CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Tempest: The Mastered Self

NEAR THE END of Shakespeare’s career stands a simple play not of self-loss but of self-gain. Shakespeare may well have intended it to have been his final one; it is difficult to think of Henry VIII as anything but an afterthought. A comedy or a tragicalmedy, of course, was expected to present an action that moved toward self-gain; and the romances Shakespeare wrote during his last phase, Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale, and The Tempest, all conclude happily with their heroes’ self-recoveries. But The Tempest differs from the other romances in notable ways: the hero’s self-loss has taken place before the beginning of the play, as we are told by him in the second scene; during the action, he is in command of himself and in control of the events. Further self-loss is a continuing threat to Prospero—a somewhat more serious threat, I think, than is usually realized—but because it is avoided and because the play never really approaches tragedy, it is not quite in the same category as are its immediate predecessors. It probably deserves to be called a comedy rather than a tragicomedy.

Indeed The Tempest continues and perfects the comic treatment of the themes of self-loss, self-search, and self-recovery on which Shakespeare structured his early comedies; it gives this structure a new and more festive polish. But a reading of The Tempest against the background of Shakespeare’s developing patterns of self-knowledge suggests resemblances also to most other preceding plays, even to that signal tragedy of self-loss Macbeth. Reading The Tempest in such fashion, as I propose to do in this concluding chapter, will allow us to glance back at Shakespeare’s earlier patterns as well as to see in perspective Shakespeare’s final achievement in giving dramatic form to the ideas that have been the concern of this study.

To call The Tempest a simple play, as I have done, is to invite con-
tradiction in view of the diversity of interpretations it has produced; yet simplicity seems to me one of its most notable qualities. The story is, admittedly, a trifle fantastic; some of its credibility depends on the acceptance of magic, which for us, contrary to the Jacobean, requires a suspension of disbelief. But the fine web of fantasy Shakespeare spun in the play lessens the problem; we give our hearts to The Tempest much as we do to fairy tales. And perhaps for this reason critics become fanciful and imaginative when they analyze it; its outlines become vast, wavering, and infinite, and we are told that "any interpretation, even the wildest, is more or less plausible." 

Actually, no play of Shakespeare's has a clearer dramatic structure, one more closely tied up with the nature of its hero and the major strands of its thought than this, and few have as simple a thematic content. That The Tempest observes the unities of time, place, and action—the only play of Shakespeare after the early Comedy of Errors to do so—is well known. The action is fitly digested into five acts—they are accurately marked in the Folio text—according to the formula derived from the comedies of Terence, modified in the epitasis by a movement that comes from revenge tragedy. In its act structure, composite but yet composite on a simple plan, The Tempest could be compared with Love's Labor's Lost (for the simple formula) and with Hamlet (for the revenge plot).

There is, of course, room for disagreement on the place of details in this pattern and even more on the meaning of the action. But no legitimate interpretation can avoid speaking of the losses and their recoveries and of the material, moral, and spiritual transformations that give movement to the action. On a very simple level, this idea is articulated in an almost liturgical tone by the good old counselor Gonzalo in the comic catastrophe of the last act. Recalling that he and the other Neapolitans set out to attend the wedding of the King of Naples' daughter at Tunis, Gonzalo hails the journey's unexpected outcome:

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

(V.i.206-13)

The losing-finding antithesis that forms the text of Gonzalo's hymn to joy recalls the rhythm of the paradox of salvation Shakespeare had used in previous plays to emphasize the importance of self-knowledge and to give structural patterns to his plays. Because the adaptation of the losing-finding formula in *The Tempest* grows out of these earlier instances, a glance back will serve to demonstrate Shakespeare's reliance on this pattern of self-knowledge for recurring as well as changing thematic ideas and to point up its particular configuration in the present play.

The formula, as we noted, was basic to the thematic structure of Shakespeare's two earliest comedies, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost*. Although *The Comedy of Errors* primarily exploits the outward possibilities and impossibilities of mistaken identities, it at least implies the danger of self-loss and depicts the joy of self-recovery. When Antipholus of Syracuse arrives in Ephesus to search for his brother, he feels like a drop of water searching for another drop in the vast ocean. "So I," he says, "to find a mother and a brother, / In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself" (I.ii.39-40). Antipholus's search starts a chain reaction of errors, making the twin-masters and twin-servants doubt at times that they know who they are. *The Comedy of Errors* attains whatever thematic depth it has by the comic horror Shakespeare injected into the threatening loss of identities, and its happy finale comes about through a universal finding. The movement from self-loss to self-recovery is very similar to that of *The Tempest*; but in the later play, both the seriousness of the one and the joy of the other are heightened: Prospero's enemies are restrained only by his magic power from doing harm to each other and to themselves, and his forgiveness has a sacerdotal quality that brings about a more spectacular recovery. But in the endings of both plays, the resumption of true identities and relationships creates the hope that a better order will evolve when the respective sets of hostile cities, Ephesus and Syracuse, Milan and Naples, are leagued in marriage; *The Tempest*, however, makes this point more strongly through a marriage of the heirs of the rulers. On the other hand, the ending of *The Tem-
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pest does not depict merely a finding of brother by brother but the reconciliation of two sets of formerly hostile brothers; and the question—one we must postpone for the moment—of the completeness and permanence of this reconciliation has been raised by critics.

Closer to the thematic structure of The Tempest than The Comedy of Errors is Love’s Labor’s Lost. It is essentially a comedy of self-loss and self-recovery that turns on the problem of self-search. King Ferdinand and his three courtiers are shown to be mistaken in their belief that they can find their true selves by withdrawing into an academy that bars influences disturbing to study, particularly women and love. When the princess and her ladies-in-waiting arrive on the scene, nature promptly takes its course and Cupid his revenge. The love-stricken courtiers are in a dilemma that even the astute Berowne cannot solve with his quibble on the losing-finding antithesis: “Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves, / Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths” (IV.iii.358-59). This ingenious turn of the formula Shakespeare may have borrowed from the Genevan-Tomson side-note to Matthew 16:25: “they that deny Christ to save themselves do not only not gain that which they look for but also lose the thing they would have kept, that is, themselves, which loss is the greatest of all.” If “losing oneself” is the greatest loss of all—as the side-note says and Berowne implies—“finding oneself,” in the sense of becoming a human being who attains his greatest moral potential and assumes his proper role in society, is the greatest gain. The endings of both Love’s Labor’s Lost and The Tempest pay tribute to the precious goal of “finding” as well as to the difficulty of achieving it. The courtiers of Navarre, who have thoughtlessly sworn vows contrary to nature and who have shown no compunction about breaking these vows, ill-advised as they were, must, on the princess’s orders, expiate their transgressions in a year of penitence and service; the gayest of the courtiers, Berowne, who had sworn against his better knowledge, must prove his regeneration by serving his term of penitence in a hospital. There is good reason to believe that he and his fellow sinners will eventually find their true selves as both honorable gentlemen and men of flesh and blood since the princess and her ladies-in-waiting have promised to marry them if they pass their tests. In The Tempest, Prospero arranges the finding of the others and of himself. He resembles in this respect, as in some others, Duke Vincentio in Measure for Measure. Prospero, in the end, forgives transgressions
as great as does Vincentio—and certainly much greater ones than does the princess—and he forgives, as do the arrangers of these two comedies, in order to make humane values triumph. However, as I shall argue, *The Tempest*, particularly through the character of its hero and the nature of its ending, makes the point even more strongly that self-finding must be accomplished through a discipline based on a realistic understanding of the nature of man.

