?
- What makes Prospero interrupt the masque?
- How does Ariel get the best of the low-life plotters?
- Does Prospero plan to continue to practice magic when his plan is brought to completion (V.i.33-57)?
- Who first asks Prospero for forgiveness? Who might you expect to ask Prospero for forgiveness?
- What does Miranda mean by the phrase, "Brave new world" (V.i.185)?
- What do you think happens on the island once the Italians leave? What kind of community, society, or form of life can you imagine Ariel and Caliban forming either together or alone?

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