

*The Prosperal Solution: A Study of
Shakespeare's Vision of Social
Change in **The Tempest***

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Abstract

This paper discusses **The Tempest** as Shakespeare's last vision of social change and amelioration. Shakespeare, too optimistic about the possibility of societal and individual improvement and redemption, arranges for a group of jaded and tainted characters to be washed up on the shores of an island in the New World, and there to be restored to spiritual health at the hands of a qualified redeemer, Prospero. The mission of Prospero in **The Tempest** is to reunite the characters into an integral whole, and to accompany them to the Old World, where, penitent and enlightened through the healing experience they have undergone, they can establish enlightened relationships and enlightened government.

The reformation of corrupt characters through recreation in an enchanted world is not new in Shakespeare's **The Tempest**. It is a pattern already present in such earlier works as **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **The Merchant of Venice**, **As You Like It**, and **The Winter's Tale**. What sets **The Tempest** apart from earlier plays, however, is the figure of Prospero, who stands at the centre of the play controlling and manipulating all that happens in the play.

Shakespeare endows Prospero with an admirable command of magic, which provides him with power similar to that of the Greek deities. Prospero is also given access to the farther depths of human psyche and mind, an access that enables him to direct his treatment to the very core of his patients' psyches and spirits.

In his presentation of an optimistic vision about the regeneration of the human spirit and the advancement of society, Shakespeare does not advocate the possibility of eliminating evil from the world; he rather advocates the necessity of an agent of change to anesthetize and control the powers of evil.

Shakespeare's vision, however, is not native. He does not forget to direct our attention to Prospero's human limitations and the magical unreality of his enchanted island. The Elizabethan playwright seems to posit that however qualified man alone is incapable of salvation. The grace of God and providential support are necessary for and healer.

William Shakespeare's last play, **The Tempest** (1611)¹, can be viewed as a play about change, change from chaos to order, from corruption to regeneration, from evil to good. The targets for change in the play are the individual and society. In that play, Shakespeare seems to posit that to effect such change there ought to be a qualified agent of change endowed with mystical powers not available to normal men. **The Tempest** centers on the workings of Prospero, a mystical agent of change, and on his healing power for a group of literally and morally shipwrecked characters. He purges some of them of their evil nature, anesthetizes the villainous ambition of others, rewards the good characters and unites a pair of young lovers by directing them toward ideal marriage. He returns his cured visitors to their society, where, penitent and enlightened through the experience they have undergone on Prospero's island, they can establish enlightened relationships and enlightened government.

The Tempest is a peacefull play in which "there's no harm done" (I.ii.13).² Ruby Cohn aptly sums up the themes of the play as follows:

(Shakespeare's) last comedy reflects his tragic themes but strips them of peril: brother plots against brother, as in **King Lear**; usurper conspires against the rightful ruler, as in **Macbeth**; a young prince is tested, as in **Hamlet**; young lovers meet obstacles, as in **Romeo and Juliet**. Any or all of four plots of **The Tempest** might have ended tragically: two conspiracies involving two realms (Naples and Setebos), the love story of Miranda and Ferdinand, the separate servitudes of airy Ariel and earthy Caliban. But magic prevents tragedy. Magician Prospero is practical and metaphysical, match-making and puritanical, stern and forgiving, cruel only to be kind. He imposes the happy ending (1976: 267).

Cohn recognizes the dominant role of the magician Prospero in imposing the happy ending despite the tragic elements inherent in the play.

In **The Tempest** as well as in **Cymbeline** and **The Winter's Tale**, Shakespeare seems to focus not on the life that ends with death, but on the transmutation that can befall the human spirit. Thus he finds in the tragi-comedy of Beaumont and Fletcher which "has no deaths" but "brings many near it" a ready form to employ (Ellis-Fermor, 1964: 268).³

The Tempest is a "pellucid" yet a profoundly rich and subtle play (Rabkin, 1967: 226). D.J. Palmer recognizes the richness of the play and rightly reminds the readers that "no single key fits all the doors" to its meaning (1970:12). The complexity and multi-dimensionality of **The Tempest** are reflected in the diversity of the increasingly mounting literary explications and critical interpretations of it. One of the areas of the greatest disagreement among the critics of **The Tempest** is the perception of Prospero and his role or roles.

Among the prominent modern critics of **The Tempest** is John Dover Wilson.⁴ In 1932, he wrote that Prospero is "a wronged old man," like Lear (247). Yet Prospero,

Wilson argues, is "a happier Lear with his Cordelia to share his banishment" (142). He sees much of Shakespeare himself in Prospero, and identifies Prospero's abjuration of magic toward the end of the play with Shakespeare's farewell to the theatre. Yet Prospero for Wilson "is more than Shakespeare, he is dramatic poetry; just as the island is more than Life, it is Life seen in the mirror of ripe dramatic art" (1932:143).

E.M.W. Tillyard offered another important view of Prospero in **The Tempest**. He contends that Prospero is the agent of his own and his antagonists' regeneration. He emphasizes that Prospero's regeneration has already been achieved before the play starts (1958:53). About a decade later appeared G. Wilson Knight's influential theory of **The Tempest**.⁵ Knight treats the play simply as a distillation of the major themes of Shakespeare's plays (**Tempest**, 1932:247). He likewise considers Prospero as a "composite of many Shakespearian heroes; not in "Character," since there is no one quite like him elsewhere, but rather in his fortunes and the part he plays" (**Crown**, 1947:204).

