Prospero and the Best State of the Commonwealth

Prospero’s name in itself suggests the form Shakespeare chose to construct his main character in *The Tempest*. In Cooper’s *Thesaurus*, “prospero, prosperas” is glossed as “to give prosperity: to make prosperous: to give success to.”

Consistent with Prospero’s godlike and patriarchal identities, and with the play’s strategies for praise, is this explicit naming of the ruler as the one on whom civil life depends for its goodness. But while the representation of Prospero proceeds by a demonstration of exemplary choices and actions, implicit in this demonstration is always an element of persuasion.

This linking of praise and persuasion is present in George Puttenham’s instructions concerning the appropriate style for praise; there must be, he says, “decencie” and “comelinesse” both “in prayse or dispraise” and in “praise & perswasion.” When Brian Vickers discusses the persuasive function of epideictic, he recalls Aristotle’s explanation of the connection between praise and action: “To praise a man is in one respect akin to urging a course of action. The suggestions made in the latter case become encomiums when differently expressed. . . . Consequently, whenever you want to praise any one, think what you would urge people to do” (1367b35ff). In *The Tempest*, the support of and persuasion to constitutionalism is richly and diplomatically packaged in a godlike and fatherlike ruler who nevertheless chooses to give up his transcendent power.

The following discussion focuses on three aspects of Shake-
The Virgilian patterns that Shakespeare refigured for Prospero's role place *The Tempest* directly in the line of earlier imitators of the *Aeneid*. Following the practice of Tasso, who, like Homer, was understood to have used two different characters to present the images of the public and private man, Shakespeare created the private man, Ferdinand, primarily from patterns in the Dido and Aeneas love story. But he constructed Prospero in such a way that he embodies the idea of rule associated with Aeneas in and after book 6 (that is, Aeneas as one who will be an ideal governor), and also so that he carries, but transforms, the ideas of wrath, revenge, and destruction associated with the Troy story in *Aeneid* 2 and 3. Thus, in the part of Prospero, as in other instances in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare conflates widely separated sections of Virgil's text.

This method dominates the composition of Prospero's first scene (1.2) where he, like Aeneas in *Aeneid* 2 and 3, speaks a long narration of the past that establishes him as the figure who holds the memory of the culture and is haunted by its tragedies. But as he speaks to a daughter who recalls only that "Four or five women once . . . tended me" (1.2.44), the tone of his narrative has none of the hesitancy and grief that marks Aeneas's story, conserving only a sense that there is no time for delay: "Tis time I should inform thee farther" (1.2.22–23), he says; "The hour's now come" (1.2.36).

Various features of this conversation show how Shakespeare combined earlier Virgilian patterns with later ones. Prospero speaks here not as Aeneas did to Dido—as visitor to stranger—but
as father to child, a fact that also recalls Anchises’ words to Aeneas in the underworld, “I will teach you your fate” (“te tua fata docebo,” 6.759). At another point in the scene there is a variation on the familiar paradox that Troy had to fall in order for Rome to come into being. Questioning the significance of having been thrust from Milan, Miranda asks: “What foul play had we, that we came from thence? / Or blessed was’t we did?” (1.2.60–61). Prospero’s reply—“Both, both”—is an appreciation of the paradox that Aeneas did not grasp about his own situation until he had heard the prophecies of Anchises in Aeneid 6 and could begin to imagine his destiny.

In the final passage of Prospero’s conversation with Miranda, he again expresses an attitude reminiscent of Aeneas in Aeneid 6:

By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune,  
(Now my dear lady) hath mine enemies  
Brought to this shore; and by my prescience  
I find my zenith doth depend upon  
A most auspicious star, whose influence  
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes  
Will ever after droop.

(1.2.178–84)

Here Prospero claims for himself two of the most important characteristics with which Virgil associated Aeneas. In the phrases that contain the words “Fortune,” “zenith,” “auspicious star,” and “fortunes,” he declares himself to be a man whose destiny is at hand, as was Aeneas’s upon arriving in Italy. He too possesses the “fatum” that set Aeneas apart from all others. Second, in his reference to his “prescience,” Prospero declares that he also possesses knowledge of the future, a characteristic Virgil does not assign to Aeneas until Aeneid 6, where, after listening to the prophecy of the Sibyl, he replies, “I have foreseen [praecipi] and thought all in my soul” (“omnia praecipi atque animo mecum ante peregi,” 6.105). In a conflation of characteristics of the heroic Aeneas which in Virgil stand several books apart, Prospero appears in his first scene as a man of memory, vision, and wisdom.

The dignity that such conflation confers upon Prospero’s char-
acter is further stabilized by Shakespeare’s making him a magician. Because of James I’s cultivated reputation as a philosophic ruler, a Hermes Trismegistus, the first association of the magus figure for the Jacobean court audience would no doubt have been with the tradition of the philosopher-king. Earlier, in *Gesta Grayorum*, the entertainment prepared by Gray’s Inn for the Christmas revels of 1594, this tradition had been articulated in terms that others have also seen as relevant to *The Tempest*. In that entertainment, one of the counselors describes the king as a magician who engages in “the exercise of the best and purest part of the mind.” “Antiquity . . . informeth us,” he says, “that the [governments of] kingdoms have always had an affinity with the secrets and mysteries of learning.” The Persian magi and the gymnosophists of Asia exemplified the tradition that the happiest kingdoms are those whose rulers were “most addicted to philosophy.” To pursue that same end, the prince should collect a perfect library, devise a magnificent garden as “a model of universal nature,” possess a “hugh cabinet” full of examples of both man’s and Nature’s finest creations, and acquire “a still-house, so furnished with mills, instruments, furnaces, and vessels, as may be a palace fit for a philosopher’s stone,” so that he may become a Hermes Trismegistus and “be left the only miracle and Wonder of the world” (p. 335).

Shakespeare made his magician both Virgilian and Jamesian by arranging that Prospero’s magic be articulated through patterns that Virgil used for his gods, a method that also plays off the similitude that kings are like gods. Like Aeolus, Prospero has “Put the wild waters in this roar” (1.2.2); like Neptune, he has “safely ordered” (1.2.29), so that the victims of the storm do not suffer great harm; and like Jupiter, who comforted the fearful Venus (“Spare thy fear,” *parce metu*, 1.257), he tells Miranda, “Be collected . . . tell your piteous heart / There’s no harm done” (1.2.12–14). Later in the scene Prospero replicates more godlike patterns when he oversees the young love of Ferdinand and Miranda, as Venus and Juno oversaw that of Dido and Aeneas and, when he issues commands to Ariel, as Jupiter did to Mercury.

