

RSC

THE  
TEMPEST



William  
Shakespeare

Edited by Jonathan Bate  
and Eric Rasmussen



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## **The RSC Shakespeare**

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The RSC Shakespeare

William Shakespeare  
**THE TEMPEST**

Edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen

Introduction by Jonathan Bate



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*The Tempest* was almost certainly Shakespeare's last solo-authored play. We do not, however, know whether he anticipated that this would be the case. It was also the first play to be printed in the First Folio of his collected works. Again, we do not know whether it was given pride of place because the editors of the Folio regarded it as a showpiece—the summation of the master's art—or for the more mundane reason that they had a clean copy in the clean hand of the scribe Ralph Crane, which would have given the compositors a relatively easy start as they set to work on the mammoth task of typesetting nearly a million words of Shakespeare. Whether it found its position by chance or design, *The Tempest's* place at the end of Shakespeare's career and the beginning of his collected works has profoundly shaped responses to the play ever since the early nineteenth century. It has come to be regarded as the touchstone of Shakespearean interpretation.

Most of Shakespeare's plays have twenty or more scenes, at least as many roles, several different plot lines and a variety of imaginary locations. In some, the action takes place across a wide gap of time. In comparison, *The Tempest* is extremely simple: it only has nine scenes and a dozen speaking parts of substance. Miranda is the only female role, though Ariel would have provided a showcase for a boy actor who could sing. After the short opening scene representing a ship struggling in a storm, all the remaining action takes place on Prospero's island. A series of very precise references to the timing of Ariel's release from his servitude suggests that the action takes place almost in "real time," during a few hours on a single afternoon. For the first time since *The Comedy of Errors*, written nearly two decades earlier, Shakespeare conforms to the neoclassical "unities," the idea that a well-made play should have a single focus of time, place, and action.

## MASTERY AND RULE

The narrative is concentrated on questions of mastery and rule. During the tempest in the opening scene, the normal social order is out of joint: the boatswain commands the courtiers in the knowledge that the roaring waves care nothing for "the name of king." Then the backstory, unfolded at length in Act 1 Scene 2, tells of conspirators who do not respect the title of duke: we learn of Prospero's loss of power in Milan and the compensatory command he has gained over Ariel and Caliban on the island. The Ferdinand and Miranda love-knot is directed toward the future government of Milan and Naples. There is further politic plotting: Sebastian and Antonio's plan to murder King Alonso and good Gonzalo, the madcap scheme of the baseborn characters to overthrow Prospero and make drunken butler Stephano king of the island. The theatrical coups performed by Prospero, assisted by Ariel and the other spirits of the island—the freezing of the conspirators, the harpy and the vanishing banquet, the masque of goddesses and agricultural workers, the revelation of the lovers playing at chess—all serve the purpose of requiting the sins of the past, restoring order in the present and preparing for a harmonious future. Once the work is done, Ariel is released (with a pang) and Prospero is ready to prepare his own spirit for death. Even Caliban will "seek for grace."

But Shakespeare never keeps it simple. Prospero's main aim in conjuring up the storm and

bringing the court to the island is to force his usurping brother Antonio into repentance. Yet when the climactic confrontation comes, Antonio does not say a word in reply to Prospero's combination of forgiveness and demand ("I do forgive / Thy rankest fault—all of them—art thou require / My dukedom of thee, which perforce I know / Thou must restore"). He wholly fails to follow the good example set by Alonso a few lines before ("Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat / Thou pardon me my wrongs"). As for Antonio's sidekick Sebastian, he has the temerity to ascribe Prospero's magical foresight to demonic influence ("The devil speaks to him!"). For all the powers at Prospero's command, there is no way of predicting or controlling human nature. A conscience cannot be created where there is none.

By this time, Prospero has broken his staff. Ariel's key words in the speech that prompts the master to renounce his magic—his power—are "were I human" (5.1.23). The fact that a nonhuman spirit has shown "a touch, a feeling" for the afflictions of Prospero's enemies reveals to him that his own humanity requires him to forgive instead of revenge. The play is indeed an investigation of what it means to be human, or, to put it another way, of the meaning of humanism.

### PROSPERO'S "POTENT ART"

In Shakespeare's time, the essence of humanism was the idea of "art." To be human was to stand above the rest of nature by means of the arts of rational debate, eloquent speech, and ethical responsibility. Humanism was above all an educational project that aimed to inculcate civic virtue: through reading and literary composition, through history, through the "liberal arts," young men could be trained as public servants and loyal subjects. This is the major reason why there was a vigorous debate about the theater in the period: the drama, with its ancient Greek and Roman precedents, had a venerable humanist pedigree, but the public stage was a less malleable arena than the university, and the theater-going audience represented a more mixed and unruly clientele than the boys regimented in Elizabethan grammar schools. The fact that Prospero persistently uses theater as an educational device suggests that *The Tempest* may be read as Shakespeare's interrogation of his own art.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge described Prospero as "the very Shakespeare, as it were, of the tempest." In other words, the leading character's conjuring up of the storm in the opening scene corresponds to the dramatist's conjuring up of the whole world of the play. The art of Prospero harnesses the power of nature in order to bring the other Italian characters to join him in his exile; by the same account, the art of Shakespeare transforms the platform of the stage into a ship at sea and then "an uninhabited island." "If by your art, my dearest father," says Miranda on Prospero's first appearance, "you have / Put the wild waters in this roar / Allay them." A few lines later, he asks his daughter to help him take off his "magic garment" which he addresses as "my art." "Art" is thus established as the play's key word. Caliban is Prospero's "other" because he represents the state of nature. In the Darwinian nineteenth century, he was recast as the "missing link" between humankind and our animal ancestors.