When we turn to the tragedies, we find self-loss to be the main theme and self-gain to be implied as a desirable goal. The self-losses of the tragic heroes and villains arise from serious moral failures, from passion, sin, and crime, and they lead to the destruction of the heroes and of other characters, innocent and guilty. The nuanced value system Shakespeare infused into the tragedies from *Hamlet* on gave the losing-finding formula a subtler, more existential meaning. The Danish prince exercises his probing mind on all questions about his own role and the function of man in the world, and yet he loses himself more and more in the web of his destiny. Once during his probing for certainty in the world of shifting realities, Hamlet touches on the biblical losing-finding formula. Just before his fatal duel with Laertes, a test that to Hamlet appears one of self-knowledge as well as of physical skill, he asks the perplexing question: “Since no man of ought he leaves knows, what is't to leave betimes?” (V.ii.216). If this version of the passage, that of Quarto 2, is correct, as I think it is, Hamlet here gives a skeptical turn to the paradox of salvation; for him, life has no recognizable pattern, and man profits little by retaining it. But Hamlet’s preceding reference to the special providence in the fall of a sparrow suggests that, at least to God, the pattern is meaningful. A similar skepticism-fideism, emphasized by a view of the world as illusionary and temporary, is beautifully expressed in Prospero’s end-of-revels speech; but the detachment with which Prospero views the transience of all earthly things has some drops of soothing serenity that are completely absent from Hamlet’s tentative acceptance of the divinity that shapes all ends.

Although self-losses occur in all the tragedies and the importance of self-recovery is suggested somehow in all of them, the losing-finding formula rings particularly strongly in *Lear* and *Macbeth*. In *Lear*, the paradox of what the world seeks and what it loses becomes a tragic agony. The King of France weaves from this paradox the beautiful speech in which he accepts the disinherited Cordelia, who
is "most rich, being poor; / Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd" (I.i.250–51). In the course of the play, Lear, who has let evil develop in himself and in others, has fleeting glimpses of his and man's true nature as he loses himself in anger, grief, and madness. By contrast, Edgar, from being a man whose name is lost, comes to find himself in the end; and he assumes a more significant role than he has in the beginning. But even if Edgar's self-recovery anticipates, in some fashion, Prospero's, it is more painfully achieved and at greater loss. Neither—since Edgar is not the hero—did Shakespeare focus on the state of his soul as he did on Prospero's.

*Macbeth* is as relentless a tragedy of self-loss as *The Tempest* is a consistent comedy of self-gain. Macbeth's self-loss is pointed up by the evasiveness with which he speaks about losing the "eternal jewel" of his soul. But by his negative example and by his oppression of Scotland, this tragedy makes a strong point that a man must seek to find himself and that a country can find itself only when it is ruled morally. "The time is free" when Scotland shakes off the oppressor's yoke in the end. Though the benevolent Prospero and the murderous Macbeth are worlds apart, *The Tempest* not only dramatizes self-finding but also demonstrates the danger of self-loss. An evil similar to that of Macbeth (although it is not examined in its origin or spotlighted in its manifestation) dwells in the soul of Prospero's brother Antonio, who plots the murder of King Alonso with the help of Alonso's own brother, Sebastian. Prospero's firm direction keeps these wicked plotters and would-be regicides from succumbing to the total self-loss that engulfs Macbeth. To Prospero himself, nothing worse seems to happen in the play than a temporary threat to his peace of mind; but I shall argue that this threat does present a danger, particularly because we know that he has harmed himself years ago by becoming lost in his studies and by thus facilitating Antonio's usurpation of his throne. Prospero's self-recovery from this evil of omission is the main plot of *The Tempest*.

However, evil is a less serious threat in *The Tempest* than in the other romances, which veer toward tragedy. In *The Winter's Tale*, for instance, Leontes's unfounded accusation and condemnation of Hermione brings about the death of his son Mamilius. If these heroes do not suffer permanent self-losses, the reasons lie in the extraordinary efforts of recovery through penitence and faith they make or in the powerful help, human and divine, they receive. The romances, with their stories of shipwreck, of broken and reunited
families, of deep self-losses and strong, sometimes miraculous, recoveries, make the losing-finding formula even more prominent than do the early comedies, but the formula is now pregnant with moral and spiritual associations.

However, none of the romances or any other play of Shakespeare gives greater prominence to the losing-finding formula and extols self-finding more melodiously than does The Tempest. No other play makes the presence of the formula as strongly felt: “lose,” “lost,” “loss,” “search,” “find,” and “found” are key words that occur at significant junctures of the action and provide clues to the placement of the characters in the total design. These words are also constant reminders that the action presented brings a long story to a climax: losses are to be remedied, ills to be healed, and blessings to be gained.

The spectacular tempest that opens the play and furnishes its title is an example of this fusion of past and present. Apparently it brings about the loss of a ship, its passengers, and its crew. But the second scene makes it clear that this storm is also a reenactment of that earlier storm, twelve years past, in which Prospero and his infant daughter, Miranda, expelled from Milan by the evil Antonio, were cruelly exposed to the roaring of the waves; by firmly controlling the effect of the present storm and preventing harm to human lives, Prospero recoups his loss and makes it possible for all to be themselves. Renaissance rhetoric had taught the Jacobean to think of storms as metaphorical for the gusts of passion and the blows of fortune. The initial storm may thus be taken to symbolize the passions of the ship’s guilty passengers, the passions that brought about Prospero’s expulsion and continue to threaten violence on the island. But this storm may also be understood to symbolize the passions of Prospero, slumbering as they are during most of the play. We learn of his potentially passionate nature by his account of that earlier, intellectual ecstasy, when, “transported / And rapt in secret studies,” he let his brother usurp his place (I.ii.76–77). Most of all, we experience Prospero’s one, if muted, outbreak of anger when, at the decisive moment of the play, disgust with Caliban’s revolt wells up in him and threatens to make him prefer revenge to mercy.