Shifting the godlike powers in this play to a mortal also accommodates the problem of trying to achieve in Christian times a suc-
cessful imitation of Virgil’s epic machinery. Shakespeare models Ariel, the aerial spirit every renowned magus would have in his company, on the pattern of Mercury. When Mercury, in the Aeneid, carries Jupiter’s message to Aeneas to leave Carthage, he puts wings on his feet so that he can fly, he drives the winds, skims the clouds, and speeds down to the waves (4.238–58). So, in Ariel’s first speech of the play, the daemon offers “to fly, / To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride / On the curl’d clouds” (1.2.190–92) in order to do Prospero’s bidding. Also, like Virgil’s Mercury, who “gives or takes away sleep” (“dat somnos adimitque,” 4.244), Ariel later uses sleep to quiet Alonso and Gonzalo and then awakens them to save them from their enemies (2.1.292–300).

In these actions Ariel represents, at least in part, what Mercury was to the allegorizers. For Ficino, he was “the one who carried and revealed the hermetic mysteries,” and for Bernardus he represented “the activity of the mind,” because he revealed contrived matters. And thus he was also called Hermes, that is interpres, ‘explanation.’ As an aerial spirit doing the bidding of a magus, Ariel manifests the degree to which Prospero is the master of his own soul. A version of an Aeneas figure who has completed much of his journey but who is now about to reenter (rather than enter) the active, governing aspect of his life, Prospero also displays through Ariel the magisterial control he can exercise over everything around him.

Such control, especially in the early scenes, may present a character seemingly static in conception. Yet it is a conception that exactly fits the language that Bacon, Salisbury, and other contemporaries used when they “translated” James’s similitude about kings being gods. In his power and in his effect on the kingdom, the king was the principale agens, the primum mobile, the primus motor, the primum movens. Or, as James put it, kings could “make and unmake their subjects . . . have power of raising, and casting downe: of life, and of death.” It would seem that, in these aspects at least, Shakespeare’s representation of Prospero is of “the sacred and authoritarian word . . . with its indisputability, uncondition-ality, and unequivocality,” a sacredness characterized by “its inertness, its withdrawal from dialogue.”
OCCASIONAL PATTERNS IN ARIEL AND CALIBAN

What disrupts the static quality of his presentation is the presence of the two nonhuman characters, Ariel and Caliban, whom Prospero commands. This triangle of characters acts out a complex set of power relations that share a conceptual similarity with those between king and Parliament in 1610. Like James and Parliament arguing over supply, Ariel and Caliban talk to Prospero about what they must do for him and what they will get in return. Shakespeare’s method here depends primarily on the skillful assignment and management of voice. Even as Prospero speaks with the flat, impenetrable voice of the gods, so Ariel and Caliban speak with the various voices of subjects.

Ariel’s is the voice of humility and obedience, as advocated by Puttenham: “in negotiating with Princes we ought to seek their favour by humilitie & not by sternnesse” (p. 293), and “in speaking to a Prince the voyce ought to be lowe” (p. 294). Clearly, this was the standard form of address to use with the monarch. Caliban, on the other hand, speaks in a rude voice of challenge, complaint, and accusation, an alternative style that Puttenham advises against: “Princes may be lead but not driven, nor they are to be vanquisht by allegation, but must be suffred to have the victorie and be relented unto: nor they are not to be chalenged for right or justice, for that is a maner of accusation. . . . Likewise in matter of advise it is neither decent to flatter him for that is servile, neither to be to rough of plaine with him, for that is daungerous” (pp. 293, 295).

On the surface, such assignments of voice to Ariel and Caliban may seem simple. But even as Puttenham knew that the voice selected comprised a technique (hence his reference to the courtier as the “faire semblant,” p. 299), so there is a great deal of equivocation, amounting to paradox, in the effect and implication of these two voices being present, and present in characters of such opposite (Ariel/high; Caliban/low) natures. Thus, even though humility can suggest an obedient and respectful attitude, it can also disguise a self-interested motive. But a rude voice can be a disguise too,
Prospero and the Best State of the Commonwealth

and especially in a work of fiction written for a culture where the standards for decency and comeliness predisposed the assumption that someone with a rude voice was not only imprudent but discreditable. Thus, in *The Tempest*, where this rude voice fits Caliban's subhuman status, it becomes both representative of baseness (that is, what is not normative and so not to be valued), and a disguise for the voice of challenge and accusation—or, to shift back to the terms of epideictic, the voice of vituperation and blame. In other words, in this situation, ironically and paradoxically, the voice of blame (and the character who speaks with it) is discountable for its indecency and uncomeliness yet is creditable and compelling insofar as the vices it enumerates are recognizable as those of a ruler who has insufficient regard for the freedom of subjects.

Whatever the case at any one moment in the play, Caliban and Ariel can best be understood when, in the context of their dealings with Prospero, they are read relationally, not allegorically. We would not, for example, want to fix our reading so that we always saw Ariel as the properly obedient subject and Caliban as the disobedient one deserving of punishment. Nor does the project involve matching a speech of Ariel or Caliban with a particular speech or speaker in Parliament. The object instead is to see how the issues that Parliament and James were debating, the idioms in which they cast this debate, and the forms of address they used when they responded to each other have been given concrete representation in a parodic fictional setting. In the process, we witness both the means by which controversy can be fictionalized, and also another example of the "expansion of the literary language that results from drawing on various extraliterary strata of the national language."

Before proceeding to the ways in which Ariel and Caliban represent conflict and struggle, we should first acknowledge how exactly they iterate the common ground shared by all those who participated in the argument over royal power—namely, the assumption, central to the very concept of English monarchy, that in certain areas no one could interfere with the king's exercise of power. In the heated sessions that took place at the end of June, Henry Martin, discussing the issue of whether the king had any
“absolute power,” argued that, if he did, “it is in matters of justice, or in matters of treason or felony” (Gardiner, p. 89). Thomas Hedley made the same point, only he emphasized that some prerogatives did not need to be disputed because they were not as easily abused as were impositions. His list of such indisputable prerogatives, similar to and yet more complete than Martin’s, included “making war and peace, enhancing or debasing coin, pardoning of felons and offenders, making of judges, etc.” (Foster, 2:183).