Prospero then transforms the "bare island" into a schoolroom. He delivers a series of history lessons to Miranda, to Ariel, to Caliban—and to the audience in the theater. Orlando senses that Miranda has been told the story of her life many times before and that on this occasion she is struggling to stay awake. As Duke of Milan, Prospero reminds her, he was "for the liberal arts / Without a parallel." Becoming more and more absorbed in his study, he



delegated first the “manage” (administration) and then the outright “government” of his state to his brother Antonio. Prospero’s mistake was to pursue learning for its own sake rather than as a means to a political end. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the “liberal arts” were intended as tools for government, not distractions from it.

Prospero’s name means “fortunate,” or more literally “according to one’s hopes.” This could also be a translation of the name of one of the most famous figures in the dramatic repertoire during Shakespeare’s early years in the theater: “Faustus” is Latin for “fortunate.” Marlowe’s hugely successful play opened with a soliloquy in which Dr. Faustus explains that he has become bored with the conventional curriculum of the liberal arts. He accordingly crosses the border into the dangerous territory of necromancy; he makes a pact with the devil, exchanging his immortal soul for the transitory power that magic can offer him; only when it is too late does he realize the error of his ways and cry out, “I’ll burn my books.” Both the coincidence of name and Prospero’s climactic line, “I’ll drown my book,” spoken as he abjures his “rough magic,” suggest that Shakespeare was courting parallels with *Dr. Faustus*. The benign spirit Ariel and the “savage and deformed slave” Caliban might be considered to serve an analogous function to the good and bad angels who watch over Faustus.

The difference from Marlowe is that Prospero claims to practice “natural” as opposed to “demonic” magic. Magical thinking was universal in the age of Shakespeare. Everyone was brought up to believe that there was another realm beyond that of nature, a realm of the spirit and of spirits. Natural and demonic magic were the two branches of the study and manipulation of preternatural phenomena. Magic meant the knowledge of hidden things and the art of working wonders. For some, it was the highest form of natural philosophy: the word came from *magia*, the ancient Persian term for wisdom. Sir Francis Bacon, in many ways a pioneer of scientific empiricism, did not hesitate to describe magic as “a sublimation of wisdom, and the knowledge of the universal consents of things” (*De augmentis scientiarum*). The “occult philosophy,” as it was known, postulated a hierarchy of powers, with influences descending from disembodied (“intellectual”) angelic spirits to the stellar and planetary workings of the heavens to earthly things and their physical changes. The magician ascends through knowledge of higher powers and draws them down artificially to produce wonderful effects. Cornelius Agrippa, author of the influential *De occulta philosophia*, argued that “ceremonial magic” was needed in order to reach the angelic intelligences above the stars. This was the highest and most dangerous level of activity, since it was all too easy—as Faustus found—to conjure up a devil instead of an angel. The more common form of “natural magic” involved “marrying” heaven to earth, working with the occult correspondences between the stars and the elements of the material world. The enduring conception of astrological influences is a vestige of this mode of thought. For a Renaissance mage such as Girolamo Cardano, who practiced in Milan, medicine, natural philosophy, mathematics, astrology, and dream interpretation were all intimately connected.

## CALIBAN AND SYCORAX

Natural magic could never escape its demonic shadow. For every learned mage such as Agrippa or Cardano, there were a thousand village “wise women” practicing folk medicine and fortune-telling. All too often, the latter found themselves demonized as witches, blame-

for crop failure, livestock disease, and the other ills of life in the premodern era. Prospero keen to contrast his own white magic with the black arts of Sycorax, Caliban's mother, but the play establishes strong parallels between them. He was exiled from Milan to the island because his devotion to his secret studies gave Antonio the opportunity to usurp the dukedom, while Sycorax was exiled from Algiers to the island because she was accused of witchcraft; he arrived with his young daughter, while she arrived pregnant with the child she had supposedly conceived by sleeping with the devil. Each of them can command the tides and manipulate the spirit world that is embodied by Ariel. When Prospero comes to renounce his magic, he describes his powers in words borrowed from the incantation of another witch, Medea in Ovid's great storehouse of ancient mythological tales, the *Metamorphoses*. Thus Prospero: "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves..." And Medea in Arthur Golding's Elizabethan translation of the *Metamorphoses*, one of Shakespeare's favorite books: "Ye elves of hills, of brooks, of woods alone, / Of standing lakes, and of the night..."

