

THE TEMPEST: MYSTERY DRAMA OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS SOUL



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"*The Tempest* is a specimen of the purely romantic drama, in which the interest is not historical, or dependent upon fidelity of portraiture, or the natural connection of events—but is a birth of the imagination and union of the elements granted to, or assumed by, the poet. It is a species of drama which owes no allegiance to time or space, and in which, therefore, errors of chronology and geography—no mortal sins in any species—are venial faults, and count for nothing. It addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty."

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's plays that has been the most re-read, critiqued and even adapted and re-written. It has given rise to comic operas, burlesque, pantomime. No Shakespeare's play has elicited an equal amount of literary criticism. Practically every critique item can be rebutted with an equally valid argument, often by pointing to some overlooked details of the text. The same can be said about one character or another and chiefly about the main protagonist, Prospero. He can be extolled, vilified or somewhere in between. Part of this predicament can be attributed to the play being among the last of Shakespeare career—therefore one of his most artistically mature productions—and also to the nature of the political/cultural changes introduced by James I in British and European politics. These changes, or tensions, accelerated with the coming of age of his son Henry and daughter Elizabeth at the time of the play's first production, as we will see in what follows.

In recent time the play has been the target of revisionist critique linking it to issues of colonialism, racism, feminism and other social themes.¹ As far-fetched as it may seem to base a colonialist interpretation of the play, mostly or solely, on the figure of Caliban, the name's possible derivation from cannibal—added to an understanding of indigenous people ranging from naïve idealism to Euro-centric hegemonic views—still a lingering doubt can understandably bring some to this conclusion. This is due, I would argue, and try to prove, to the archetypal richness of the play.

¹ An example of how the theme of colonialism is taken for granted in *The Tempest* comes from Stephen Greenblatt's "The Best Way to Kill Our Literary Inheritance Is to Turn It into a Decorous Celebration of the New World Order": "And it is similarly difficult to come to terms with what *The Tempest* has to teach us about forgiveness, wisdom, and social atonement if we do not also come to terms with its relations to colonialism." (Quoted in the collection *Case Studies in Critical Controversy, The Tempest*, Gerald Graff and James Phelan, editors, 115).

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* can offer a case in point. People of all persuasions have found in the play a justification for their political persuasions, be they progressive or conservative, or for their religious views, be they Pagan, Christian, New Agers or other. And for good cause. Tolkien, himself a Roman Catholic, nevertheless wrote the opus solely from artistic inspiration, surprised and at times bewildered about how far the theme seemed to take him away from his professed faith. After the fact he welcomed open-mindedly some of his readers' suggestions of the parallels of characters and themes with Christian belief. It came as a surprise to him, no doubt even as a relief.

When a writing is rich in archetypal content, meaning escapes narrow definitions. The archetypal content is so vast that the reader has two options: either enlarge her own views with something new and broader, or narrow a very large perspective to suit what she already knows and bypass the possibility of creative and artistic growth. He can rest content and reassured in what he already is and comprehends. To come back to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, colonialism is a rather narrow aspect of what the archetype of Prospero and his magic can suggest, and it would be hard to cogently prove that Shakespeare had in mind an apology of colonialism when he wrote the play, or even contemplated colonialism at all. Still, the play generously makes room for such a narrow interpretation, though it doesn't coherently sustain it.

It is fascinating to read the interpretations of conservative or liberal critics counter each other. On one hand Shakespeare is an unquestioned authority that has established the canons of dramatic productions once and for all, and attacking him means undermining the essence, or part of the essence, of Anglo-American, if not Western culture; on the other hand the critic can retroactively force his modern views and sensibilities on everything he confronts and condemn this play or others that fail muster, no matter what its objective achievements may be. Unquestioned and unquestioning acceptance can oppose single-minded, one-sided, ideologically prescribed criticism.²

With the help of a spiritual scientific approach we can hope to avoid such either/or traps and try to discover the polarities that build up the archetypes. Part of this approach will rest on a phenomenological look at the text

² An example of this can be found in the contrast between the views of George Will's "Literary Politics" and Stephen Greenblatt's "The Best Way to Kill Our Literary Inheritance Is to Turn It into a Decorous Celebration of the New World Order"—responding to each other. It is offered in *Case Studies in Critical Controversy, The Tempest*, Gerald Graff and James Phelan, editors, 110-115.

that accepts all apparent contradictions before attempting an integration. In doing so a full appreciation of the perplexing, ambivalent, contradictory Prospero will be the key. An appreciation of Shakespeare's role in relation to the age of the Consciousness Soul will be the other element. Since little is outwardly known about the author that would allow deeper understanding, we will turn to Rudolf Steiner's indications about him and about his relationship to James I as a source of inspiration. Finally, we will dwell on the figure of James I himself and the historical moment that his presence defined.