When Shakespeare shows Ariel stopping the treasonous attack of Antonio and Sebastian on Alonso, has the harpy-Ariel denounce the three men of sin in the banquet scene, and routs the treasonous Caliban in the glistering apparel scene, he is acknowledging these necessary and acceptable prerogatives of the king.

Beyond this acknowledgment of the rightful powers of the king, the basic issue that Ariel and Caliban represent in relation to Prospero is that of reciprocity, that is, meum et tuum, the principle that the Commons urged on the king from the very beginning of the session. When he asked for supply, they responded by asking what the king would, in turn, give to them. In his March speech James made this same point, though emphasizing his own needs, when he explained that “Duetie I may justly claime of you as my Subjects; and one of the branches of duetie which Subjects owe to their Soveraigne is Supply” (McIlwain, p. 317). In The Tempest, both Ariel and Caliban are shown as deeply beholden to Prospero, and likewise he to them. In exchange for having set him free from a pine tree, Prospero now requires Ariel to fulfill all of his commands. The obedient Ariel is also aware that the relationship is a reciprocal one: “Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains, / Let me remember thee what thou hast promis’d, / Which is not yet perform’d me. . . . My liberty” (1.2.242-45). Likewise, Prospero says that upon coming to the island he treated Caliban very well (“us’d thee with human care . . . lodg’d thee / In mine own cell,” 1.2.347-49), though now he needs Caliban more than the belligerent Caliban thinks he needs Prospero. “We cannot miss him,” Prospero tells Miranda; “he does make our fire; / Fetch in our wood, and serve in offices / That profit us” (1.2.312-14). In other words, although he is now offering resistance to Prospero’s
demands ("There's wood enough within," "I must eat my dinner," 1.2.316, 332). Caliban's basic function is to supply Prospero. All during the debates on impositions, the central issue for the Commons was the need to protect the property of the subject. This is the point around which Nicholas Fuller, invoking, like others, Magna Carta, organized his entire speech of June 23, where he explained that his "arguments for the freedom of the subject" would show "that by the laws of England the subjects have such property in their lands and goods as that without consent the king can take no part of" (Foster, 2:152). This argument was in effect one that opposed the concept of absolute monarchy by setting against it a concept of absolute property (and hence an argument for the absolute rights of subjects). One way of articulating the argument about property was to distinguish the status of a subject from that of a slave, the former having a status before the law that protects him and gives him rights, the latter not. When some members of the Lower House protested the king's system of impositions, they argued that impositions had the effect of making the people slaves. James Whitelocke, in his speech arguing the "essence" of the kingdom and his fear of subjects becoming "tenants at [the king's] will," cited a precedent from the reign of Richard III when "the Commons of this his Realme . . . have been put to great servitude" (A Learned and Necessary Argument, C3). "We are," Whitelocke said, emphasizing the consensualist position, "masters of our own and can have nothing taken from us without our consents." At one point, Thomas Edmondes wrote William Trumbull that the object of Parliament had now to be "to redeem a greater burden and thralldom" (Foster, 1:47). One of the strongest statements of this sort was that of Hedley, who argued that "the liberty of the subject" exists principally "in matter of profit and property" (Foster, 2:191). Therefore, "take away the liberty of the subject" in these matters "and you make a promiscuous confusion of a freeman and a bound slave, which slavery is as repugnant to the nature of an Englishman as allegiance and due subjection is to his own proper and peculiar" (Foster, 2:192).

This promiscuous confusion is replicated in the patterning of Caliban's role on that of a displanted native. Actually named in the
list of actors as “a savage and deformed slave,” he is an exaggerated representation of that debased and deformed state that some parliamentarians claimed they would be reduced to were subjects to lose their rights. And because Shakespeare had at hand the other contemporary context of plantation, especially that of Ireland where slavery was also an issue, he could superimpose the image of the enslaved and colonized native upon that of the subject who is no longer, as Whitelocke would say, his own “master.”

All these images, and their accompanying languages, are simultaneously written into Caliban’s protest that Prospero has taken what is not his:

This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak’st from me . . .
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own King.

(1.2.332–33, 342–44)

According to Bakhtin, such superimposition virtually defines the nature of parody: “in parody two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects. It is true that only one of these languages (the one that is parodied) is present in its own right; the other is present . . . as an actualizing background for creating and perceiving.” In the vituperative Caliban, who characterizes Prospero’s power as strong enough to reduce even the god Setebos to the status of “vassal” (1.2.376), the language “present in its own right” is that of the opposition parliamentarians, to whose position Shakespeare gives dramatic actuality when he provides Caliban with an identity that they insisted an English subject was not to have. However, this does not mean that scholars are mistaken in finding here a colonialist discourse; on the contrary, Bakhtin’s explanation of parody helps to confirm its presence.

Parody, a method of composition that Greene speaks of as one of the dominant modes of imitative writing, is also a method that hides intent. As Bakhtin stresses, “Theoretically it is possible to sense and recognize in any parody that ‘normal’ language, that ‘normal’ style, in light of which the given parody was created. But in practice it is far from easy and not always possible.” And in The
Tempest, the act of recognition required by parody is continually complicated by Shakespeare’s switching, as it were, the sides on which the norm and its parody might be expected to be found.

One aspect of the normal language of the parliamentary debates, for instance, was the citation of precedents by which could be measured the regularity or irregularity of King James’s actions. On the issue of impositions, a frequently cited precedent was that no impositions had been levied in England for one hundred and eighty years, from the time of Edward III until the time of Queen Mary.26 Especially important in this context was the fact that Elizabeth herself had levied impositions, as Salisbury was eager to remind Parliament when he spoke to them on July 10, 1610, referring to “the impost upon the currants (set in the Queen’s time, and then carried in a monopolie)” (Gardiner, p. 157). The Commons also referred to this precedent in the Petition of Temporal Grievances, issued just days before Salisbury spoke, where they admitted that impositions “were in some use in the late Queen’s time, and not then much impugned, because the usage of them being more moderate, gave not so great occasion of offense.” Moreover, Parliament urged that the king not “continue any grievance upon your people, because you found them begun in your predecessor’s time” (Foster, 2:257).