Prospero at some level registers his own kinship with Sycorax when he says of Caliban "this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine." The splitting of subject and verb across the line ending here, ensuring a moment's hesitation in the acknowledgment, is an extreme instance of the suppleness with which late Shakespeare handles his iambic pentameter verse.

Shakespeare loved to set up oppositions, then shade his black and white into gray areas of moral complexity. In Milan, Prospero's inward-looking study of the liberal arts had led to the loss of power and the establishment of tyranny. On the island he seeks to make amends by applying what he has learned, by using active magic to bring repentance, restore his dukedom, and set up a dynastic marriage. Yet at the beginning of the fifth act he sees that to be truly human is a matter not of exercising wisdom for the purposes of rule, but of practicing a more strictly Christian version of virtue. For humanism, education in prince and virtue meant the cultivation for political ends of wisdom, magnanimity, temperance, and integrity. For Prospero what finally matters is kindness. And this is something that the master learns from his pupil: it is Ariel who teaches Prospero about "feeling," not vice versa.

Ariel represents fire and air, concord and music, loyal service. Caliban is of the earth, associated with discord, drunkenness, and rebellion. Ariel's medium of expression is delicate verse, while Caliban's is for the most part a robust, often ribald prose like that of the jester Trinculo and drunken butler Stephano. But, astonishingly, it is Caliban who speaks the play's most beautiful verse when he hears the music of Ariel: "Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not..." Even in prose, Caliban has a wonderful attunement to the natural environment: he knows every corner, every species on the island. Prospero calls him "A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick," yet in the very next speech Caliban enters with the line "Pray you, tread softly, that the blind mole may not hear a footfall," words of such strong imagination that Prospero's claim is instantly belied.

Caliban's purported sexual assault on Miranda shows that Prospero failed in his attempt to tame the animal instincts of the "man-monster" and educate him into humanity. But who bears responsibility for the failure? Could it be that the problem arises from what Prospero has imprinted on Caliban's memory, not from the latter's nature? Caliban initially welcomed Prospero to the island and offered to share its fruits, every bit in the manner of the "noble savages" in Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals," which was another source from

which Shakespeare quoted in the play (Gonzalo's Utopian "golden age" vision of how he would govern the isle is borrowed from the English translation of Montaigne). Caliban only acts basely after Prospero has printed that baseness on him; what makes Caliban "filth" may be the lessons in which Prospero has taught him that he is "filth." According to humanist theory, the learning of language is what makes man godlike as opposed to beastlike, but Caliban's only profit from the language lessons delivered to him by Prospero and Miranda is the ability to curse.

Caliban understands the power of the book: as fashioners of modern coups d'état begin by seizing the television station, so he stresses that the rebellion against Prospero must begin by taking possession of his books. But Stephano has another book. "Here is that which will give language to you," he says to Caliban, replicating Prospero's gaining of control through language—but in a different mode. Textual inculcation is replaced by intoxication: the book that is kissed is the bottle. The dialogic spirit that is fostered by Shakespeare's technique of scenic counterpoint thus calls into question Prospero's use of books. If Stephano and Trinculo achieve through their alcohol what Prospero achieves through his teaching (in each case Caliban is persuaded to serve and to share the fruits of the isle), is not that teaching exposed as potentially nothing more than a means of social control? Prospero often seems more interested in the power structure that is established by his schoolmastering than in the substance of what he teaches. It is hard to see how making Ferdinand carry logs is intended to inculcate virtue; its purpose is to elicit submission.

## PLANTATION AND THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

Arrival on an island uninhabited by Europeans, talk of "plantation," an encounter with "savage" in which alcohol is exchanged for survival skills, a process of language learning in which it is made clear who is master and who is slave, fear that the slave will impregnate the master's daughter, the desire to make the savage seek for Christian "grace" (though also a proposal that he should be shipped to England and exhibited for profit), references to the dangerous weather of the Bermudas and to a "brave new world": in all these respects, *The Tempest* conjures up the spirit of European colonialism. Shakespeare had contacts with members of the Virginia Company, which had been established by royal charter in 1606 and was instrumental in the foundation of the Jamestown colony in America the following year. Some time in the autumn of 1610, a letter reached England describing how a fleet sent to reinforce the colony had been broken up by a storm in the Caribbean; the ship carrying the new governor had been driven to Bermuda, where the crew and passengers had wintered. Though the letter was not published at the time, it circulated in manuscript and inspired at least two pamphlets about these events. Scholars debate the extent to which Shakespeare made direct use of these materials, but certain details of the storm and the island seem to be derived from them. There is no doubt that the seemingly miraculous survival of the governor's party and the fertile environment they discovered in the Bahamas were topics of great public interest at the time of the play.