Frank Kermode, in his illuminating introduction to the Arden edition of **The Tempest** (1958), offers a highly perceptive interpretation of the play. He views Prospero as a magus who, during the course of the play, "exercises the supernatural powers of the holy adept" (1958:xivii). Furthermore, Kermode recognized the multi-dimensionality of Prospero's character; besides a magus, Prospero is a prince, a scholar, and a man.

In his book, **The Shakespearean Imagination** (1964), Norman Holland views Prospero as "a play-version of God or destiny" (1964: 321). Among other things, Holland touches upon an important element in the play, namely the role of drama in effecting change on the individual and societal levels.

Like Holland, Norman Rabkin views Prospero mainly as a theatrical figure (1967:222-223). He notices Prospero's dual function as a stage-manager and a director. Rabkin adds his voice to those who believe that Prospero is an autobiographical Shakespearean creation. Like Kermode, Rabkin emphasizes Prospero's willingness to renounce his mystical Eden and magical power in order to return to Milan and death.

L.S. Champion differs from the previous critics by approaching the play as a comedy of transformation (1970:171-85). Prospero, who "is... omnipotent in his limited world," (1970:176) succeeds in purging and transforming his antagonists into virtuous citizens. Champion also remarks that Prospero "establishes a fundamental comic perspective by providing "information directly to the spectator vital to a controlled perspective or the potentially tragic events" (1970:176). This judgment is similar to Cohn's judgment that the play displays tragic themes stripped of peril.

Finally, whether Prospero is God, Destiny, Shakespeare in Stratford, a composite of the major Shakespearean heroes, tragic hero, or benevolent sage, he is definitely the master of his limited world. His admirable command of magic provides him with an omnipotence similar to that of Greek deities.⁶ Consequently, he transcends his human lim-

itations, commands the natural elements on his island and recruits a group of invulnerable, supernatural spirits that execute his orders to the last detail. Through his magical art, Prospero can eclipse the sun, release tempests, rattle thunders, spark lightnings.

He describes his magical practices as follows:

... I have bedimm'd
 The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
 And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
 Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
 Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
 With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory
 Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
 The pine and cedar: graves at my command
 Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth by my so potent Art.
 (V.i. 41-50)

Prospero, in other words, is capable of performing any miracle known to classical mythology or Christian theology.

Prospero is also given access to the farther depths of human psyche and mind, an access that enables him to direct his treatment to the very core of his patients' psyches and spirits. Besides, Prospero attains some sort of telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition. Furthermore, he is supported by the benevolent universal powers that support a cosmic design which does not allow evil powers to take control in the universe.⁷ These powers helped Prospero and his daughter in their aimless voyage to land safely on the desolate island. Prospero contends that they could come to the island only "by Providence divine" (I. ii. 158-59). The support from these providential forces was manifested by the moral and sympathetic response of the natural elements to the exiles during their voyage. The sea roared and the wind sighed in sympathy with their agony (I.ii. 149-50). Also, Prospero could start his therapeutic mission only when his "auspicious star" reaches its zenith indinting the right time for his encounter with his adversaries. These have been brought to the island by Destiny and the powers that delay but not forget. Prospero is beyond doubt an agent of these benevolent cosmic powers.

Prospero's knowledge, insight, power and the support he gets from cosmic forces qualify him as a mystical reformer and enable him to stand at the centre of the drama controlling and manipulating the characters as well as the action, and consequently to achieve his objectives. Indeed, the protagonist causes the shipwreck of a group of royal passengers some of whom are spiritually broken and morally corrupt. He sets them adrift to be washed up on the shores of his enchanted island in the New World, and there to be restored to spiritual health and moral reformation. Then, he sends them back to the Old World, where they will effect both familial and political harmony. Prospero manages to effect these changes by having his supernatural aides orchestrate soft and harmonious music by which he ministers to the degenerating human soul.⁸ He also has these aides rattle thunders and stir tempests to frighten or punish the seem-

ingly irredeemable villains. Prospero's interaction with his captives, which is largely based on righting past wrongs done to Prospero in "the dark backward and the abysm of time" (I.ii. 50), is an act of initiation: he isolates the initiates from society, cuts them off from social connections and has them undergo a manipulated experience which leads to their enlightenment. The enlightened characters are then sent back to society to forge enlightened and thus healthy relationships. This essay focuses on the role of Prospero as a reformer and manipulator in his encounter with his captives.