In The Tempest, Shakespeare displaces these arguments about the preceding monarch onto Prospero’s female predecessor, Sycorax, whose behavior Prospero describes to Caliban:

too delicate  
To act her earthy and abhorr’d commands,  
Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,  
By help of her more potent ministers.  

(1.2.272–75)

This description of how an earlier authority, in this case a female, also tried to control Caliban would seem to make Sycorax into a parody of Queen Elizabeth, as Ariel and Caliban are of Parliament. Even though elsewhere Caliban appeals to her precedent for his own legitimacy, here it is her precedent for taking power and containing her opposition that receives emphasis.

It should be admitted that the political story we are considering
116  Prospero and the Best State of the Commonwealth

has a confusing aspect, in that it is Caliban, not Prospero, who evokes Sycorax to claim his own legitimacy. While it might be possible to make sense of this confusion by positing that what is being referred to is the legitimacy of Parliament's status under Elizabeth, the outcome of our efforts is just as likely to shake our confidence in our ability to identify equivalencies. At any point, we may feel, our ability to distinguish between legal and illegal ruler, master and slave, could falter, so fluid and abstract is the play's referential method. And if we grasp, for security, the notion that Sycorax is the black magical alternative to Prospero as magus, that confidence will also disappear when we reach, much later, the speech where Prospero gives up his magic, a speech modeled on an Ovidian passage spoken by the witch Medea.

This is not the only place where Shakespeare manipulates categories and displaces language. In a passage that follows shortly after this one, where Caliban speaks of Prospero's having usurped the island which was his "by Sycorax my mother," he also tells of how Prospero, upon first coming to the island, had been kind to him: "When thou cam'st first, / Thou strok'st me, and made much of me . . . and then I lov'd thee, / And show'd thee all the qualities of the isle, / The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile; / Curs'd be I that did so" (1.2.334–41). Here again, one starting point for grasping the referent is the perspective of the Commons in the Petition of Temporal Grievances, where they recalled for the king how they had treated him when he first came to their land. They reminded James that the people then expressed their "cheerful affections . . . by their joyful receiving of your Majesty at your happy entrance into this kingdom . . . as also by their extraordinary contributions granted since unto you, such as never have been yielded to any former prince upon the like terms and occasions" (Foster, 2:258). Once again, master and slave seem to have exchanged languages. In this play it is the foreigner, Prospero, who initiated the kindness to the native, Caliban.

Shakespeare's technique might, therefore, be compared to the "world upside down" iconography popular in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. These metaphoric graphics picture a series of inversions—a man carrying a beast of burden, a
servant beating his master, and so on. The ideological ambivalence of such a picture permits either the interpretation that the picture supports the existing ideology by mocking its inversion or that it mocks the existing ideology as in itself a perversion. On the one hand, Prospero's thoroughgoing domination of both Ariel and Caliban can be taken as representing the significance of the royal prerogative, which nothing, not even the Great Contract, should be allowed to diminish. Moreover, the representation of parliamentary positions in two nonhuman figures can be taken as having a satiric thrust; these diminutive others can suggest an uncomplimentary caricaturing of Parliament. But the opposite reading is also possible. Even as a cartoonist may draw a caricature of the ideological position he favors as well as of that he disfavors, so can the caricaturing of Ariel and Caliban be understood as reflecting the right role of Parliament. In this reading, Ariel and Caliban are again structures that function collaboratively, with Ariel representing Parliament's high role as counselor to the king and Caliban the essential role that opposition to authority plays in the commonwealth. In this regard, we may note with some interest the statement made by Sir Julius Caesar, drawn up on December 20, 1610, urging that Parliament be prorogued rather than dissolved; “notice of another parliament,” Caesar said, would indicate “a dislike of these parliament men ‘who are held amongst the common people the best patriots that ever were,’ most valued for their greatest contempt to the King” (Foster, 2:348).

We need this grasp of Shakespeare's shiftiness in his manipulation of rhetorical structures—a grasp, that is, of the potential ideological ambivalence of his caricatures of the ruler-subject relationship—in order to consider two other central political issues in the 1610 parliamentary proceedings, the related terms of complaint and restraint. In the March speech, James took the position that Parliament could not dispute the royal prerogative; it was “sedition in Subjects, to dispute what a King may do in the height of his power . . . I will not be content that my power be disputed upon” (Mcllwain, p. 310). He also spoke at some length about grievances and the necessity that the Commons bring the people's grievances to him. But he then turned again to the topic of their
disputing his prerogative, instructing the Commons, “doe not meddle with the maine points of Government; that is my craft,” and “I would not have you meddle [sic] with such ancient Rights of mine, as I have received from my Predecessors,” and “beware to exhibit for Grievance anything that is established by a settled Law” (p. 315). Parliament’s response to this position was firm. They had always had the right to dispute, as Wentworth explained: “Is not the king’s prerogative disputable? Do not our books in 20 cases argue what the king may do and what not do by his prerogative. . . . Nay if we shall once say that we may not dispute the prerogative, let us be sold for slaves” (Foster, 2:82–83). The Commons’s more formal response to the king was to issue the Petition of Right, dated May 23, and, in July, the Petition of Temporal Grievances.

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare replicates the debate over the right to dispute and the right to issue grievances by inventing actions and speech that concretize the two terms of restraint and complaint that were so central to this aspect of the debate and recur in both petitions, as well as in the speeches of James and the debates in Parliament.

The code word *restraint* entered the Petition of Right when Parliament addressed the fact that they “have received, first by message and since by speech from your Majesty, a commandment of restraint from debating in Parliament your Majesty’s right of imposing” and then informed the king that the “prerogatives of that king concerning directly the subject’s right . . . have been ever freely debated . . . both in this and all former Parliaments, without restraint” (Tanner, p. 246, italics added). “Restraint” and the variant “restrain” also occurred repeatedly in the debates when the Commons argued whether or not the king could levy impositions, the idea being that to levy an imposition, or to impose, was itself a form of restraint.29 This point was made in a slightly different way by Fuller when he argued that because impositions were illegal, to levy them was to restrain the law, or, as he put it, “the power of the law in this land is not to be restrained by the power of the king” (Foster, 2:153).