The British Empire, the slave trade, and the riches of the spice routes lay in the future. Shakespeare's play is set in the Mediterranean, not the Caribbean. Caliban cannot strictly be described as a native of the island. And yet the play intuits the dynamic of colonial possession and dispossession with such uncanny power that in 1950 a book by Octave Mannoni called

*The Psychology of Colonisation* could argue that the process functioned by means of a pair of reciprocal neuroses: the “Prospero complex” on the part of the colonizer and the “Caliban complex” on that of the colonized. It was in response to Mannoni that Frantz Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks*, a book that did much to shape the intellectual terrain of the “postcolonial” era. For many Anglophone Caribbean writers of the late twentieth century, *The Tempest*, and the figure of Caliban in particular, became a focal point for discovery of their own literary voices. The play is less a reflection of imperial history—after all, Prospero is an exile, not a venturer—than an anticipation of it.

In terms of real political power, the British Empire at the time of the play extended no farther than Ireland. That island of colonial “plantations” and supposedly savage yet poetized natives may lie in the hinterland of Shakespeare’s imagination, but the main political emphasis of the play is court intrigue rather than imperial endeavor. As in so much drama of the age, Italy—the land of courtly sophistication and cunning, of Castiglione and Machiavelli—serves as backdrop. Italy did not become a unified nation until the nineteenth century. In Shakespeare’s time, it was dominated by five separate city-states: Milan, Venice, Florence, Naples, and Rome. Each was marked by rivalry with the others, internal factional divisions, and external pressures from Spain, France, and the Holy Roman Empire. By setting the play amid the Italian maelstrom of the earlier sixteenth century, Shakespeare and his contemporaries could engage in theatrical debate about monarchy and republicanism, idealism and realpolitik, dynastic liaison and internecine strife, without offending the Master of the Revels who cast an austere censor’s eye over every play script with a view to the suppression of any contentious matter concerning Elizabethan and Jacobean politics and religious controversy.

## COURT AND MASQUE

The first recorded performance of *The Tempest* took place on the evening of All Saints’ Day, November 1611, in the presence of King James at Whitehall. Just over a year later, in February 1613, the play was one of fourteen performed by Shakespeare’s company, the King’s Men, as their contribution to court celebrations marking the marriage of the king’s daughter Elizabeth to Prince Frederick, Count Palatine and later King of Bohemia. It has sometimes been supposed that the wedding masque staged by Prospero’s spirits for Miranda and Ferdinand was an addition to the script especially for this occasion, but there is no evidence for this supposition. *The Tempest* is no more and no less a courtly play than any of Shakespeare’s other dramas. It was not commissioned for any particular court occasion, but—like all the other plays written for the King’s Men—it was created in the knowledge that it would at some time be played at court.

Given his theater company’s status as the king’s own players, Shakespeare remained politically guarded but made it his business to show an interest in the things that the king was interested in, such as witchcraft (*Macbeth*) and the question of the number of kingdoms into which Britain should be divided (*King Lear*). In the years when he was writing his last play, the king and his courtiers were much preoccupied with royal marriages and the potential of dynastic liaisons to heal Europe’s divisions. King James of Scotland and England was in the unique position of sitting on two Protestant thrones while being the son of a famous Roman Catholic (Mary, Queen of Scots). His wife, Anne of Denmark, had Catholic sympathies. F

was therefore well qualified for his chosen role as an international peacemaker: the marriage of his son to a Catholic princess from Spain and his daughter to a Protestant prince from the Germanic territories would have been a strong strategic move. Though Shakespeare rigorously eschewed topicality and did not take the risk of seeking to advise his monarch on matters of policy, *The Tempest* is very much a drama of the moment: the duchy of Milan and the kingdom of Naples, together with the rivalry and intrigue of their rulers, stand as shorthand for the fractured polity of Europe, while the union of Miranda and Ferdinand embodies the hope that royal marriage might bring peace and stability. The game of chess was a powerful symbol for skillful statecraft and diplomatic maneuvering. Miranda and Ferdinand's banter over their chessboard has typically Shakespearean equipoise: does the accusation of cheating suggest the fragility of the alliance between Milan and Naples or does the good humor of the exchange suggest that Italy will be in safe hands?

As regular players in the Whitehall Palace, the King's Men knew that from the end of 1603 onward, the teenage Princess Elizabeth was resident at court. A cultured young woman who enjoyed music and dancing, she participated in court festivals and in 1610 danced in a masque called *Tethys*. Masques—performed by a mixed cast of royalty, courtiers, and professional actors, staged with spectacular scenery and elaborate music—were the height of fashion at court in these years. Shakespeare's friend and rival Ben Jonson, working in conjunction with the designer Inigo Jones, was carving out a role for himself as the age's leading masque-wright. In 1608 he introduced the "antimasque" (or "antemasque"), a convention whereby grotesque figures known as "antics" danced boisterously prior to the graceful and harmonious masque itself. Shakespeare nods to contemporary fashion by including a betrothal masque within the action of *The Tempest*, together with the antimasque farce of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo smelling of horse piss, stealing clothes from a linen closet, and being chased away by dogs. One almost wonders whether the figure of Prospero is a gentle parody of Ben Jonson: his theatrical imagination is bound by the classical unities (as Jonson's was) and he stages a court masque (as Jonson did). Perhaps this is why a few years later, in his *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson parodied *The Tempest* in return.