Shakespeare’s audience would have especially relished the story of the shipwreck and the miraculous preservation of its passengers and crew because of the similar fate of his majesty’s ship Sea Adventure, wrecked on the reefs of Bermuda in 1609. Shakespeare exploited the
interest created by the incident; he had Ariel remember how Prospero once awakened him, while sleeping at the same nook where now the Neapolitan ship is safely hidden, in order to have him “fetch dew / From the still-vex’d Bermoothes” (I.ii.228–29). But if Shakespeare could count on his audience’s familiarity with this topical incident, he could and did rely even more on their knowledge of a moral tradition that made shipwreck a prime test of human reaction to fate and fortune. Narratives of the Bermuda wreck, particularly that in the Council of Virginia’s apologetic *True Declaration of the State of the Colony of Virginia* (1610), were tinged with this moral tradition. It was one that, derived from Homer’s *Odyssey,* was continued in Virgil’s *Aeneid* and became familiar in the Renaissance to many a grammar-school boy, including William Shakespeare, through Erasmus’s colloquy *Naufragium.* As Professor Baldwin has noted, Erasmus presents a tempest that recalls Shakespeare’s in many respects, although Erasmus was more obviously interested in the moral make-up of his characters. But even so, one could well expect Shakespeare’s audience to have concluded from the extremely vivid first scene of *The Tempest* that the shipwreck represents a moral-psychological test for the passengers and crew and that nearly all fail it as they are thrown into utter confusion, get into each other’s way, curse, and despair: “All lost! . . . All lost!” (I.48).

There is one notable exception: the old counselor Gonzalo, who keeps his humor and, though in vain, admonishes the others to be patient; by contrast, Sebastian laments that he is “out of patience” (51). From the beginning, Gonzalo’s role in the play is crucial. Throughout, he is the voice of charity and patience. This is a voice frequent in Shakespeare; but, as we have noted, it became more insistent from *Lear* onward. It is embodied sometimes in a young man like Edgar, more often in an old man, like Gonzalo and his fellow counselor Helicanus in *Pericles,* but most often in suffering women, in Cordelia, Marina, Imogene, Hermione, Perdita, and Paulina. In view of the customary identification of Prospero with Shakespeare, it is intriguing to ponder that, judging by the fact that his name appears in fourth and fifth position of the actors of his company, Shakespeare is more likely to have thought of himself when writing the part of Gonzalo than when writing that of Prospero. But Shakespeare probably did not act in *The Tempest,* and one should realize that the voice of Gonzalo, that of patience—important as it is for articulating the virtue that was becoming the most
important one for the achievement of self-knowledge in Shakespeare's later plays—is still only one of his many voices. The aging Shakespeare may have felt greater need for patience; but he knew also of many other needs.

The patient Gonzalo is an instrument of the power of good and demonstrates how man may endure and even master his fate. When the storm of fortune raged hardest for Prospero, it was Gonzalo who gave him the means to regain control over his fate by furnishing the bark in which he and Miranda were set adrift with the books from which Prospero gained his knowledge of magic. On the island, Gonzalo constantly tries to cheer and comfort his companions. He finds that they have cause for joy, as he says in his first words after the miraculous rescue: "for our escape / Is much beyond our loss" (II.i.2–3). It is Gonzalo who, awakened by Ariel, cries out and thus unknowingly saves the king and himself from being murdered by Antonio and Sebastian. His cry, "good angels / Preserve the King" (II.i.298–99), is symptomatic of his reliance on heavenly help; he is the only one among the Neapolitans to invoke it. Gonzalo becomes at times a choric commentator, registering the transformations that take place, noting the outward signs of the effect of guilt on the others, and rejoicing about the completed changes in the end. His tears, shed for the suffering of the others, engender "fellowly" drops in Prospero—"holy Gonzalo" Prospero calls him then (V.i.62). His example makes Prospero in the end reaffirm patience as an abiding virtue. When Alonso laments what he thinks is the irreparable loss of his son and claims "Patience / Says it is past her cure," Prospero (thinking of losing Miranda through marriage) answers: "For the like loss I have her sovereign aid / And rest myself content" (V.i.140–44).

Thus Gonzalo becomes a pattern of patience and charity for all, even for Prospero. It is a patience anchored in faith—Christian in a general sense (although the pagan Cordelia has it too); it is tempered by sympathy and pity rather than hardened into suppression of the emotions as the Stoics recommended. Gonzalo's orientation toward one dominant trait is a feature he shares with other characters in Shakespeare's baroque plays and makes critics speak of allegory. But Gonzalo has other, if less important, traits; we simply are made more aware of the one that is primary for the function he has in the thematic movement.

Of the traits that prevent him from becoming a mere symbol of
patience, his garrulity and whimsicality help to take the edge off some of his moral commentary. Shakespeare allows him a holiday of the spirit on the "poor isle" whose enchanting airs encourage all kinds of extravaganzas. Crudely derided by the others, Gonzalo paraphrases the famous passage in Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals" that describes in glowing colors an anarchistic utopia of universal happiness. Gonzalo would like to make the island into such a state and govern, somewhat illogically, as a king "with such perfection . . . / T' excel the golden age" (II.i.161-62). But the island turns out to be a quite different country from the idealized Brazil of Montaigne's essay—Shakespeare was aware that travelers' tales like those glorified by Montaigne do lie. Although the spirits commanded by Prospero appear to Gonzalo to be islanders of monstrous shapes but of manners kinder than civilized men's, the banquet they serve to the starved Neapolitans proves a cruel mirage; it is snatched away by Ariel in the guise of a harpy. From now on, the Neapolitans' life is a nightmare. Thus, in his utopian dream, Gonzalo, after a fashion, loses himself; but his self-loss is of the mildest kind, a fantasy of what cannot be and must not be. The island of dreams, the forest of Arden, the golden age are never more than temporary retreats in Shakespeare's plays. Man who knows himself must accept the actual world and assume his proper role in it. Gonzalo cannot live in a benevolent anarchy, but must again be a counselor of princes. Prospero cannot remain on the island that he rules so well, but has to return to Milan to govern as duke. And all others must resume their destined functions and offices.

If a positive and sympathetic reaction to the storm and shipwreck characterizes Gonzalo, so it does Miranda. As she watches the events from the shore, she sympathizes with the suffering of the people whom she fears to be lost: "O, I have suffer'd / With those that I saw suffer" (I.ii.5-6). Miranda is blessed with that active patience, a species of fortitude as well as a religious virtue in the humanistic system of values. Like the patience of Marina in Pericles, hers smiles "extremity out of act." As a child, she instilled her groaning father with "fortitude from heaven" when she helped him to bear up in the storm-tossed boat that carried the two to the island (I.ii.154). But Miranda also plays a part in the thematic movement from self-loss to self-recovery. Like the Neapolitans and like Prospero, she is the victim of "sea-sorrow." The earlier storm that drove her to the island has wiped out her identity; she has lost her privileged place in the
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world. She still remembers vaguely that she was once favored by her birth; her only childhood recollection is that she was tended by four or five women (I.ii.46). She is now ignorant of what she is, as her father says (I.ii.18), both in the sense of knowing neither her exact position nor the real world that surrounds her. But directed by her instincts and guided by Prospero, she will find herself in the end as the future wife of Ferdinand and as the prospective queen of Naples.