But before discussing the encounter between the patients and their healer, one must speak briefly about these characters. Among them are three villains—Antonio, the Duke of Milan and Prospero's "perfidious" (I.ii. 67) and unfaithful brother; Alonzo, the King of Naples; and Sebastian; Alonzo's brother, who had conspired against Prospero and set him and his young daughter, Miranda, adrift condemning them to probable death. The list of dramatis personae also includes "goodly" (I.ii. 418) Ferdinand, Alonzo's son, and the only heir to the throne of Naples; Gonzalo, a "noble Neapolitan" (I.ii. 161), whom Prospero describes as his "true preserver" (V.i. 69) referring to Gonzalo's supplying him and his daughter with ample provisions, clothes and Prospero's books when they were set adrift by the conspirators; Stephano, the king's butler; Trinculo, the King's jester. Among Prospero's subjects are Ariel and Caliban, who belong to two disparate ranks of nature, one supra-the other sub-human. Ariel is an aethereal spirit, Caliban, a semi-monster, a "freckled whelp hag-born-not honour'd with/A human shape" (I.ii. 282-83).

Through the inclusion of this wide variety of characters, human and non-human, **The Tempest** claims a cosmic scope. Prospero's island becomes a microcosm of the whole world, if not the universe. His captives and subjects belong to the different ranks of the Chain of Beings: angels (Ariel), human beings, beasts (Caliban) and things (the elements). Controlling all these, Prospero stands in his universe like a god. Because his captives are capable of various degrees of salvation, Prospero has them undergo different experiences depending on their spiritual and moral health. Thus, he rewards the good ones and has them change from good to better; unites the young lovers and directs them toward ideal love; and has the tainted villains undergo a psychological experience of fear, despair, remorse and penitence.⁹ which is meant to ameliorate their villainous natures.

Prospero's therapeutic experiment takes place on an isolated island which he turns into an enchanted peaceful Eden. The island itself is not sacred, it is only sanctified by Prospero's divine-like presence. Prior to his arrival onto it, this same island was the playground for the harmful necromancy of the sorceress, Sycorax, Caliban's mother. Sycorax's practices had turned it into a barren desert, a hell marked by torture, agony and pain. By contrast, Prospero's art turns it from a barren desert into a rustic utopia in which music is the means of purging evil souls, a peaceable kingdom in which evil cannot function.

The enchanted atmosphere of Prospero's utopia stimulates varied responses by the involved captives, which reflect their moral and spiritual conditions. Gonzalo is

Stimulated to dream of a prelapsarian paradise where everything is "advantageous to life" (II.i. 48). For Ferdinand, the island is the dwelling of sweet spirits that orchestrate celestial music which is "no mortal business, nor no sound/That the earth owes" (I.ii. 409-10). The Machiavellian princes, Alonzo, Antonio and Sebastian, perceive the island as a hellish place of agony and torture.¹⁰ Their inability to perceive the beauty and peace of Prospero's world, as their contemptuous reaction to Gonzalo's dream of the Golden Age, indicates their spiritual depravity and moral corruption (Harbage, 1963:469-70). Likewise, Caliban, who is degenerate in nature views the island as a prison and Prospero as "a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island" (III.ii. 40-2).

Though Prospero is in complete control of everything in his new, rustic world, there is no indication that he accepts it as a substitute for the civilized world of Milan. His stay on the island can be viewed as a period of waiting to go back to Milan and to his people. Prospero's earlier choice to seclude himself in quest of knowledge was a mistake which enabled the malevolent powers to gain full control over the people of Milan and led to the exile of the innocent Miranda. Since then Prospero has devoted himself to atoning for his error. Previously, knowledge and wisdom were his ends: now they have become means to another end, namely to return to his society, and to lay the foundation for a lasting future stability in Milan and Naples. On the island Prospero regards himself as "the once and future king" of Milan, to borrow a phrase from Malory.¹¹ He prefers to join his people and play an active social and political role rather than remain in solitude in his utopia. Yet before his return, Prospero, an agent of change, has to redeem his degenerate subjects and restore order to his society. As far as Miranda is concerned, she will be introduced to a civilized world. Once the heiress of Milan, she will return home as the queen of Milan and Naples. On the island Prospero has prepared her for her future role: as "schoolmaster," he has "made thee more profit/Than other princess' can" (I.ii. 172-73).

Clearly, the deep motivation behind Prospero's healing mission is a sense of guilt toward his daughter and his people. He indirectly sinned against those by his previous choice to retire to his library out of ambition to acquire knowledge and wisdom. He complains to Miranda:

The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies.

(I.ii. 75-7)

Prospero's self-imposed seclusion in quest for secret knowledge rendered him liable and enabled his brother Antonio to usurp power. Thus Prospero was a negligent ruler whose neglect of his governmental responsibilities encouraged an explosive political situation. Prospero must, then, bear some responsibility for Antonio's wild ambition.

Prospero's guilt feelings toward his daughter and society motivate him to use his

art with ultimate capacity not only to restore order to society and introduce his daughter to the civilized world, but also to improve the previous situation. He manages to unite Milan and Naples, which were traditional enemies, in a solid political coalition by betrothing his daughter to Ferdinand, the heir of Naples. The future marriage of the young generation is meant to heal the wounds of the past enmity of the old generation. Prospero also reconciles himself with his past enemy, Alonzo, without whose help Antonio would not have been able to conspire against Prospero. In the light of these new realities, it will be nearly impossible for Antonio and Sebastian to usurp power or even conspire against the rightful future rulers. Prospero fails to redeem Antonio and Sebastian, yet he fully succeeds in curbing their chances for creating any future disorder.