In *The Tempest*, Prospero exercises his power by restraining or confining those on the island. He threatens to return Ariel to confinement in a tree, this time an oak instead of the weaker pine tree
that Sycorax had used; and he has “confin’d” Caliban “into this rock” (1.2.363). Later he casts a spell on the Alonso party that leaves them, as Ariel says, “Confin’d . . . all prisoners . . . . They cannot budge” (5.1.7–11).

In addition to using forms of confinement, Prospero also restrains by silencing or threatening to silence Ariel and Caliban, a pattern that duplicates James’s attempt to silence his opposition by forbidding the Commons to dispute. Prospero warns Ariel that imprisonment in an oak will be the result “if thou more murmur’st” (1.2.294), and he threatens Caliban with “Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up” (1.2.328). The implications of these threats, especially as they reflect what was happening in Parliament, extend even beyond the issue of disputing to include the fear that, should the Great Contract be passed and the king’s revenue thereby guaranteed, then the king would not have to summon Parliament at all, in which case it would be completely silenced. In his speech of May 21, James certainly had done nothing to allay such fears, as he declared, “be not misled that the more wayward you shall be I shall be the more unwilling to call you to parliament, for such behavior will make me call you the seldomest to council” (Foster, 2:105). In *The Tempest*, Prospero threatens to silence Ariel, but he also keeps summoning him to do his bidding, even as James had originally summoned the Parliament of 1610 to settle the matter of his supply. In 1611, people were wondering when the king would call his counselors together again.

We get a somewhat clearer idea of how complicated and tense the entire situation in 1610 had become when we find references in the records of Parliament to occasions on which fear so overcome everyone that no one dared speak: knowledge that “speeches in the House of Commons critical of royal policy were instantly reported to the crown . . . . ‘brought so base a fear amongst them, no man dareth speak freely’” (Foster, 2:46n.), and “It seemeth by this great silence men do not think it safe to speak” (Foster, 2:88). In such an atmosphere, it is even more understandable that Fuller should focus his entire speech of June 23 upon “arguments for the freedom of the subject” (Foster, 2:152), and that Shakespeare, in imitating this discourse, should punctuate the play with lines in which Ariel and Caliban cry out for their liberty and freedom.
As even these cries suggest, the counterbalance to restraint and silencing, in Parliament as in The Tempest, was the insistence on the right to issue grievances, or to complain. How closely associated are the ideas of restraining and complaining in this context is obvious from the way they fall together in James’s speech of May 21: “I told you my meaning was [not] to forbid you to complain if their were inconvenience or heaviness, inequality, disproportion or disorder in matter of trade; from this I mean not to restrain you” (Foster, 2:102; her brackets). In the Petition of Temporal Grievances, the Commons explained that the people, “perceiv[ing] their common and ancient right and liberty to be much declined and infringed in these late years, do with all duty and humility present these just complaints thereof to your view” (Foster, 2:257), and asked that “we may receive to these our complaints your most gracious answer” (Foster, 2:258). The Commons matched this insistence on verbalizing their griefs with language that expressed the effect of those griefs. In the Petition of Right, they complained that the king’s actions caused them to “languish in much sorrow and discomfort” (Tanner, p. 247). Fuller called this abuse of power a “hurt” (Foster, 2:152) and a “burden” (2:26, 75). James, too, on May 21, used the word hurt to refer to “any just grievance” (Foster, 2:102).

Shakespeare conflates and reifies this complaint and hurt by developing for Caliban a coarse and cursing language of complaint about all the physical ills that Prospero inflicts upon him:

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him
By inch-meal a disease! his spirits hear me,
And yet I needs must curse . . .
For every trifle are they set upon me;
Sometime like apes, that mow and chatter at me,
And after bite me; then like hedghogs, which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount
Their pricks at my foot fall; sometime am I
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness.

(2.2.1–14; cf. 1.2.327–32)
In giving such angry and vociferous representation to Parliament's own complaining, Shakespeare dramatizes both the idea that a king could do great hurt to a subject, and Parliament's reputation at court for growing entirely too insolent and contemptuous in their attitude toward the king. On May 21, James remarked that they were "peevious and undutiful subjects that will petition to the king for that wherein they know his mind already, it is both superfluous and a piece of contempt" (Foster, 2:105). And Thomas Egerton, Lord Ellesmere, writing "Special Observations Touching all the Sessions of the Last Parliament," referred to the "very audacious and contemptuous speeches" given "against the King's regal prerogative" in the Lower House, to the Commons's desire only "to quarrel," and to the "irregular and insolent course of their proceeding."

If Shakespeare represents through Caliban one view of the Commons, he sometimes represents through Ariel an ideally obsequious Commons such as the king himself would have preferred. Such a subservient (Puttenham would say "comely") persona was actually available in the language that the Commons used in representing themselves officially to the king. That persona was the one adopted for the Petition of Right, where the Commons addressed James as "Most gracious Sovereign" and referred to themselves as "your humble subjects" who "do with all humble duty make this remonstrance to your Majesty," "your Majesty's most humble, faithful, and loyal subjects [who] shall ever (according to our bounden duty) pray for your Majesty's long and happy reign over us" (Tanner, pp. 245-47). Ariel is also able to speak in this voice: "All hail, great master . . . I come / To answer thy best pleasure" (1.2.189-90); "What would my potent master? here I am" (4.1.34); "Thy thoughts I cleave to. What's thy pleasure?" (4.1.164).

Despite the similarity in style here, the opponents of the king were not, like Ariel, asking what they could do for him but, as we have said before, what he could do for them. The effect on James of their insistent complaining was that he became by May 19 (two days before he would speak again to Parliament and four days before the date of the Petition of Right) "extremely disquieted
with our long forbearing” (Foster, 1:96). Said Wentworth politely, “We all had cause to be sorry that the King should be disquieted with any proceedings of ours” (Foster, 1:97).

Caliban has the same disquieting effect on Prospero. In the midst of celebrating the betrothal of Miranda and Ferdinand, Prospero suddenly flies into a “passion that works him strongly.” The masque disintegrates, the spirits leave. Prospero, as sure of Caliban’s treasonous intents as James was of the seditiousness of some members of the Commons, prepares to punish him and his cohorts. First they are led through a stinking swamp; then they are shown to be so petty that they can be distracted from their seditious intents by clothes hanging on a line. If one feels that Shakespeare gives Caliban rough treatment here for being a debased mutation of the Aeneas pattern, one may also feel (to the extent that one sees Caliban figuring them) that the poet is presenting the predicament of those in his own culture who challenge absolute authority. For whoever one sees as these characters run off the stage chased by a ruler’s hunting dogs, the final point is the same: the person who is forced to run is the person who confirms the hunch that one person on the island has more power than anyone else.