The masque also provides the occasion for Shakespeare to continue his meditation upon the power of "art." Sometime schoolmaster Prospero has turned himself into a theatrical impresario. Having first staged the harpy's banquet, now he educates Ferdinand and Miranda into virtue (which in their case he makes synonymous with chastity) through dramatic spectacle. The hope here is that theater can do what humanism traditionally relied on books to do. But—as is the way with live theater—things do not go quite according to plan: by Prospero's irritation, the performance is interrupted by the entrance of Caliban and company.

## POETIC FAITH

The play moves toward forgiveness, but also renunciation. The book of art is drowned. The masque and its players dissolve into vacancy:

... These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air,  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,

The cloud-capped 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....

What endures is the power of the poetry. This passage, especially its last sentence, has become one of the great Shakespearean quotations: it is the kind of passage that a Renaissance reader, scanning a book for “sentences” of deep wisdom about life, would have underlined or marked in the margin.

Stylistically, the speech is typical of the fluid verse of late Shakespeare. Crudely speaking, early Shakespearean verse is characterized by a preponderance of end-stopped verse lines, frequent use of rhyme and a wide array of highly visible rhetorical figures—repetition, variations, balanced pairs—that impart shape and symmetry to the poetry, assisting the actor in remembering his part and the spectator in perceiving the play’s language as memorable. Late Shakespearean verse, by contrast, is more flexible. There is a preponderance of run-on or enjambed lines, thoughts that spill over the line-ending and set up a tension between the movement of the meter and that of the grammar. The meter itself is also more varied, although the five beats of the iambic pentameter remain the underlying pulse or heartbeat, the rhythm measured to match the breath and pitch of English speech, irregularities are frequent. Subject and verb may be split across the line-ending. Half lines, incomplete lines, feminine endings (an extra offbeat syllable), bold variations in the position of the caesura or midline pause, elaborations of simile and metaphor that snake across a whole speech: such arts serve to create the illusion of a character thinking in the moment and turning the thought to words, as opposed to an actor reciting a rhetorically finished prepared speech.

Thus: “These our actors” (sentence beginning in the middle of a verse line), pause, “As foretold you” (parenthetical reference back to earlier dialogue), pause, “were all spirits and” (verse line ends with a forward-thrusting “and” instead of the customary pausal punctuation mark) “Are melted into air,” pause for elaboration, “into thin air,” take breath before launching into elaborated simile, then the towers, the palaces, the temples, the globe (each with its adjective and for the globe a special gesture or intonation in recognition that the theater-home of “these our actors” was “the great globe itself”), pause again, to gather and strengthen the strands of the thought with “Yea,” then through an asymmetrical parallelism of short and long, little function words and large-meaning verbs (“all which it” played off against “shall” and “inherit” against “dissolve”), then a repetition of the structure established four lines before (“And, like”), but with an upping of the ante (“baseless fabric” inflated to “insubstantial pageant”), and finally fade after “faded” to the completion of the sentence. The half line “Leave not a rack behind,” the key word being “rack,” which primarily means a wisp of cloud, thus clinching the sustained comparison of actors, theater, and life itself to *weather*—English weather, evanescent, always changeable—but also, by means of the play of “wreck” (which in Shakespearean English was pronounced and sometimes spelled “wrack”) evoking the particular form of extreme weather, namely tempest, that Prospero has conjured up at the beginning of the play. The subtlety of the verse movement matches the complexity

of the thought. Through the vocal art of a skilled actor, the “beating mind” and the beats of the verse are as one.

Prospero’s renunciations suggest that the play itself is profoundly skeptical of the power of the book and even of the theater. The closing sections of the dialogue focus on traditional religious themes such as the search for grace and the preparation of the soul for death. Prospero’s Christian language reaches its most sustained pitch in the epilogue, but his final request is for the indulgence not of God but of the audience. At the last moment, humanist learning is replaced not by Christian but by theatrical faith. Because of this it has been possible for the play to be read, as it so often has been since the Romantic period, as a credible *apologia pro vita sua* (a justification of his own life), on the part of Shakespeare the dramatist. The drama’s own afterlife folds back its interior movement from secular to sacred. *The Tempest* has become a work of secular scripture. When art took over some of the functions of religion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Matthew Arnold predicted it would, Shakespeare became a kind of God, and the role *The Tempest* performed became analogous to that which classical texts such as Virgil’s *Aeneid* performed for humanism. Humanism became the humanities and Shakespeare became the classic text at the center of the literary curriculum, where he still remains. This edition feeds that process, but with its particular emphasis on the play in performance—explored in the essays on Shakespeare’s career in the theater and on the play’s stage history, and above all through the inclusion of the voices of distinguished directors—it also seeks to return *The Tempest* to the theater.