Before she can find herself, she must suffer another "sea change" through the impact of the outside world on her sheltered existence. Because she has never seen a man besides her old father and the semi-devil Caliban, she idealizes the creatures of the brave new world, particularly the handsome Ferdinand. Miranda's innocence is, baroque fashion, heightened by being spectacularly contrasted with the evil of the world. Unacquainted with this evil—her bad experience with the only half-human Caliban evidently does not count—she equates appearance with reality. She objects to Prospero's calling Ferdinand a spy: "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple" (I.ii.457). She happens to be right in this case, but she is quite wrong when she hails the checkered company of the Neapolitans: "How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people in't." Prospero's comment is sobering: "'Tis new to thee" (V.i.183-84). She mistakes the old world for the new, and she is too innocent and idealistic to realize that both contain much evil. She will have to acquire some prudence and practical wisdom if she is not to be lost in the world in which she must play a stellar part. But she is virtuous and she can inspire—and does in Ferdinand—virtuous behavior.

In her innocence, bordering on naïveté, Miranda bears some resemblance to the pastoral maidens of Fletcher's tragicomedies. The whole idea of such pristine innocence as hers is precarious to a degree that one step further will lead to absurdity. Dryden and Sir William Davenant took this step in their adaptation of The Tempest when they made out of Miranda two white virgins shrouded in ignorance but not devoid of human instincts and confronted them with a young man much more naïve than the pellucid Ferdinand because he had never seen a woman. Dryden thought this tripling of ignorance an "excellent contrivance," and the situations arising from it are indeed pleasantly risqué; but Shakespeare would never have succumbed to the temptation inherent in the baroque to paint with
strong colors by applying false ones as did his adapters. Miranda's naïveté is bearable because her case is singular; and, besides, she has an appealing vitality that makes her take a refreshingly active role in courtship. Her father's vigilance—or so at least he thinks—is required to prevent her from further self-loss by throwing herself on Ferdinand. But we may trust her power of recovery when in the final scene she is revealed as playing with her fiancé that game of intellectual patience *par excellence*, chess. We feel that she is bound to become Ferdinand's support and comfort as she was Prospero's.

It appears that Ferdinand will need her. The young man of the beginning of the play who is the first to jump from the burning ship with the cry "Hell is empty, / And all the devils are here" (I.ii.214–15), is evidently in need of some improvement. But Ferdinand is not burdened with guilt as is his father, and he has positive virtues. He demonstrates his filial affection when he grieves for the loss of his father whom he believes to be drowned (I.ii.487, III.i.58). He is the first of Alonso's party to feel the power of regeneration as Ariel's music creeps by him on the waters, "Allaying both their fury and my passion / With its sweet air" (I.ii.392–93). Cheered on by Miranda, he demonstrates a newfound patience in the emblematic log-carrying task and proves his equilibrium at chess.

Of the older Neapolitans, King Alonso is relatively sympathetically portrayed. Although he abetted the usurpation of Prospero's dukedom by Antonio, Alonso is clearly not a soul totally lost. He has a capacity for human sentiments; he suffers deeply from the loss of his son, following hard upon that of his daughter (e.g., II.i.103, 116, 129, 313; III.iii.75, 100; V.i.137). In violent despair, he seeks to drown himself in the sea "deeper than e'er plummet sounded / And with him there lie muddied" (III.iii.101–2). His sorrow, the self-destructive grief of which the humanists and theologians warned, is in part punishment for his complicity in Antonio's crime. But grief as such is still a noble passion, and Alonso's basic goodness shows itself in his repentance in the end. Although the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda makes him "twice lose" his son (V.i.177), he says "amen" when Gonzalo wishes them a blessed crown, and he adds his voice to the old counselor's hymn to joy (V.i.204 ff.).

The two arch-plotters, Sebastian and Antonio, are so perverse as to be moved by Alonso's grief not to sympathy but to a murder plot. With Alonso and Ferdinand removed, Antonio wickedly suggests, Sebastian may seize power without interference. Antonio's influence
on Sebastian and their Machiavellian plotting has a distinct resemblance to Lady Macbeth's incitement of Macbeth before the murder of Duncan. Poetic justice requires that these two criminals be harshly treated. Consequently, they are sorely struck by Prospero's magic: in madness they wander through the island in search of an invisible enemy and are in danger of killing each other. "And even with such-like valour men hang and drown / Their proper selves," comments Ariel (III.iii.59–60). The tempest in their hearts, threatening self-loss, is at its climax. One must assume them to rave in frenzy through the fourth act while the masque is performed and Prospero makes his nostalgic farewell speeches. Not until the fifth act are Sebastian and Antonio released, together with the despairing Alonso, by Prospero's heavenly music.

Some critics have been disturbed because neither Sebastian nor Antonio manifests repentance, and they have seen in this omission Shakespeare's lack of confidence in the way he brought The Tempest to a conclusion. But conscience is, after all, at work in their self-threatening fury just as it is in Alonso's despair. "Their great guilt," comments Gonzalo, "Like poison given to work a great time after, / Now gins to bite the spirits" (III.iii.105–6). There is some indication that a moral transformation has taken place in Sebastian when he hails the reappearance of Ferdinand and his union with Miranda as "a most high miracle" (V.i.177). Sebastian now acknowledges the divine power that he derided when Gonzalo attributed to it the preservation of the travelers after the shipwreck. True, there is not even such a sign of a change of heart in Antonio, and this silence is alarming. But would not a declaration of repentance, which Shakespeare could easily have provided, be even more disturbing? Such profession, which could hardly be very long and very eloquent in the pressure of the ending, would scarcely have been convincing.

Antonio is the most wicked character of the play; the influence he wields over Sebastian is almost comparable to that of Iago over Othello. We may on this basis surmise that he will plot again; but it is vain to predict what any of Shakespeare's characters will do after they leave the stage, whose illusion is their only reason for existence. (That we are constantly tempted into guessing is a tribute to Shakespeare's power to make us believe in the reality of his creations.) We cannot really know whether Antonio will or will not plot again. What we can say is that in Shakespeare's conception "every man with his affects is born, / Not by might mast'red, but
by special grace" (Love's Labor's Lost, I.i.149-50). Antonio, born with more passions than most men, surely needs both uncommon strength, vigilant supervision, and a strong dose of heavenly grace if he is to master them. But when even a Caliban, brought up in Setebos-worship, promises in the end of the play to "be wise hereafter / And seek for grace" (V.i.294-95), one may discern some hope also for Antonio. The emphasis of Shakespeare's ending, at any rate, is not on the miraculous efficacy of conversions but on Prospero's power of forgiveness. If we are left with the impression that Antonio will require Prospero's supervision in Milan, we may take that as a tribute to Prospero's strength—a purely human strength after his renunciation of magic.

Of Ariel and Caliban one can hardly speak in the same analytical terms as one speaks of human characters. The two are creatures of a brilliant fantasy that tempts a scholar to become a poet. Shakespeare's empathetic imagination triumphs when it rides on the curled clouds, swims through the water, and dives into the fire with Ariel, and when it creeps on the ground, listens to the noises of the island, and breathes its sweet airs with Caliban. The Tempest, like the other romances, has levels of movement that leave the dull brain behind. But the scholar can say at least that Ariel belongs to a Platonic realm of the spirit that lies beyond the sensual and rational one. Crawling on the ground with Caliban is no more comfortable an intellectual experience; one must assimilate himself to a quite different realm and a no less strange one, that of half-human monsters. Caliban, too, is a fantastic and unique creature, sketchily but evocatively drawn so as to leave much to the imagination in which such as he must live if they are to live at all.