Prospero's project is thus a massive one that includes all the captives, good or evil. Through the power of his magic and the guidance of his "auspicious star," Prospero has Ariel, his aetherial and obedient server, shipwreck and separate his captives by releasing an unexpected, but miraculous storm. Ariel describes the tempest he creates according to the orders and directions of his master saying:

I boarded the King's ship: now on the beak,
 Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
 I flam'd amazement: sometime I'd divide,
 And burn in many places: on the topmast,
 The yards and boresprit, would I flame distinctly,
 Then meet and join.

(I.ii.196-200)¹²

This manipulated tempest enables Prospero to frighten and humiliate the royal passengers and consequently to lower their resistance to his healing project. Prospero's storm quickly creates disorder and chaos among the terrified passengers and severs their sense of decorum and social order. The Boatswain in such a turbulent situation becomes more important than the King of Naples. Like King Lear on the heath, Alonzo finds himself in a face-to-face encounter with the stormy elements. As usual in Shakespeare, the encounter is lost to the elements, and the anointed King is disillusioned about his human weakness. He is desperately dispossessed of all illusions of power and authority.¹³ The resultant annihilation and desperation emphasized by the quickly increasing sense of loss, disorder and confusion among the royal encourage reflect their spiritual brokenness and moral depravity.

Prospero, moreover, has his marooned patients divided and isolated from one another: the three villains and Gonzalo, though separated from one another, are all confined in the "line-grove" (V.i. 10): Ferdinand is isolated by himself; the mariners are put to sleep; and the rest of the fleet is sent back home to declare the tale of the shipwreck and the supposed death of Alonzo. Separating the shipwrecked characters is essential to Prospero's therapeutic project; it enables him to have them undergo separate psychological experiences appropriate to their moral and spiritual health. However, his encounter with the "goodly" Ferdinand, on the one hand, and his other encounter with the cor-

rupt villains, on the other, run parallel all through the play. The isolation of these characters from one another is also an act of alienation which reflects their psychological and spiritual fragmentation.

Pathetic as it seems, Prospero's magical storm is not an act of revenge upon his erstwhile antagonists; rather, it is the first phase of a manipulated experiment which is meant to purge them of evil and then forgive them (Champion, 1970:174). Prospero is not Hieronimo, nor is **The Tempest** a revenge play. "The rarer action is/In virtue than in vengeance" (V.i. 28), emphasizes Prospero. Shakespeare loses no time in having us rest assured that the royal captives are in the presence of a benevolent agent of change who uses his magical power for good ends. "There's no harm done" (I.ii. 14), Prospero assures the innocent Miranda. He says, moreover:

The direful spectacle of the wrack,...
I have with such provision in mine Art
So safely ordered, that there is no soul -
No, not so much perdition as an hair
Betid to any creature in the vessel
which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink.

(I.ii. 26-32)

Ariel, who honestly executes Prospero's orders, gives a similar account:

Not a hair perish'd;
On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
But fresher than before; and, as thou bad'st me.

(I.ii. 218-19)

Prospero's plan is accurately calculated; it is not only that there is no harm done to the prisoners, but their condition is actually improved.

According to Prospero's project, Ferdinand and Miranda are to be betrothed for a future "sanctimonious" marriage (IV.i. 16), which will be religiously blessed and socially celebrated after their return to Milan. The treatment Ferdinand receives on Prospero's island is proportionate with this end and appropriate to Ferdinand's merits of fidelity, courage, filial loyalty and good nature. Prospero treats Ferdinand well in anticipation of his premeditated marriage to Miranda. Prospero has Ariel orchestrate soft music by which he appeals of Ferdinand's "goodly" soul. To Ferdinand, however, Ariel's music is unearthly and his highly suggestive song puzzling:

Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Courtsied when you have and kiss'd
The wild waves whist:
Foot it feattly here and there,
And sweet sprites bear
The Burthen.

(I.ii. 377-84)

On the surface, these words are enigmatic; yet in reality they are suggestive of Prospero's intricate project. The song is an invitation for Ferdinand to proceed further into the island where his sad emotions over his father's supposed decease will be calmed when he meets Miranda. Ferdinand should not worry about his father because the "sweet sprites" take care of him. The invisible Ariel elaborates further:

Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his Knell.

(I.ii. 402-05)

These words imply that Alonzo is not dead; he is merely undergoing "sea-change," an experience that refers to Alonzo's regeneration into a different, yet a richer and a better human being than ever before. Ferdinand's father, Ariel claims, is attended by a group of "sea-nymphs" which are no more than Prospero's attendant spirits, since Ariel himself is presently taking the shape of one. The words of Ariel's song will, however, gather more meaning as the play proceeds and as Prospero gradually reveals his project.¹⁴

Prospero's treatment of Ferdinand achieves its objectives; it calms down Ferdinand's strong, sorrowful passions over his "father's wrack" (I.ii. 393), and makes Ferdinand believe that he is wandering in the dwelling place of some sweet spirits that "wait... upon/Some god o' th' island" (I.ii. 391-92). This contention marks Ferdinand's lessening resistance to Prospero's project. As he is supposed to, Ferdinand follows the sweet music, or probably he is drawn into Prospero's "bait" where he is supposed to meet the gentle Miranda.