Shakespeare endures through history. He illuminates later times as well as his own. He helps us to understand the human condition. But he cannot do this without a good text of the plays. Without editions there would be no Shakespeare. That is why every twenty years or so throughout the last three centuries there has been a major new edition of his complete works. One aspect of editing is the process of keeping the texts up to date—modernizing the spelling, punctuation, and typography (though not, of course, the actual words), providing explanatory notes in the light of changing educational practices (a generation ago, most of Shakespeare's classical and biblical allusions could be assumed to be generally understood, but now they can't).

But because Shakespeare did not personally oversee the publication of his plays, with some plays there are major editorial difficulties. Decisions have to be made as to the relative authority of the early printed editions, the pocket format "Quartos" published during Shakespeare's lifetime and the elaborately produced "First Folio" text of 1623, the original "Complete Works" prepared for the press after his death by Shakespeare's fellow actors, the people who knew the plays better than anyone else. *The Tempest*, however, exists only in the Folio text that is extremely well printed. Save for a handful of possible misprints, the Folio is highly trustworthy and unusually easy to edit.

The following notes highlight various aspects of the editorial process and indicate conventions used in the text of this edition:

**Lists of Parts** are supplied in the First Folio for only six plays, of which *The Tempest* is one. Capitals indicate that part of the name which is used for speech headings in the script (thus "PROSPERO, the right Duke of Milan").

**Locations** are provided by the Folio for only two plays, of which *The Tempest*, set on "a uninhabited Island," is one. Eighteenth-century editors, working in an age of elaborate realistic stage sets, were the first to provide detailed locations ("another part of the island"). Given that Shakespeare wrote for a bare stage and often an imprecise sense of place, we have relegated locations to the explanatory notes, where they are given at the beginning of each scene where the imaginary location is different from the one before. We have emphasized broad geographical settings rather than specifics of the kind that suggest anachronistical realistic staging.

**Act and Scene Divisions** were provided in the Folio in a much more thoroughgoing way than in the Quartos. Sometimes, however, they were erroneous or omitted; corrections and additions supplied by editorial tradition are indicated by square brackets. Five-act division based on a classical model, and act breaks provided the opportunity to replace the candles of the indoor Blackfriars playhouse which the King's Men used after 1608, but Shakespeare did not necessarily think in terms of a five-part structure of dramatic composition. The Folio convention is that a scene ends when the stage is empty. Nowadays, partly under the influence of film, we tend to consider a scene to be a dramatic unit that ends with either



change of imaginary location or a significant passage of time within the narrative. Shakespeare's fluidity of composition accords well with this convention, so in addition to act and scene numbers we provide a *running scene* count in the right margin at the beginning of each new scene, in the typeface used for editorial directions. Where there is a scene break caused by a momentary bare stage, but the location does not change and extra time does not pass, we use the convention *running scene continues*. There is inevitably a degree of editorial judgment in making such calls, but the system is very valuable in suggesting the pace of the plays.

**Speakers' Names** are often inconsistent in Folio. We have regularized speech headings, but retained an element of deliberate inconsistency in entry directions, in order to give the flavor of Folio.

**Verse** is indicated by lines that do not run to the right margin and by capitalization of each line. The Folio printers sometimes set verse as prose, and vice versa (either out of misunderstanding or for reasons of space). We have silently corrected in such cases, although in some instances there is ambiguity, in which case we have leaned toward the preservation of Folio layout. Folio sometimes uses contraction ("turnd" rather than "turned") to indicate whether or not the final "-ed" of a past participle is sounded, an area where there is variation for the sake of the five-beat iambic pentameter rhythm. We use the convention of a grave accent to indicate sounding (thus "turnèd" would be two syllables) but would urge actors not to overstress. In cases where one speaker ends with a verse half line and the next begins with the other half of the pentameter, editors since the late eighteenth century have indented the second line. We have abandoned this convention, since the Folio does not use it, and nor do actors' cues in the Shakespearean theater. An exception is made when the second speaker actively interrupts or completes the first speaker's sentence.

**Spelling** is modernized, but older forms are very occasionally maintained where necessary for rhythm or aural effect.

**Punctuation** in Shakespeare's time was as much rhetorical as grammatical. "Colon" was originally a term for a unit of thought in an argument. The semicolon was a new unit of punctuation (some of the Quartos lack them altogether). We have modernized punctuation throughout but have given more weight to Folio punctuation than many editors, since, though not Shakespearean, it reflects the usage of his period. In particular, we have used the colon far more than many editors: it is exceptionally useful as a way of indicating how many Shakespearean speeches unfold clause by clause in a developing argument that gives the illusion of enacting the process of thinking in the moment. We have also kept in mind the origin of punctuation in classical times as a way of assisting the actor and orator: the comma suggests the briefest of pauses for breath, the colon a middling one and a full stop or period a longer pause. Semicolons, by contrast, belong to an era of punctuation that was only just coming in during Shakespeare's time and that is coming to an end now: we have accordingly only used them where they occur in our copy texts (and not always then). Dashes are sometimes used for parenthetical interjections where the Folio has brackets. They are also used for interruptions and changes in train of thought. Where a change of addressee occurs

within a speech, we have used a dash preceded by a full stop (or occasionally another form of punctuation). Often the identity of the respective addressees is obvious from the context. When it is not, this has been indicated in a marginal stage direction.