But it is to my purpose in elucidating the thematic structure of The Tempest to recall that Caliban and Ariel, different as they are, have something in common that is important for the movement of the play: they suffer from a similar sense of dislocation and depend on Prospero for their release from servitude. They thirst for the freedom they have lost, and we cannot help sympathizing a little even with Caliban's pathetic desire; but we should not forget that he seeks freedom to avenge himself, freedom to hurt and to kill. He lacks both gratitude and sense when he exchanges his benevolent master, Prospero, for the braggadocio, Stephano, and the raggamuffin, Trinculo. When the noblemen lose themselves in dreams, conspiracy, and grief, Caliban and the two clowns whom he deifies
lose themselves in the bottle. The apocalypse that strikes the noblemen dumps the servants in the pool, where they drop their bottle—an infinite loss for Stephano (IV.i.207). Prospero has his spirits administer a thorough drubbing to the three, and Caliban, at least, comes to realize his stupidity. Whether he will be able to remain wise as he promises depends on the "grace" he seeks and on strong guidance. Appropriately, he and his two companions are released not into immediate freedom but into temporary servitude so that they may find their proper subordinate place in society: they are ordered by Prospero to trim his island cave, whereas Ariel receives immediately his deserved freedom. The humorous Caliban subplot thus adds a scherzo movement to the symphonic theme of self-loss and self-recovery that reaches its purest notes in the soprano voice of Ariel.

The subhuman Caliban and the superhuman Ariel are the poles between which Prospero is placed. He shares a reason aided by grace with the former and the world of the senses and passions with the latter; the two creatures indicate the directions, evil and good, into which Prospero can move. In a way, all of Shakespeare's characters are placed between two such poles, but none is so visibly and, at the same time, symbolically assigned to a field of action in which he must move, a field that reaches from almost beneath the earth to just below the heavens. And, from the beginning, Prospero moves with energy and determination. The concentration and speed of the action result from his vigorous and firm control. He makes use of the advantage offered to him by providence and brings the moment to its crisis:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{by my prescience} \\
\text{I find my zenith doth depend upon} \\
\text{A most auspicious star, whose influence} \\
\text{If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes} \\
\text{Will ever after droop.}
\end{align*}
\]

(I.ii.180–84)

One could say even that the classical unities the play possesses are due to Prospero's direction. Divine providence brought Alonso's ship to the island, but it is Prospero who makes the work of punishment, redemption, and reconciliation happen in the last four hours of his island residence. Almost as if he had a stopwatch in his hand,
he says to Ariel: “The time ’twixt six and now / Must by us both be spent most preciously” (I.i.240-41). All through the play, there is a sense of speed, starting with the first cries of the mariners, “bestir, bestir,” a feeling maintained by frequent expletives like “here” and “now” and by the several references to Ariel’s impending release and the completion of Prospero’s work. The movement of the action, including its temporary relaxation in the more idyllic fourth act, is rigorously controlled by him. His energy infuses itself into everything and everybody, produces the storm and the rescue of the Neapolitans, sends Ariel about his work, separates Ferdinand from the others, engineers his meeting with Miranda, keeps the two from too precipitous a union, confounds and punishes his enemies, puts on a mask in celebration of the coming wedding, and finally effects the universal recovery and reconciliation.

Prospero’s control is the more impressive as it requires only a minimum of his magic skill. That he possesses great occult powers is suggested, but very little of what he actually does on the stage violates the laws of nature. He is not a very professional magician, as critics have noted. He has no magic cauldrons, no witches’ brew, no squeaking ghosts. The passage in which he evokes most nearly the traditional image of the sorcerer is his speech beginning with “Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves” (V.i.33 ff.). These lines are adapted from Medea’s incantation in Ovid’s Metamorphoses; but some of Ovid’s lurid details are left out, and the speech serves only to abjure “this rough magic.”

Prospero exerts his power largely through Ariel, whom he has learned to understand and to control evidently by the study of the books he prized above his dukedom; at times, Ariel appears to be an extension of his mind and imagination. Prospero practices white magic or theurgy, that is, magic in the service of good and performed by benevolent spirits. He appears to have derived it from a study of natural philosophy and its excrescences astrology and alchemy, and also from a knowledge of the properties of music—one of the liberal arts in which, as he says, he immersed himself in Milan. Prospero uses music by drawing on its generally acknowledged hypnotic and medicinal effects. Through his music, he stirs up emotions and allays them: a melody in the winds and in the thunder threateningly sings like an organ pipe the name of Prospero to the conscience-stricken Alonso, and gentler strains sound in the tune that assuages the Neapolitans’ grief and fury. Music here has a transforming power on
the self; it has the kind of influence that interested Thomas Wright, the \textit{nosce teipsum} author most concerned with the moving of the passions. (The section on the moving through music was added in the second edition of 1604, which had some new material on the control of the emotions.) Prospero's particular use of magic testifies to the fascination with human engineering Shakespeare evinced in his baroque plays. Like an Iago, Prospero knows how to make men lose themselves; but like an Edgar, although more successfully, he makes men find themselves.

Generally, Prospero dispenses even with his gentle magic and prefers the schoolmaster's apple and rod. He is the teacher of Miranda and Caliban, and, occasionally, of Ariel. After he has created the initial storm, he doffs his magic mantle and lectures Miranda on her past, observing in the process the degree of her attention and giving her, as it were, good and bad marks. If this be weakness, it is one with which Shakespeare may have had some personal experience and sympathy if, as Aubrey says, he was in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country. But if Prospero is at times the impatient pedagogue, he also has trained himself to be a patient researcher; he does not despise to learn even from Caliban, who curses himself for having shown Prospero the fresh springs, brine pits, and barren and fertile places.

One can look upon Prospero's activity as a kind of experiment for which the island provides the laboratory. If he is to be successful, he must show in this smaller setting that he will prevail in the greater world of Milan. His exile, except for being forced rather than voluntary, resembles the temporary experimental withdrawal of Duke Vincentio from the government of Vienna. Both dukes have a preference for the "life removed," a preference they find it hard to reconcile with the demands of their office. Both become engaged in experiments the nature of which is not evident in the beginning, experiments that involve their own self-knowledge, the government of their countries, and the relationship between their knowledge of themselves and the proper conduct of their political affairs. But \textit{Measure for Measure} treats these problems with mannerist opaqueness and indirection. The questions, it turns out, are obliquely posed because of Vincentio's choice of the corrupt Angelo to give a demonstration of the difficulty man has in meting out judgments; and, as we noted, the outcome of it all is something of a question mark. It is true that the full nature of Prospero's experiment is not revealed until its
results are established at the beginning of the fifth act when Prospero forgives his enemies and renounces his magic; but his experiment never has the psychological complications of Vincentio's, and the outcome, toward which the action develops logically and consistently, is much more neat and conclusive than that of the earlier play.