Prospero's plan succeeds: he puts Ferdinand and Miranda in a situation in which they become quickly "in either's pow'rs" (I.ii. 453). Miranda takes the wandering stranger for a "spirit" (I.ii. 414) and "a thing divine" (I.ii. 421). Likewise, Ferdinand instantly takes her for "the goddess/On whom these airs attend" (I.ii. 424-25).¹⁵ On Prospero, the mastermind of the action, immediately assumes the roles of the instructive father and the stern father-in-law because he finds it necessary to modify the lovers' amazement and unrealistic feelings. He clarifies to Miranda that Ferdinand is not supematural, but an ordinary human being like themselves:

No, wench; it eats and sleeps and hath such senses
As we have, such. This gallant which thou seest
Was in the wrack; and, but he's something stain'd
With grief (that's beauty's canker) thou mightest call him
A goodly person: he hath lost his fellows,
And strays about to find 'em.

(I.ii. 415-19)

He also plays the role of a stern father-in-law by insulting Ferdinand as a traitor, an

impostor, and a spy. He charms Ferdinand from moving as the latter draws his sword in defiance of Prospero's order to "manacle thy neck and feet together" (I.ii. 464). Prospero's reason for all this seemingly rough treatment is to make things uneasy for Ferdinand. Prospero ensures his power over his captive and simultaneously nurtures the lovers' relationship. Ferdinand reflects:

My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.
 My father's loss, the weakness which I feel,
 The wrack of all my friends, nor this man's threats,
 To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,
 Might I but through my prison once a day
 Behold this maid: all corners else o' th' earth
 Let liberty make use of; space enough
 Have I in such a prison.

(I.ii. 489-96)

As Prospero plans, Ferdinand, on the mysterious island, is quickly bound by Miranda's love and by her father's magic. The period of Ferdinand's imprisonment and hard work is a time of nourishment for the lovers' relationship.

Prospero is thrilled and satisfied by his success in arranging the love of Ferdinand and Miranda. In an aside, he expresses his joy and extends his paternal blessings:

Fair encounter
 Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace
 On that which breeds between 'em!

(III.i. 75-6)

His happiness with their love is strong: "My rejoicing/At nothing can be more" (III.i. 93-4), he admits.

Prospero's apparent cruelty against Ferdinand is merely a test of the young lover's fidelity. "All thy vexations/Were but my trails of thy love" (IV.i. 5-6), explains Prospero. As Ferdinand proves trustworthy and honest, Prospero reconciles himself to him and offers him "a third of mine own life" (IV.i. 3),¹⁶ namely of course, Miranda. Prospero himself does not have the religious authority to unite the two lovers in marriage. Thus comes his insistence that Ferdinand keep Miranda chaste until a priest performs the ceremony. Prospero clearly advocates the preservation of spiritual values and social tradition if society is to remain healthy.

Although Prospero is given power over the natural elements and spirits, "the religious realm is barred to him."¹⁷ Hence all he could do in his mystical world is to entertain the lovers with a hymnal celebration of their "contract" of true love (IV.i. 4). Prospero's fancies do not stop at the summit of Olympus; he extends his powers to bring down the rainbow from the sky to assist Juno and Ceres to please the lovers (Neilson, 1956:163). Juno's and Ceres' wishes to the lovers of joy, happiness and a bounteous paradise that yields them abundance are no more than a reflection of the wishes of

Prospero himself. Motivated by his success in uniting Ferdinand and Miranda, Prospero momentarily seems to forget his other duties as a reformer, i.e., his encounter with the villainous captives or subjects. Yet, his imaginary spectacle is quickly interrupted by his remembrance of the monstrous plot of Caliban and his confederates against his life.¹⁸ Shakespeare amplifies that man's dream of happiness cannot last long because the human mind has to face the harsh realities of life. Neilson rightly comments:

We have been in the clouds, drifting pleasantly
over high Olympus. But no poet or anyone he
charms can stay there for long. The descent to
earth, even for the Prosperos, unfortunately,
does not always set one down on the Islands of
the Blest.... We are brought
up harshly against reality, and the task it
presents to us must be undertaken, or we
surrender the modicum of freedom that we cherish.

(Neilson, 1956:164)

Prospero at the moment of disturbance expresses the worthlessness of man's dreams about a better reality. He says to Ferdinand:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

(IV.i. 156-58)

Along with his arrangements for the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, Prospero, simultaneously, is hard at work in his attempt to redeem the corrupt characters. Prospero's healing, yet, rough, treatment of them, is merely an attempt to eliminate their evil by purging and redeeming their degenerate souls. Prospero's "rarer action" (V.i. 27) is dictated by his "nobler reason" (V.i. 26), transcending tragedy and mere revenge. And his goal is to advance the human condition, and bring peace, concord and tranquility to his fellow men. Malevolent characters, according to his new form of justice, may be rehabilitated and purged of their pride, ambition and selfishness.