**Entrances and Exits** are fairly thorough in Folio, which has accordingly been followed as faithfully as possible. Where characters are omitted or corrections are necessary, this is indicated by square brackets (e.g. “[*and Attendants*]”). *Exit* is sometimes silently normalized to *Exeunt* and *Manet* anglicized to “remains.” We trust Folio positioning of entrances and exits to a greater degree than most editors.

**Editorial Stage Directions** such as stage business, asides, indications of addressee and characters’ position on the gallery stage are only used sparingly in Folio. Other editions mingle directions of this kind with original Folio and Quarto directions, sometimes marking them by means of square brackets. We have sought to distinguish what could be described as *directorial* interventions of this kind from Folio-style directions (either original or supplied) by placing them in the right margin in a smaller typeface. There is a degree of subjectivity about which directions are of which kind, but the procedure is intended as a reminder to the reader and the actor that Shakespearean stage directions are often dependent upon editorial inference alone and are not set in stone. We also depart from editorial tradition in sometimes admitting uncertainty and thus printing permissive stage directions, such as an ***Aside?*** (often a line may be equally effective as an aside or a direct address—it is for each production or reading to make its own decision) or a ***may exit*** or a piece of business placed between arrows to indicate that it may occur at various different moments within a scene.

**Line Numbers** are editorial, for reference and to key the explanatory and textual notes.

**Explanatory Notes** explain allusions and gloss obsolete and difficult words, confusing phraseology, occasional major textual cruxes, and so on. Particular attention is given to non-standard usage, bawdy innuendo, and technical terms (e.g. legal and military language). Where more than one sense is given, commas indicate shades of related meaning, slashes indicate alternative or double meanings.

**Textual Notes** at the end of the play indicate major departures from the Folio. They take the following form: the reading of our text is given in bold and its source given after an equals sign, with “F2” indicating that it derives from the Second Folio of 1632 and “Ed” that it derives from the subsequent editorial tradition. The rejected Folio (“F”) reading is then given. Thus for Act 4 Scene 1 line 57: “**4.1.57 abstemious** = F2. F = abstenious.” This means that the Folio compositor erroneously printed the word “abstenious” and the Second Folio corrected it to “abstemious.”

**MAJOR PARTS:** (with percentage of lines/number of speeches/scenes on stage) Prospero (30%/115/5), Ariel (9%/45/6), Caliban (8%/50/5), Stephano (7%/60/4), Gonzalo (7%/52/4), Sebastian (5%/67/4), Antonio (6%/57/4), Miranda (6%/49/4), Ferdinand (6%/31/4), Alonso (5%/40/4), Trinculo (4%/39/4).

**LINGUISTIC MEDIUM:** 80% verse, 20% prose.

**DATE:** 1611. Performed at court, 1 November 1611; uses source material not available before autumn 1610.

**SOURCES:** No known source for main plot, but some details of the tempest and the island seem to derive from William Strachey, *A True Reportory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight* (written 1610, published in *Purchas his Pilgrims*, 1625) and perhaps Sylvester Jourdain, *A Discovery of the Bermudas* (1610) and the Virginia Company's pamphlet *A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colony in Virginia* (1610); several allusions to Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (most notably the imitation in Act 5 Scene 1 of Arthur Golding's 1567 translation of Medea's incantation in Ovid's 7th book); Gonzalo's "golden age" oration in Act 2 Scene 1 based closely on Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals" translated by John Florio (1603).

**TEXT:** First Folio of 1623 is the only early printed text. Based on a transcript by Ralph Crane, a professional scribe working for the King's Men. Generally good quality of printing.

# THE TEMPEST

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# LIST OF PARTS

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OSPERO, the right Duke of Milan

RANDA, his daughter

ONSO, King of Naples

BASTIAN, his brother

TONIO, Prospero's brother, the usurping Duke of Milan

RDINAND, son to the King of Naples

ONZALO, an honest old councillor

ORIAN and FRANCISCO, lords

INCULO, a jester

EPHANO, a drunken butler

ASTER, of a ship

ATSWAIN MARINERS

LIBAN, a savage and deformed slave

IEL, an airy spirit

Spirits commanded by Prospero playing roles of

IRIS

CERES

JUNO

NYMPHS

REAPERS

**The Scene: an uninhabited island**

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## Act 1 Scene 1

running scene

*A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard. Enter a Shipmaster and a Boatswain*

MASTER Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN Here, master. What cheer?<sup>2</sup>

MASTER Good: speak to th'mariners. Fall to't yarely<sup>3</sup>, or we  
run ourselves aground! Bestir<sup>4</sup>, bestir!