Because Prospero is the ruler over forces of nature, his experiment concerns not only psychology (or in the term of Shakespeare's time, moral philosophy) and politics but also natural science and raises the question of their relation. It is interesting in this respect that, on the connection and analogy between natural science and politics, Sir Francis Bacon based an appeal he addressed to King James in the first year of his reign. In *A Brief Discourse Touching the Happy Union of the Kingdoms of England and Scotland* (1603), Bacon argued that James should study nature in order to reign well and bring about the harmonious fusion of his two kingdoms. Bacon's Preface opens with the statement that the king should not find it strange that a certain book by Heraclitus, now lost, was regarded by some readers as a discourse on nature and by others as a treatise on politics, "because there is a great affinity and consent between the rules of nature and the true rules of policy, the one being nothing else but an order in the government of the world; and the other, in the government of an estate." Therefore, Bacon claimed, the education of the kings of Persia was called an education in "magic": "For the Persians, magic, which was the secret literature of their kings, was an observation in the contemplation of nature and an application there to a sense politic, taking the fundamental laws of nature, with the branches and passages of them, as an original and first model, whence to take and describe a copy and imitation for government."

This curious reference to magic certainly does not prove that Shakespeare read the *Brief Discourse* and was influenced by it in writing *The Tempest*. By evincing an interest in the control of nature through human energy, Shakespeare showed that, like Bacon, he belonged to a period that was fascinated with the search for power, which, as a modern historian has said, was the common ground of the baroque age. But, as we have noted at the beginning of this study, in their ideas about self-knowledge and its place in human endeavor, Bacon and Shakespeare differed fundamentally. In the *Brief Discourse* and elsewhere, Bacon looked upon natural science as the field under which to subsume all other human
knowledge and activity, whereas Shakespeare even in his late *Tempest* paid tribute to the humanistic view of man according to which a knowledge of moral nature is the initiation to all other human knowledge and endeavor. For Shakespeare-Prospero, the harmony of nature becomes secondary to the harmony of the self, which must be established if the body politic is to be ordered and governed. And the power over nature is much less important than the power over the self for Prospero: he abandons his control over the forces of nature voluntarily and returns to Milan as a ruler over himself and his dukedom.

It is only from the point of view of the centrality of the moral self and in the context of the play’s movement from losing to finding that the events of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth acts, together with the most important speech of the play, the end-of-revels speech, make sense. Already Prospero’s admission of his failure as a duke, which he makes to Miranda in the second scene, indicates how personally he is involved in the losing-finding movement that underlies the action. His account of his rapture and transport during his secret studies shows that he is a man of passionate dedication and has an explosive temperament. He has mastered this earlier weakness; but in the fourth act, he is beset by an inner turmoil that makes it at least possible that he may lose again the stability of mind and the control over himself and others he has gained in his twelve years of island residence.

Shakespeare gave Prospero’s disturbance strong dramatic emphasis by having it occur in the midst of the most idyllic episode, the performance of the masque. For no apparent reason, Prospero suddenly starts to speak. Instantaneously, his spirit-actors disperse, “to a strange, hollow, and confused noise,” as the Folio stage direction says. In an aside, Prospero explains his vexation as due to his remembering Caliban’s rebellion. Both Ferdinand and Miranda punctuate Prospero’s distemper by astonished exclamations. Prospero then begins to speak haltingly, addressing Ferdinand, until his emotion channels itself into the powerful visionary images of the end-of-revels speech. But he stops abruptly, apologizes for his weakness and infirmity, and announces that he will walk a turn or two to “still” his beating mind. The force of his passion makes itself strongly felt, although Shakespeare softened its visual impression by taking him off the stage soon after its inception. Before he goes, he expresses in a soliloquy his despair about the educability
of Caliban, a despair underlined by the repetition of the key-word "lost":

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,
Even to a roaring.

(IV.i.188-93)

When Prospero reappears, there is no apparent sign that his passion has lessened. He and Ariel unleash the spirits in the shape of dogs against the rebels, and Prospero’s last words in the fourth act have an ominous ring: “At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies” (261-62). Prospero’s enemies were at his mercy from the beginning of the play; his present awareness of his power over them raises the suspicion that he is tempted to avenge himself. Prospero is at the point where he must finally show that he is not made of the stuff of littleness that produces the villain who avenges himself but of the stuff of greatness that characterizes the hero who can forgive.

The significance of Prospero’s anger and its connection with the end-of-revels speech has frequently been misunderstood. Theodore Spencer thought that “in Prospero there is no conflict; in his control of the world, internal conflict has no place.” But this opinion disregards both Prospero’s obvious anger and the peculiar nature of this tension-fraught speech, of which something will have to be said later. Prospero’s agony, it is true, takes a very different form from similar phenomena in heroes of earlier plays. It is largely intellectual; but it differs also from the melancholy cerebration of a Hamlet, which would be out of spirit with a festival play like The Tempest and would not be in agreement with the tendency in Shakespeare’s later plays to punctuate strong movements toward man’s losing or finding himself with ecstatic states of his soul. Such climaxes in Shakespeare’s baroque tragedies and romances manifest themselves in rapture, epilepsy, dream-like experiences, and, in Prospero’s case, in an apocalyptic vision, not in a discourse of reason or in a rhetorical expression of passion.

Frank Kermode, who is among the critics that are at least surprised by Prospero’s strong perturbation, yet thinks it “apparently unnecessary” and surmises that it “may be the point in which an
oddly pedantic concern for classical structure causes it [the disturbance] to force its way through the surface of the play.” Far from it, Prospero’s anger is very important for the play, and it is not entirely unmotivated. The rebellion of Caliban threatens the loss of twelve years of Prospero’s educational labors with him and thus the failure of one half of the strictly educational side of his experiment (the success of the other half depends on Miranda’s chastity). Further, the boorish ingratitude of Caliban recalls the graver ingratitude of Antonio, and Caliban’s threat to Prospero’s order mirrors the more portentous threat to all order in Antonio’s and Sebastian’s plot against Alonso. In a sense, Caliban’s revolt can be taken as symbolic of the recalcitrance and rebelliousness inherent in all human nature owing to its being weighed down by its earthly ingredients. Thus Caliban’s rebellion can be thought to externalize an internal threat—a threat as all men face it—to Prospero’s stability, whose preservation is necessary for the happy outcome. In this respect, Caliban becomes representative of the lower forces of Prospero’s soul, of his worse self. This interpretation is supported by Prospero’s later recognizing a kind of kinship with Caliban, “this thing of darkness,” which he acknowledges as his own (V.i.275). Ariel, who in the denouement sympathizes with Prospero’s enemies, becomes symbolic of Prospero’s better self; but he is also superhuman—he has no senses, as Shakespeare reminds us—and Prospero’s problem is a human one. Significantly, we hear of Ariel’s sympathy after Prospero has made his decision strictly as a human being (V.i.1 ff.).