Prospero forces the "three men of sin" (III.iii. 53), who "mongst men/Being most unfit to live" (III.iii. 57-58), into his mystical world for correction. They are capable of various degrees of redemption. Antonio, who committed the "rankest fault" (V.i. 132) against Prospero, and Sebastian are the main targets for Prospero's corrective treatment.

Prospero succeeds in fully purging Alonzo of his evil nature. He does so by having Alonzo undergo a series of psychological states-fear, despair, remorse, penitence-that finally lead to a full awakening of his conscience. Alonzo's awakened conscience compels him to reconsider his past accounts and repent his previous sins. His repentance indicates his growth and reformation.

Separating Alonzo from his son Ferdinand, Prospero also inflicts restlessness, distraction and frustration upon him. The fruitless search for Ferdinand leads only to Alonzo's despair and turbulence of the mind.

He suffers from his guilt feelings towards his son, thinking that his decision to marry his daughter Claribel to the faraway King of Tunis was the immediate cause for the shipwreck and the loss of his son. Prospero at this point has to make a turning-point in Alonzo's therapeutic treatment. He encourages Alonzo's guilt feelings, but has Ariel remind him of the reason why he should be guilty, namely his previous sins against Prospero. The healer puts his patient in an ultimately helpless situation by having Ariel, in the disguise of a Harpy, reveal to him that he is treated thus by Destiny (III.iii. 53) and the powers that delay but do not forget (III.iii. 73). Prospero inflicts further torture on Alonzo's distracted soul as he has Ariel pronounce the judgment passed on him by those universal powers:

. . . Thee of thy son, Alonzo,
 They have bereft; and do pronounce by me
 Ling'ring perdition - worse than any death
 Can be at once - shall step by step attend
 You and your ways; whose wraths to guard you from,—
 Which here, in this most desolate isle, else falls
 Upon your heads, - is nothing but heart-sorrow
 And a clear life ensuing.

(III.iii. 75-82)

This sentence of lingering punishment falls like a thunder bolt on Alonzo's mind:

Methought the billows spoke, and told me of it;
 The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,
 That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounc'd
 The name of prosper: it did bass my trespass .

(III.iii. 96-99)¹⁹

Prospero thus succeeds in inflicting torture and releasing remorse in Alonzo's mind. The noble Gonzalo, who does not hear Ariel's words, notice Alonzo's "strange stare" (III.iii. 94) indicating deep contemplation of his past grievances against Prospero. Alonzo's feelings of remorse become pathetically strong and his condition tremendously touching. By having Alonzo undergo this psychological experience of fear, despair and remorse, Prospero prepares him for the last step of his reformation: repentance leading him to reconciliation with Prospero and reunion with the lost Ferdinand.

Likewise, Prospero has the two Machiavellian princes, Antonio and Sebastian, undergo a similar manipulated experience intended to awaken their benumbed consciences. The redeemer this time succeeds in stimulating these villains' consciences but fails to have them repent their sins. They are depicted as so degenerate that Pros-

pero's cure evades them. Prospero, however, anesthetizes their villainy by creating new political realities, the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda and the reconciliation with Alonso. In such circumstances these villains cannot conspire with or against anybody.

Prospero has Antonio and Sebastian undergo a psychological experience consisting of frustration, despair and fear. At the beginning, they, unlike Alonso, defy Prospero's manipulated treatment. The magical, but miraculous, storm does not frighten them the way it does Alonso. It rather provokes their fury and leads them to display their vulgarity and coarseness. Prospero's casting and isolating them on his island only awaken their evil nature and encourage their ambition for power. Endowed with clairvoyance and telepathy, Prospero foresees their evil plans and thwarts them. He thus has them suffer a shock of agonizing frustration. Lack of fulfillment makes these villains suffer as much agony and desperation as Alonso suffers due to the loss of his son and the loss of his senses after the awakening of his conscience. Furthermore, the redeemer has these irremediable villains experience ultimate annihilation that definitely frustrates their undaunted quest for power, and succeeds in activating their benumbed consciences. He has his attendant spirits play harmonious, "solemn and strange music," set a banquet and perform a gentle dance. Behind these arrangements Prospero himself appears like a deity, looking on the action invisibly, as the stage direction, "Prospero, on the top (invisible)," suggests. During this scene, Prospero fully deprives his captives of any illusion of power or authority. He thus puts them in a helpless situation in which they cannot defy his project. Ariel, directed and instructed by his master, illuminates them of the essential facts and circumstances of their existence on the island. The powers that have shipwrecked and marooned them are no less than Destiny and the supernatural benevolent powers. Ariel also informs them that these cosmic powers have provoked all natural forces and all creatures against them because of their previous sins against Prospero and his daughter. The degenerate princes are made to believe that they are in a world in which everything is collaborating against them. Not even their swords can release them from the "invulnerable.... ministers of Fate" (III.iii. 61-6) that captivate them.

Prospero definitely manages to awaken the benumbed consciences and motivate guilt feelings of his enemies. He evaluates his achievement saying:

My high charms work,
 And these mine enemies are all knit up.
 In their distractions: they now are in my power;
 And in these fits I leave them.

(III.iii. 88-91)

Gonzalo describes the "distractions" of his fellow captives:

All three of them are desperate: their great guilt,
 Like poison given to work a great time after,
 Now 'gins to bite the spirits.