Of the several achievements of the Ariel and Caliban material, then, the primary one remains the opportunity to voice blame while at the same time appearing not to blame. These constructions allow no sacrifice of attention to contemporary issues and yet they avoid accusation. The resultant validation of all sides provides the attitude within which the play can suggest a resolution to conflicts.

THE GIVING OF MERCY AND THE SUSPENSION OF POWER

The successful routing of Caliban is followed immediately in the next scene by two actions in which Prospero sets his own passions aside. First he grants mercy and then he surrenders his magic. The problems that these actions have caused critics can be resolved to
some extent by appealing to generic requirements of comedy and romance, two genres that must produce happy endings. But it is possible to reauthenticate the ending and reduce its transparency by contextualizing this section, too, taking note once again of the political field of parliamentary discourse. Also, again at issue here are the authorities of ancient texts, first the tradition of mercy-giving as it had been transmitted by the *Aeneid* and next the tradition of magic as it had been handled by Ovid in his story of Medea.

Of the several places in Virgil’s poem where showing mercy is an important issue, the two episodes that seem most relevant for Shakespeare’s text are the ending of the epic—Aeneas’s refusal to extend pity to Turnus—and the chronological beginning of the poem, where Priam makes the mistake of extending pity to Sinon, thereby bringing on the destruction of Troy. To the extent that we describe the ending of *The Tempest* in terms of Virgil’s ending, it can represent one more reversal of Virgil; for Prospero extends mercy and thus breaks the pattern of revenge that Aeneas could only perpetuate by acting out the role of the furious Achilles who denied mercy to Hector. If, on the other hand, it is the Priam story that we see behind Shakespeare’s mercy-giving scene—and there are several details here evocative of Virgil’s telling of that story—we may find another kind of variation on Virgil, another bold rearrangement of parts. Shakespeare’s ending might here be described as a rewriting of Virgil’s beginning.

In the context of the Virgilian Troy patterns that we have noticed elsewhere in the play, several details of Shakespeare’s mercy-giving scene are interesting. First of all, the court group to whom Prospero extends mercy is made up of characters who have earlier mounted conspiracies that replicate an aspect of the Greek conspiracy against Troy; Alonso was implicated in Prospero’s being hustled out of Milan at night, and Antonio and Sebastian tried to undo Alonso while he slept. Moreover, just as Sinon was bound as a prisoner when he was brought to Priam, so does Ariel in this scene describe these characters as “all prisoners, sir. . . . They cannot budge till your release” (ll. 9–11). Then, too, both Priam and Prospero justify their decisions, and with the same argument. Priam defends himself by saying that the Trojans should accept Sinon as one of them: “He is ours” (“noster eris,” 2.149); Prospero explains
to Ariel: "shall not myself, / One of their kind . . . be kindlier mov'd than thou art." A significant variation on Virgil's story is that the supplicative role that the wily Sinon played is here taken over by Ariel, Prospero's trusted companion and guide.32

The experience of reading Shakespeare's ending in the context of Virgil's beginning is not necessarily a clarifying one, however. In this context, too, there may indeed be a reversal of the Aeneid; Priam's pity issued in disaster, Prospero's issues in renewal. But the very presence in Shakespeare's text of the Sinon episode, in which Virgil told of a well-meaning gesture that turned out to be a mistake of catastrophic proportions, destabilizes that text no matter how we might want to see it differently. This element of instability is all the more interesting when considered in relation to Shakespeare's historical present, the deteriorated relationship of king and Parliament that we have been pondering, and, more specifically, the options James had in dealing with the situation.

Indeed, at this very time in history, there were the fear and the possibility that James might take revenge on those who had opposed him in Parliament. As early as his March speech, James himself addressed this possibility, being careful to present himself as one who would not use an arbitrary power outside the law in order to punish anyone. Nevertheless, he made it clear that within the law he could still get even with those who did not support him: "For although I will be no lesse just, as a King, to such persons, then any other . . . yet ye must thinke I have no reason to thanke them, or gratifie them with any suits or matters of grace, when their errand shall come my way" (Mcllwain, p. 318). Several months later, on October 25, Salisbury spoke suggestively—and, despite his disclaimers, even threateningly—of how the king's withholding of "favor" and "grace" would not be inconsistent with "justice": "No necessity is such as may make a king do unjustly; but there may be cause to make a king not to extend his favor; he oweth his justice, not his favor" (Foster, 2:300), and, "I speak not by way of menace . . . I do not speak anything by way of threat; the King will not do injustice to his subject; he will not do all he may do" (Foster, 2:301). There is no question that people who had opposed James perceived that they were in a dangerous position. For example, on
November 16, a few weeks after Salisbury’s speech, Samuel Lewknor began a speech with some remarks about the danger in which he might be placing himself by taking a stand against the king: “Dangerous I account it to contradict or expose himself against his prince’s will or demand. . . . The fury of the king, saith the wise man, is the messenger of death and I know that one word evil taken, though not evil spoken, may blot out the remembrance of many years’ deserts” (Foster, 2:400). Later in the speech, he acknowledged that he, too, wished that this king could have all the money he wanted, “that as he is a prince Troiano melior so he might be Augusto felicior” (p. 401)—but his good wishes for the king were not sufficient to allow him to change his position on the issue of supply.

Implicit in these threats and fears of threat is the assumption that reciprocity was to characterize the relationship between king and Parliament. As long as the king felt that Parliament was not being sufficiently cooperative with him, he believed it injudicious to consent to all their demands and felt it necessary to remind them that they were placing their own power in jeopardy by challenging his. Meanwhile, Parliament wanted the king to moderate his demands, but they were at the same time aware that their recalcitrance had its costs. In this climate of contention, more than one speaker likened the situation to the Trojan War, where men fought for years over Helen, “a goodly treasure,” said Roger Owen, “but not worth the destruction of Troy” (Foster, 2:398; cf. 401).