Prospero’s anger occurs at the structural climax of the play, the summa epitasis, but it is a mistake to assume that the play’s structure produces the anger; it would be more appropriate to say that Prospero’s vexation creates the crisis. His present understandable urge to avenge himself and his even more understandable temptation to cling to his magic powers could be as costly to him as his earlier intellectual fervor that deprived him of a dukedom. If Prospero is to demonstrate that he knows himself and that he can bring the action to a happy conclusion, he must once and climactically show that he can exorcise the ghost of potential self-loss and resist the attraction of superhuman power. This is the acid test of the long and painful struggle Prospero has waged on his island; everything depends on winning it. Only after he has shown convincingly that he has found himself can he help his enemies to find themselves. When he does, the
revenge movement of the plot turns into a movement of reconciliation. Threatening loss becomes confirmed recovery.

Prospero's end-of-revels speech has to be understood in the dramatic and thematic context that I have just sketched. It is not Shakespeare's leave-taking from life and art or a soothing commonplace—although it has a glow of sunset and a touch of serenity—but it breathes Prospero's struggle with his intemperance and impatience. Blended of nostalgia and vexation as the speech is, it rises to a consideration of life that envelops and yet transcends Prospero's particular problem and general unhappiness.

Dramatically, the speech arises from Prospero's stormy mood that interrupts the masque. It is not in sober reflection but in a near-breakdown of his self-control that Prospero, his spirits scattered in fear, turns to the astonished Ferdinand and begins to speak haltingly: "You do look, my son, in a mov'd sort, / As if you were dismay'd; be cheerful, sir, / Our revels now are ended" (IV.i.146-48). If this assurance is not apt to console Ferdinand, neither is the panoramic prediction of the disappearance of all earthly things which follows. The spirit-actors, Prospero says,

| Are melted into air, into thin air ; |
| And, like the baseless fabric of this vision, |
| The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, |
| The solemn temples, the great globe itself, |
| Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, |
| And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, |
| Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff |
| As dreams are made on; and our little life |
| Is rounded with a sleep. |

(IV.i.150-58)

We are so familiar with the speech that we forget how full of tension, how puzzling and ambiguous it is.

Prospero seemingly disparages the masque, the "baseless fabric of this vision," with which he compares the fragile and unreal show of life. His imagination wings itself above the modest masque when he considers the analogous evanescence of the earth and the unreality of life; temporary as he knows the dream of existence to be, it is yet beautiful with its cloud-capped towers, gorgeous palaces, and solemn temples. There is here an aesthetic transfiguration of what,
alas, is so fugitive, a transfiguration that envelops both life and the masque. The real and the artificial realms become indistinguishable: life is a vision and a pageant, and the masque becomes the great, dissolving globe. The beauty of the double evocation of transcience suggests Prospero’s difficulty in distancing himself from both worlds, the natural and the supernatural one, as he must as an old man who approaches the end of his life and as a mere man who must divest himself of powers that are not man’s to wield.

The two final images of Prospero’s speech are evidence of his struggle for detachment by taking refuge in conventional ideas on life and death; they are an attempt to console himself and find equilibrium. The idea of Prospero’s concluding sentence was and is commonplace, and Shakespeare’s pregnant expression has made it more so to us. Yet, in their context, these lines are charged with an ambiguity that goes beyond the traditional nature of the sentiment they express. The comparison of life to a dream was typical of contemptus mundi attitudes; it was intended to prevent man from taking life on earth as the purpose of man. As Calderón’s drama La vida es sueño shows, the concept appealed also to the baroque imagination. In Prospero’s reflection, just as in Calderón’s play, fragile man is still the maker of his dreams, and Prospero’s has a seductive glory that makes one almost forget the evanescence that is its subject. Prospero’s final image of sleep rounding off life evokes the proverbial figure of sleep as the image of death, which Shakespeare would have met in Sententiae Pueriles of early grammar school—somnum imago mortis, a proverb that was thought to accustom man to the idea of death. But the notion of the dream of life and perhaps also that of the sleep of death becomes tinged with the aesthetic and kinetic associations of the preceding stage-and-world images so as to suggest that the quality of the dream and possibly that of the sleep have something to do with man’s performance in life. This, at most, is a suggestion conveyed through the images; but, perhaps, I have merely read it into the speech.

This is not a speech of certainty—if it were, it would not fit Prospero’s humility as he expresses it in his epilogue. And the uncertainty is highlighted by the ambiguous meaning of “sleep”: we cannot be sure whether it “rounds off” life merely by bringing it to a conclusion or by coming before and after. Perhaps, as has been suggested, Shakespeare wished his audience (did he also have in mind such skeptical readers as us?) to supply their own answers.18
When it comes to what Shakespeare believed, we cannot even be sure that he really envisaged a final dissolution of the earth, although the recurrence of the idea in his plays makes it likely that he did. But Shakespeare expressed here the nostalgia and vexation of Prospero. And from the point of view of Prospero’s approach to self-knowledge, it is most important that he concern himself with the fact of mortality, universal mortality, and not with the hope of immortality. Prospero anchors his renunciation of magic on a self-knowledge humanly achieved and not on the reward of heaven. In *The Tempest*, as in Shakespeare’s later plays generally, it is apparent that man cannot seek to find himself by guessing at the designs of heaven but only by using his own resources; he can, of course, pray that these be increased by divine aid, as Prospero does in the end.

The recognition of human limitations makes Prospero not a weak but a strong man. “In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister,” Goethe says somewhere. Prospero’s role in *The Tempest* is comparable to the one Henry V, Shakespeare’s Renaissance pattern of perfection, has in his play; but it exceeds it, given the somewhat different attitude toward self-knowledge operative in the two plays. The extension of his influence through his magic gives Prospero, of course, a power of action that other Shakespearean heroes do not have (even though, as we have noted, he uses this power gently, humanly). Nothing happens in the play of which he does not have knowledge, and he instigates everything except Antonio’s plot and Caliban’s rebellion; and even these provide no real difficulty for him. Not even Duke Vincentio, whom Angelo likens to “providence divine,” manages events so flawlessly. There is no such imperfection in Prospero’s direction as is created by the reluctance of the rogue Barnardine in *Measure for Measure* to have himself executed when Vincentio expects it of him.

But Prospero is also a strong man because he has to win what Shakespeare always considered the hardest battle, that against the passion and presumption in oneself; and in his case, the battle is the harder because Prospero’s self is heightened much above the normal scale by his supernatural powers. His passions by themselves are potent, as is generally true for the heroes of Shakespeare’s baroque plays; but their potential destructiveness is increased. Some neo-Platonic practitioners of theurgy claimed that magic could elevate man to the level of the gods; but Prospero rejects this presumption and accepts his limitations as a human being. This is not because he
is a serene sage, as he is sometimes portrayed on the stage. As Edward Dowden has said, "Shakespeare has shown us his quick sense of injury, his intellectual impatience, his occasional moment of keen irritability, in order that we may be more deeply aware of his abiding strength and self-possession, and that we may perceive how these have been grafted upon a temperament not impassive or unexcitable." Given this temperament, Prospero demonstrates his victory over his passions as much as does Henry V, who says that they are as subject to him as are "our wretches fetter'd in our prisons." Henry's passions serve life sentences, but they were from the beginning lesser criminals. Prospero has the passionate nature of a baroque hero like Othello; but he also has the will-power commensurate with it, a will-power cleansed from egotistical motives. His passion and his control have the force and strain of baroque art.