(III.iii. 104-06)

Their agony is noticeable even to Ariel, who is "but air" and is incapable of human feelings:

The King
His brother, and yours abide all three distracted.

(V.i. 12)

Ariel even pities their misery:

Your charm so strongly works 'em,
That if you now beheld them, your affections
would become tender.

(V.i. 17-9)

Prospero's apparent cruelty with his adversaries is meant for good ends. He has been conducting them from one psychological state to another till they become penitent, after which Prospero decides to terminate his corrective project. He explains:

.... They being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further.

(V.i. 27-30)

Prospero's calculations, at this point, however, prove somewhat inaccurate. Of the three degenerate patients only one, Alonzo, repents his past grievances against Prospero. "Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat/Thou pardon me my wrongs" (V.i. 118), says Alonzo. As for Antonio and Sebastian, Prospero's treatment fails to lead them to repentance of their past sins. Nevertheless, Prospero manages to restrain their evil to a degree that they will not be able to threaten the stability of Milan and Naples. Prospero forgives his brother, but reclaims his dukedom:

I do forgive
Thy rankest fault, — all of them; and require
My dukedom of thee, which perforce, I know,
Thou must restore.

(V.i. 131-34)

Prospero humiliates Antonio and Sebastian further as he discloses to them his complete knowledge of their brutal conspiracy against Alonzo's life, and thereby they become at his mercy:

I here could pluck his highness' frown upon you,
And justify you traitors: at this time
I will tell no tales.

(v.i. 127-28)

Prospero deprives these two villains of any present power thereby laying the foundations of political harmony.

Prospero does not only extend his healing hand to the evil captives and the young lovers, but also to the benevolent characters. He has the noble Gonzalo undergo an experience of amazement and wonder, a pleasant experience during which Gonzalo sees his dreams of the Golden Age realized in Prospero's utopia. Prospero means to reinforce and reward Gonzalo's goodness. The generated, mystical atmosphere of Prospero's island motivates Gonzalo's vision of a prelapsarian Eden in which

All things in common Nature should produce,
 Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
 Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
 Would I not have; but Nature should bring forth,
 Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,
 To feed my innocent people.

(II.i. 155-60)

Gonzalo's vision is what Prospero has realized by turning the island into a rustic, recreational Eden. Gonzalo notices that on Prospero's island "everything (is) advantageous to life, and wonders at the lustiness and greenness of its grass (II.i. 48, 51). Gonzalo will also find that Miranda, the only woman on the island, is pure and innocent, as the women of his visionary commonwealth.

Prospero bars Gonzalo from hearing the threats of the Harpy, and thus saves him from being distracted like his fellow captives. In his final encounter with the patients Prospero reinforces Gonzalo's goodness by expressing his gratitude to Gonzalo's good deeds and promising to reward him "in word and deed" (VI.i. 71). He welcomes him as his "true preserver, and a loyal sir" (V.i. 69).

Prospero's stay on the island is a battle against evil in all its manifestations. Consequently, his redemptive mission includes more than the royal captives. He purges the island of Sycorax's spell; releases Ariel from his confinement in the "cloven pine" (I.ii. 277); and attempts to elevate the status of the degenerate Caliban to the level of a human being by having his daughter teach Caliban how to talk and think. However, Prospero's attempt to improve Caliban's condition fails. The reason being that Caliban is a member of a "vile race" (I.ii. 360) and thus cannot acquire good habits and virtues. Prospero complains that "nurture can never stick" (IV.i. 189) to Caliban's degenerate nature. As a result, Prospero has to harshly treat this vile monster (V.i. 290). He physically confines him to a certain area on the island lest he raise havoc to him or to Miranda. He also has his attendant spirits inflict physical punishment upon Caliban and his drunken confederates, whom he takes for gods. Such corporal punishment of Caliban is necessary because he has no conscience to be awakened, as in the case of the human villains. This treatment proves successful at the end; it leads Caliban to recognize his mistake.

. . . I'll be wise hereafter,
 And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass

Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,
And worship this dull fool!

(V.i. 294-97)

Caliban's repentance, though it does not lead to his salvation, is ironical because he is juxtaposed to Antonio and Sebastian who do not repent though they are human.

All through the play Prospero sustains his role of the manipulator of the characters as well as the plot. He manages to end the action with a series of pleasant reversals that lead to the happy ending of the play. He starts his redemptive project with a miraculous storm and ends it with a pleasant entertainment. During the course of the play, Prospero supervises the action like a supernatural being. As his project works and his enemies fall in his hands, he encounters them as Prospero, the man they know. At the outset, Prospero shipwrecks and isolates the captives, while at the end he reunites them into an integral whole and leads them back to their civilized world in a redemptive homecoming. Prospero himself chooses to go back to live among his people with his limited human capacity rather than stay on the island to acquire knowledge and wield power in isolation. He abjures his "rough magic" (V.i. 50) and decides to

. . . break my staff,
Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

(V.i. 54-7)

Prospero is clearly the agent of his own salvation as well as his patients'. His experience has led him to growth and wisdom. He abjures the secret knowledge to which he one day devoted himself, the knowledge that led him to a complete withdrawal from human society. This act brought him to face the facts of life and to lose his throne to an **evil brother**.