*Enter Mariners*

BOATSWAIN Heigh, my hearts! Cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! Yare<sup>5</sup>,  
men! Take in the topsail. Tend to th'master's whistle.— Blow<sup>6</sup>,  
I thou burst thy wind, if room enough.

Ex

*Enter Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo and others*

ALONSO Good boatswain, have<sup>8</sup> care. Where's the master?  
Bring the<sup>9</sup> men.

To the stor

BOATSWAIN I pray now, keep below.

ANTONIO Where is the master, boatswain?

BOATSWAIN Do you not hear him? You mar<sup>12</sup> our labour. Keep  
your cabins! You do assist the storm.

GONZALO Nay, good, be patient.

BOATSWAIN When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers<sup>15</sup>  
for the name of king? To cabin! Silence! Trouble us not.

GONZALO Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

BOATSWAIN None that I more love than myself. You are a  
foolish<sup>19</sup>: if you can command these elements to silence,  
and work the peace of the present, we will not hand<sup>20</sup> a rope  
more: use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have  
ruled so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the

To the Marin

dischance of the hour, if it so hap.<sup>23</sup>— Cheerly,

To the Courti

od hearts!— Out of our way, I say.

*Exeunt [Boatswain with Mariners, followed by Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio and Ferdinand]*

GONZALO I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks [he](#)<sup>25</sup> with no drowning [mark](#)<sup>26</sup> upon him: his complexion is perfect yellow. Stand fast, good Fate, to his hanging: make the [rope](#)<sup>27</sup> his destiny our [cable](#)<sup>28</sup>, for our own doth little advantage. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable.

*Enter Boatswain*

BOATSWAIN [Down with the topmast!](#)<sup>30</sup> Yare! Lower, lower! Bring her [to try with main course.](#)<sup>31</sup> (*A cry within*) A plague upon this howling! They are louder than the weather or [our office.](#)<sup>32</sup>

*Enter Sebastian, Antonio and Gonzalo*

BOATSWAIN What again? What do you here? Shall we give [o'er](#)<sup>33</sup> and drown? Have you a mind to sink?

SEBASTIAN A [pox](#)<sup>35</sup> o'your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog!

BOATSWAIN Work you then.

ANTONIO Hang, [cur!](#)<sup>38</sup> Hang, you whoreson, insolent noise-maker! We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

GONZALO I'll [warrant him for drowning](#)<sup>40</sup>, though the ship were stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an [unstanched](#)<sup>41</sup> hench.

BOATSWAIN [Lay her ahold](#), ahold! [Set her two courses off to](#)<sup>43</sup> sea! Lay her off!

*Enter Mariners, wet*

MARINERS All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!

BOATSWAIN What, [must our mouths be cold?](#)<sup>46</sup>

GONZALO The king and prince at prayers: let's assist them, for their case is as theirs.

SEBASTIAN I'm out of patience.

ANTONIO We are [merely](#)<sup>50</sup> cheated of our lives by drunkards. This [wide-chopped](#)<sup>51</sup> rascal: would thou mightst lie drowning, the washing of [ten tides!](#)<sup>52</sup>

ANZALO He'll be **hanged yet**<sup>53</sup>,

---

ough every drop of water swear against it  
id gape **at wid'st** to **glut**<sup>55</sup> him.

*[Exeunt Boatswain and Mariners]*

*A confused noise within*

VOICES OFF-STAGE] Mercy on us! — **We split**<sup>56</sup>, we split! —  
rewell, my wife and children! — Farewell, brother! — We  
lit, we split, we split!

TONIO Let's all sink wi'th'king.

BASTIAN Let's take leave of him.

*Exeunt [Antonio and Sebastian]*

ANZALO Now would I give a thousand **furlongs**<sup>61</sup> of sea for an  
**ere** of barren ground: **long heath**, **brown furze**<sup>62</sup>, anything.  
ere wills above be done! But I would **fain**<sup>63</sup> die a dry death.

*Exeunt*

## Act 1 Scene 2

*running scene*

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*Enter Prospero and Miranda*

MIRANDA If by your **art**<sup>1</sup>, my dearest father, you have  
t the wild waters in this roar, **allay**<sup>2</sup> them.  
e sky, it seems, would pour down stinking **pitch**<sup>3</sup>,  
t that the sea, mounting to th'**welkin's**<sup>4</sup> cheek,  
ashes the **fire**<sup>5</sup> out. O, I have suffered  
ith those that I saw suffer: a **brave**<sup>6</sup> vessel —  
ho had, no doubt, some noble creature in her —  
ashed all to pieces. O, the cry did knock  
gainst my very heart. Poor souls, they perished.  
ad I been any god of power, I would  
ave sunk the sea within the earth, **or ere**<sup>11</sup>  
should the good ship so have swallowed, and  
e **fraughting souls**<sup>13</sup> within her.

PROSPERO Be **collected**<sup>14</sup>:

o more **amazement**.<sup>15</sup> Tell your piteous heart  
ere's no harm done.



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