Prospero owes his present strength to his consciousness of having overcome his intemperance and impatience. He could, in this respect too, be compared with Henry V, who, as a prince, had indulged himself—not in study, like Prospero, but in reveling. But, in doing so, he was conscious of his future glory and set his indulgence in contrast to it, so that to some critics his licentiousness has appeared to be a proper preparation for his later success. This is not quite so; Henry, as the ending of The Second Part of Henry IV and the beginning of Henry V make clear, goes through a "consideration" in which he sheds his offending Adam. But Henry always has control over himself, and his indulgence is a controlled indulgence; Prospero's victory over himself comes from an imperfection overcome and conquered by will power. His is a mastered self.

But Shakespeare took care not to make him prigish. He does not assume the voice and tone of perfection. Considering the echoes of the Aeneid in The Tempest—a drama that takes place in the general location of Virgil's epic—it is remarkable that Prospero is so unlike the stately Roman vir perfectus. Although Aeneas, Dido, and Carthage are referred to in the play, Prospero has a quite un-Virgilian humanity and humility. Even in comparison to Henry V, who has a touch of Aeneas, Prospero appears extremely modest. The portrait of Prospero, pattern of perfection that it represents in its particular way, breathes a much stronger awareness of human imperfection than does the figure of Henry V. But then, The Tempest also contains a strong echo of Montaigne, who, as we have noted, criticized the Renaissance pattern of perfection as unrealistic and un-
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attainable. Prospero has some obvious human weaknesses: he is impetuous; he coaxes, lectures, blusters, and threatens. He is irritated not only with Caliban and the Neapolitans but also occasionally with Ariel, Ferdinand, and Miranda. Prospero's is a changeable, adaptable self of the sort Montaigne saw and observed in himself and others. Prospero’s attitudes and moods range widely: he is fervent at one moment and wise at the next; he detaches himself from the world at one time and, at another, immerses himself in it with excitement. His Protean personality is, for instance, exemplified in the long second scene with Miranda, when he is, in turns, a loving father, a narrator of past events, a coaxing schoolmaster, a preacher of faith, and a mighty magician. Such quick changes of roles put actors to a severe, perhaps an impossible, test.

In the end, he affirms his temperance, patience, and humility. He does not here or elsewhere become a “close replica to Christ,” as Professor Wilson Knight says in pardonable enthusiasm for his character. Neither does he show himself as weak and prone to further disasters, as some critics would have it. Prospero, says Northrop Frye, “appears not to be promising much improvement after he returns.” One suspects that the major reasons for this doubt about Prospero’s continuing strength lie in his prediction that in Milan “every third thought shall be my grave” (V.i.311) and in the acknowledgment of his final prayer that from now on he will have only human strength. But in concerning himself with death and its requirements, he follows a long-standing stipulation of self-knowledge. “To philosophize is to learn to die” was the title of one of Montaigne’s essays, which echoed a long tradition that, in its Christian form, went back to the *ars moriendi.* For Prospero, the preparation for death is, because of his age, a governmental and a human sine qua non; but it does not exclude other important considerations. If one wanted to be mathematical, he could say that, in turning every third thought toward the grave, Prospero will be using merely that part of his time made free by giving up Miranda, whom he earlier called “a third of mine own life” (IV.i.3). But it will be sufficient to say that Prospero’s success as an island ruler bodes well for his strength as a duke in Milan.

The ending of *The Tempest* does suggest that self-control and political control are an unfinished and continuing business, for which human might and divine grace are needed; but it does not show that Prospero is tired of his work or defeated by it. Neither, I think, is
there anything in *The Tempest* that shows it to be the work of a tired Shakespeare who had too many third thoughts, be it thought illness or religious preoccupation or both, as has been suggested. The tight structure and the sweep of ideas do not support Lytton Strachey's claim that Shakespeare, when writing his romances, was bored with nearly everything, with life, and even with drama, with all but poetic dreams. And I cannot, with Clifford Leech, detect in this play a Shakespeare weakened by the Puritan impulse. Though for Leech *The Tempest* is still "the fullest and most ordered expression" of this impulse, it shows signs that Shakespeare had grown "tired of disciplining human nature and recognized it as impossible to execute." A certain fideism, as I have suggested, is notable in Shakespeare's plays long before *The Tempest*; but it is not, in any specific sense, Calvinistic or Puritan. In Calvin's *Institutes* life may have the evanescence of Prospero's vision, but it altogether lacks its glory.

Shakespeare, of course, did acknowledge in *The Tempest* that the disciplining of human nature has its limits. For these, Caliban, on whose nature "nurture" has not so far taken, is the most obvious example. But even he becomes in the end somewhat of an educational success when he promises to "be wise hereafter, / And seek for grace" (V.i.294-95). Undoubtedly, Caliban will need much grace if he is to reach a normal level of intelligence and morality, but the fact that now he recognizes the fundamental difference between the scoundrels whom he adored as gods and his kind master whom he caused anguish provides grounds for hope. Caliban's pledge to change his ways is a delayed reaction to Prospero's pains taken with him and provides an ever so slight support for the expectation of general improvement.

Prospero, his final humility and the tentativeness of the conversion of his enemies notwithstanding, is a very strong hero, perhaps Shakespeare's strongest. He has achieved self-knowledge in terms of the definition of the Christian humanists. "Nothing," said Erasmus in *Enchiridion*, "is more hard than that a man should overcome himself; but, then, there is no greater reward than is felicity." This reward is promised to Prospero when he controls his passions and renounces the magic of unlimited power. But Prospero has also come as close as possible to achieving self-knowledge in terms of those who, like Montaigne, thought that the Christian humanists' program was simplified and in need of revision. He does not seek self-knowledge by lessons on body and soul and on the nature of the
passions, but he realizes that it is an on-going process that ends only with death. He will base his life in Milan on this realization, which includes an acknowledgement of his weakness, the weakness of being human. His future power to transform the world and to master others will lie not in the magician's wand, not in a power over nature, not in Machiavellian schemes, but in a strength that radiates from a mastered self. There are good reasons to believe that Prospero will retain his mastery and become the fortunate man that his name implies—good human reasons, at least. And for the rest, Prospero prays for divine grace (a supplication that Shakespeare combined with a compliment to that deity of the dramatists, the audience).

Whether Prospero's reliance on a political control that centers on self-control is fantastic or prophetic must be decided by the future of mankind, not by the reader or writer of this book. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect man to act like a Prospero. Perhaps it is merely a humanistic dream that the strength of man develops by self-conquest and that felicity ensues when man limits his power and abandons the idea of dominating others through social and scientific means. But it is not an implausible dream, and its fulfillment, which will require a most propitious star, is still one of mankind's happier expectations.