During his isolation, however, Prospero utilizes his knowledge and attains a miraculous power to restore some of his corrupt visitors to moral and spiritual health. Prospero, however, fails to conduct these villains to truly repent their past sins, and consequently, there is no guarantee that the reign of Ferdinand and Miranda will be the beginning of the Kingdom of Man in the world. There most certainly will be future Antonios and Sebastians to threaten the established social order.

In his presentation of an optimistic vision about the regeneration of the human spirit and the advancement of society, Shakespeare, in **The Tempest**, does not advocate the possibility of eliminating evil from the world; he rather advocates the necessity of a mystical agent of change to anesthetize and control the powers of evil. Whenever Antonios and Sebastians get control in society, there should be a Prospero to control, if not purge, them, and to restore social stability. Prospero's project is thus an act revival and reorganization of social energies, tradition and values.

Shakespeare's vision of change however is not native. He does not forget to direct

our attention to Prospero's human limitations and the magical unreality of his enchanted island. The playwright seems to posit that however qualified man alone is incapable of salvation. The grace of God and providential support are necessary for any healer.

notes

1. For the date of **The Tempest** see Frank Kermode's introduction to the Arden edition, 6th ed., (London: Methuen, 1958), pp. xix-xv; D.J. Palmer, ed., **The Tempest: A Casebook** (Nashville: Aurora, 1970), pp. 11-12; J. Dover Wilson's Introduction to **The Tempest** (London: Chiswick Press, 1928); and Norman Holland, **The Shakespearean Imagination** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 304.
2. **The Tempest**, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Methuen, 1958). All citations from the text are hereafter taken from this edition.
3. For a discussion of the exact type of drama **The Tempest** belongs to, see Alan R. Velie, **Shakespeare's Repentance Plays: The Search for an Adequate Form** (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1972).
4. For a survey of the earlier criticism on **The Tempest**, see Kermode, pp. 1xxxv-vi, and Palmer, pp. 16-22.
5. G. Wilson Knight's initial interpretation of the play first appeared in his article, "Myth and Miracle," (E.J. Burrow, 1929) which deals mainly with the last romances of Shakespeare. Knight argues that the tempest is a symbol of tragedy and music, of immortality. The last plays demonstrate a progression from tragedy to immortality. In his second study of Shakespeare, **The Shakespearean Tempest**, knight sees **The Tempest** as a distillation of Shakespeare's canon. He repeated and elaborated on this interpretation in his influential book, **The Crown of Life** (London, Methuen, 1947). My review of Knight's interpretation is mainly taken from his chapter in this book.
6. For a full study of the significance of magic in **The Tempest**, see Frances A. Yates, **Majesty and Magic in Shakespeare's Last Plays** (Boulder: Shambhala, 1978), p. 94, and Kermode's introduction to the Arden edition, pp. xvii-li. For a different perception, see D.G. James, **The Dream of Prospero** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 45-71. James argues that Prospero does not conjure; it is rather Ariel who summons minor spirits to Prospero's help.
7. For references to the support of the providential powers to Prospero, see Champion, p. 175; Kermode, p. xvii; Bonamy Dobree, "The Tempest" in **Essays and Studies** (London: John Murray, 1952), p. 21; and Alfred Harbage, **A Reader's Guide to William Shakespeare** (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1963), p. 465.
8. Wilson Knight in "Myth and Miracle" considers music a poetic symbol of revival and rebirth. See also Holland, pp. 310-11. For an account of the healing power of music in **The Tempest**, see Neilson, p. 155.
9. For a similar view see Champion, pp. 173-76.
10. For a discussion of Antonio as a Machiavellian character, see Kermode, p. liv.
11. This phrase is a translation of the Latin origin which reads: "Rex Quondam Rexque Futurus." For references see Malory, **Le Morte D'Arthur**, vol. 2, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), p. 519.
12. Knight, in **Tempest**, argues that "Jove and Neptune are twin personalities of the two main aspects of the Shakespearean tempest" (p. 250). He, however, emphasizes that tempests in the final plays are harmless.
13. Among the critics who analyze the significance of the storm scene in **The Tempest** are Harbage, pp. 461-62, Knight, **The Shakespearean Tempest**, p. 250, and Tillyard, **Shakespeare's Last Plays**, pp. 48-9.

14. For a different analysis of the song, see Kermode's notes, pp. 34-5.
15. Miranda's name means "she who is to be wondered at." See Holland, pp. 313-14. Holland compares her to the goddess Proserpina the goddess of fertility.
16. For an explanation of the phrase, "a third of my own life," see Kermode's comments on p. 92.
17. Neilson, p. 159. In my discussion of the masque I am mainly indebted to Neilson's argument, pp. 159-69.
18. This incident of Prospero's sudden fury and distracted mind is one of the places in which Shakespeare humanizes his protagonist without minimizing his powers.
19. Alonso's lines indicate that natural phenomena are moral and that they cooperate with Prospero's charitable ends. See Kermode's notes on these lines, p. 91.

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