In the passage in which Prospero declares that he will grant them mercy, the point is made that the mercy is, to some degree, contingent on his enemies’ being repentant (the reciprocity theme again): “they being penitent, / The sole drift of my purpose doth extend / Not a frown further.” The wise governor does not, as a rule, give mercy to those, like Virgil’s Sinon, who are confirmed in their intention to undermine him (although in this case, it should be noted, Prospero also forgives the unrepentant Antonio). Still, because the ruler is the only one who possesses a great power, that power can be felt as a most fearsome thing. All subjects—those who always cooperate and those who do not—long for assurance that the full strength of that power will never be made to work to
their detriment. Hence the counseling Ariel directs Prospero to recognize what it is to be subject to such a power as his: "Your charm so strongly works 'em, / That if you now beheld them, your affections / Would become tender." And a little later, the faithful Gonzalo cries out, "some heavenly power guide us / Out of this fearful country" (5.1.105–6).

Although Salisbury was entirely able, as we have seen, to speak threats to the Commons, he recommended that James speak to them in a different voice, and especially at a time when the king was seeking to make more demands on his people. Salisbury himself was quite eloquent and precise in explaining what was at stake, and why the king’s rhetoric should be the tempered voice of "clemency and moderation":

> whensoever there is cause to draw any extraordinary supplies from vulgar people, then it is the highest wisdom to observe such courses as generate greatest love, and cherish greatest hopes. . . . Neither do we draw these arguments from grounds Machiavell, as meaning to make use of virtue, as of an art. . . . But we use them as Christian counsellors, for a Christian and religious king, persuading ourselves that those princes are most happy and those counsellors most worthy where clemency and moderation is the object of princes’ actions, as well as law and justice.34

Prospero’s dispensing mercy may be a satisfying ending for a romance, but it is also an ending that accommodates itself to the tensions in the king-subject relationship. The play does not, of course, show what the consequences of that mercy actually will be. Yet it permits one to conclude that although giving pity once led to the destruction of Troy, it is far from clear that not being merciful (Aeneas and Turnus notwithstanding) is the way to vitalize an island community or, for that matter, a weary national community. Thus, it is the restraining of power, not the exercise of it, that this scene represents.

Immediately after the mercy episode comes the speech in which Prospero relinquishes his magic: "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves." His plan to reassume his dukedom requires that he leave this exclusive and removed world of the mind and immerse himself again in the give-and-take of civic life.
Seen from this point of view, the relinquishing of the magic is the logical next step in a plot where characters are to return home at the end. At this important political moment in Jacobean England, the notion that a ruler has the option of not using all of the power available to him was commanding a lot of attention. This context makes it all the more interesting that the speech in which Prospero dismisses his magical powers is modeled on a speech Ovid wrote for Medea.

As has probably always been known, Shakespeare’s model for Prospero’s speech is the speech Medea gives when she uses her magic to restore Jason’s aged father to youth. Having prepared a potion, she drains out Aeson’s blood and refills his veins with a magic elixir that turns his white hair black, his wrinkled and withered body to a lusty and fair condition. T. W. Baldwin’s analysis of Shakespeare’s transformation of this passage emphasizes that he omitted any detail that would suggest the darker realms and purposes with which Medea was associated. So altered, the passage suits the white magic that Prospero has wielded, while the original context of the Medea passage (a story of restoration and renewal) still matches nicely the theme of restoration and renewal that dominates Prospero’s efforts to reform his island visitors.

As clear as this sense of the action may be, for Prospero to give up a quality that has assured his success on the island is to acknowledge the tension between utopian vision and the reality of everyday experience. Another complication derives from the precursor text itself. While Shakespeare has reshaped it to fit Prospero’s white magic, he retains enough of the old passage to make its influence easily identifiable, and this means that his passage, despite the use to which it is now put, alludes rather forthrightly to a magic that has been known for its sinister capacities. Thus, even if Prospero speaks here to all good intents, the image that accompanies and haunts the one he now projects is the image of a magic, a power, that can destroy—the type of magic with which Medea was primarily associated and that has been brought to mind earlier in this play in the lines recalling the ruling days of the “damn’d witch Sycorax.”

The capacity that a transcendent power has for destruction was
also an issue, probably the central issue, for the Parliament of 1610. If the king were allowed to levy impositions without consulting Parliament, then his power could grow to the point of their destruction. The king might be *primum movens, principale agens*, a god on earth, but these aspects of his identity did not permit him to do anything he wanted to do; they did not give him unlimited power—hence Parliament's declaration in the Petition of Grievances that there was nothing more important to them than "to be guided and governed by the certain rule of the law" by which they avoided "any uncertain or arbitrary form of government" (Foster, 2:258). When Martin argued that the king's imposing showed "an arbitrary, irregular, unlimited, and transcendent power" (Gardiner, p. 88), and Hoskyns observed that "an unlimited power is contrary to reason" (Gardiner, p. 76), they were asserting the same thing. 

This argument, which, from a constitutional perspective, is of more interest than any other in a consideration of Prospero's actions, was also made by Hedley. Hedley framed his argument within an issue of law, and specifically of common law, which he defined as "more than bare reason." Common law, which governs both the king and Parliament, is, said Hedley, "tried reason, or the quintessence of reason" (Foster, 2:175). He then proceeded to show that these new impositions were against the common law and so also against reason, the implication being that, for a king to impose them would be for him to exercise his power in a manner contrary to reason (Foster, 2:171-90).

It would, of course, be possible to read the moments during which Prospero surrenders his magic as signifying that a king may be depended upon to know when he should curb his power. As James, who had argued that levying impositions was legal, had told Parliament, in the final analysis it was necessary for them to trust the king not to abuse his power: "If a king be resolute to be a tyrant, all you can do will not hinder him. . . . Kings must be trusted . . . I would not have you judge in general of my prerogative" (Foster, 2:103-4).

But it is also possible to see in Prospero's echo of Medea's speech a replication of Parliament's argument. For the right and good
king, the quintessence of reason is to bow to the common law. To curb power, to limit it, and to subject the royal prerogative to dispute in Parliament is, the Commons believed, the way to make oneself the best of rulers. In this reading, Prospero's surrendering of magic is less a giving up than it is a going forward to a condition that surpasses the "rough magic" on which he has been relying.

In structuring his play so that Prospero follows mostly the model of Aeneas but other models too, Shakespeare presents a complex reconstitution of the current dialogue on the nature and implications of political power. If the shadow of Medea carries by implication some rather stern warnings, the still more dominant Aeneas prototype, the ideal pattern to which the play always returns, presents the means by which a great political figure can move unfalteringly toward the fulfillment of his destiny. Cast as one whose greatness is in part owing to his ability to steel himself against excessive self-indulgence and self-interest, Aeneas faces at Carthage and again at Elysium the necessity of abandoning places of pleasure and sanctuary. Prospero's final actions, where he gives mercy and suspends his power, involve a like sacrifice. Readers and audiences have always sensed in these actions a quality of loss, what David William calls a "deprivation" and "contraction" of the self, born of necessity and yet somehow also desired. Like Aeneas, who leaves both Carthage and Elysium to pursue his destiny, Prospero, too, bends his will at the end and therein serves a higher cause. In The Tempest, Shakespeare offers the option of retreatment as the most noble and heroic of choices.

**DISCASEMENT AND REUNION**

Once through the two important decisions that stand at the beginning of act 5, all that Shakespeare has left to do is to arrange to let his play run joyously on to the end with actions that show the consequences of right choice. In the lines immediately following Prospero's suspension of power, Shakespeare moves his story forward by again immersing his text in that of Virgil. For the sequence during which Prospero exchanges his magician's robes for the every-
day cloak of a duke and then reveals his presence to the Alonso
group, Shakespeare refashions a moment in Virgil where Aeneas
has a similar experience. That episode occurs after Aeneas’s en-
counter with Venus at Carthage. Upon leaving her son, Venus
makes Aeneas and his companion Achates invisible in order to en-
sure their safety: “Venus shrouded them, as they went, with a
dusky air, and enveloped them, goddess as she was, in a thick mant-
tle of cloud” (“Venus obscuro gradientis aere saepsit / et multo
nebulae circum dea fudit amictu,” 1.411-12). As Aeneas and
Achates proceed on their way through Dido's land; they view her
city from a hilltop and finally come to the temple of Juno, where
they observe first Dido approaching and then a group of their for-
lorn Trojan comrades. They listen to Ilioneus telling Dido of their
shipwreck, the hostile reception they have had from the Carthagin-
ians, and their great but now missing king, Aeneas, and they hear
Dido promise the Trojans safety. Only then is Aeneas revealed to
them. Suddenly, Virgil writes, the cloud that has enshrouded him
separates and dissipates and Aeneas speaks, “I, whom ye seek, am
here before you, Aeneas of Troy” (“coram, quem quaeritis, ad-
sum, Troius Aeneas,” 1.595-96). Aeneas praises Dido for pitying
Troy’s woes and welcoming the Trojans to her city and then he
“grasps his dear Ilioneus with the right hand, and with the left Ser-
estus; then others, brave Gyas and brave Cloanthus” (“amicum/
Ilionea petit dextra laevaque Serestum, / post alios, fortemque
Gyan fortemque Cloanthum,” 1.610-12).

The last scene of The Tempest reproduces all of the central
elements of this reunion of the Trojans with their king. First the
Alonso group enters, as confused and fearful of their surroundings
as were the Trojans at Carthage. Ilioneus’s plea to Dido becomes
Gonzalo’s prayer that they will be rescued from the confusion they
find on this island: “All torment, trouble, wonder and amaze-
ment / Inhabits here: Some heavenly power guide us / Out of this
fearful country” (5.1.104-6). And just as the cloud that has robed
or mantled (amictu, 1.4.12) Aeneas disperses so that Aeneas can be
seen, so does Prospero now “disease” (5.1.85) himself. In words
that echo what Aeneas says to Dido, Prospero steps forward and
speaks to the group: “Behold, sir King, / The wronged Duke of
Milan, Prospero” (5.1.106–7). Just as Aeneas grasps the hands of his men, so Prospero embraces Gonzalo, thereby assuring him that what he is seeing has a corporeal reality: “For more assurance that a living Prince / Does now speak to thee, I embrace thy body.” Finally, like Dido welcoming the Trojans, Prospero welcomes his visitors: “And to thee and thy company I bid / A hearty welcome” (5.1.110–11). As in the Aeneid, the reunion in The Tempest speaks of a situation that has been restored to a right order, one in which the Alonso group cooperates but which ultimately relies, as does so much else in the play, on the ruler’s having taken the initiative.

As Shakespeare draws his play to the close, he emphasizes the reliance of his story on old forms, and also its novelty, by writing into the dialogue that runs to the end of the play several reminders that a new story has been told—or, as the dialogue has it, that Prospero now has a new story to tell. The pattern for all of these lines is that ancient moment when, at Dido’s banquet, Aeneas at last responds to her urgings and finally recounts the tale of the destruction of Troy.

Dido’s insistent plea, “tell us, my guest, from the first beginning the treachery of the Greeks, thy comrades’ misfortunes, and thine own wanderings” (“immo age et a prima die, hospes, origine nobis / insidias inquit Danaum casusque tuorum / erroresque tuos,” 1.753–55), reappears in the last scene of The Tempest in the lines of Alonso, who keeps insisting that Prospero tell them his story: “this must crave . . . a most strange story” (ll. 116–17), “Give us particulars of thy preservation; / How thou has met us here” (ll. 135–36), and finally, “I long / To hear the story of your life, which must / Take the ear strangely” (ll. 311–13). Also, three times in the scene Prospero mentions the tale he now has to tell. Unlike Aeneas’s tale, which could be told at the end of that first banquet with Dido, Prospero says of his story, “‘tis a chronicle of day by day, / Not a relation for a breakfast, nor / Befitting this first meeting” (ll. 163–65). Later he promises Alonso, “I’ll resolve you . . . of every / These happen’d accidents” (ll. 248–50). And finally, he invites his visitors to enter his cell and promises to make the time pass quickly by telling them “the story of my life” (l. 304).

Prospero’s story will not, of course, be a replication of the tragic
narrative Aeneas told to Dido; rather, it will be a story of the reno-
vation of a mind and the union of self and society that is made
possible thereby. But, as we have seen, Shakespeare's text contains
stories other than this one. It included as well, for the audience who
was living through it, a chronicle of national politics, the ending of
which had not yet been seen and which still depended on the
choices that king and subjects would make in the months and years
to come. The tentativeness that one always senses in the ending of
The Tempest reflects the uneasiness of the contemporary political
scene. The questions that are inevitably asked about the ending—
will Prospero succeed when he goes back to Milan? will the ruler
succeed once the play is over?—are the right ones.