Historical Background

The first recorded performance of *The Tempest* took place at the court of King James on November 1, 1611, eight years after James I's accession to the English throne. It was performed again on May 20, 1613 for the king during the festivities for the marriage of his daughter. It only appeared in print seven years after the death of its author, in 1623. Shakespeare, it is believed, still wrote two plays, or coauthored them, after this one: *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Below is a timeline of the Last Plays to the best of literary estimates:

- 1608: *Pericles*
- 1610: *Cymbeline*; a 1611 performance is recorded.
- 1611: *The Winter's Tale*; performed at the Globe May 1611.
- 1611: *The Tempest*; we know the play uses source material not available before autumn 1610.
- 1613: *Henry VIII*; the first Globe theatre burnt down in a fire that started during a performance of the play on 29 June 1613.
- 1613-14: *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.³

Shakespeare's plays are broadly divided into comedies, histories and tragedies. *The Tempest* falls nominally under comedies. While it shares in the romantic playfulness of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and also has the happy ending of reconciliation and marriage, the themes involving exile, enslavement, magic with dark undertones have led some to call it a tragicomedy and others to place it under the whole other category of "problem plays," or to the more organic grouping of Last Plays that we see above.⁴

³ Source: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeares-plays/histories-timeline/timeline>

⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest: A Norton Critical Edition*, second edition, Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman editors, vii.

It is interesting to bring up here Steiner's assessment of Shakespeare's soul in what we could recognize as the full establishment of the consciousness soul in the transition between the fourth and fifth post-Atlantean epochs. Shakespeare belongs to a time of transition between what is reflected in Hamlet's two kinds of perception visible on stage. Hamlet is both in contact with the spiritual world—as when he sees his father as a ghost—and with the rising intellectualism of his time. In Hamlet spiritual vision stands at odds with, and suffers from, the growing intellectualism of the time.⁵

In Shakespeare's plays there is often a lack of distinction between whether the spiritual beings are objective presences or subjective interpretations. This is reflected in Shakespeare's overabundant use of conditions of "dream" or "sleep," most often not related to literal dream or literal sleep. However, this trend evolves in time.

Shakespeare's dramas culminate in the age of Queen Elizabeth, in that intellectual clarity that had set in since that time. Here is a somehow indicative Steiner quote from the same lecture above, that needs further elucidation: "After the transition has been going on for some time [presumably after writing all the earlier plays and coming to the later plays], *the dramas lead to Shakespeare's immediate present*, which is a world with which it is possible to come to terms ... because *from then on history takes a satisfactory course and runs on into intellectualism*. Intellectualism came from the part of the earth out of which Shakespeare wrote; and he depicted this by ending up at this point" (emphasis added).⁶ It is this transition which will interest us most in the direction of understanding *The Tempest*.

Synopsis of the Play and Major Themes

Before diving into the play, and for the reader with lesser familiarity with the play, we offer here a brief synopsis of the five acts, emphasizing occasionally some themes that we will revisit later on.

The island of the play is inhabited by four characters: Prospero and his daughter Miranda who have resided there for twelve years, the airy spirit Ariel and the more earthly Caliban, the island's original inhabitant. Prospero uses both of them as his servants. Other spirits are summoned by Ariel.

Prospero, the magician, was deprived of the Dukedom of Milan by his brother Antonio in concert with Alonso, King of Naples and providentially forced to exile on the island, since he had been destined to die. Prospero has come to know through his arts that a ship carrying his enemies has

⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Old and New Methods of Initiation*, lecture of February 24, 1922.

⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *Old and New Methods of Initiation*, lecture of February 24, 1922.

sailed close to the island, and he has summoned the elements to create a tempest that will oblige them to make landfall. Together with Prospero's brother Antonio, Alonso, King of Naples with his faithful counselor Gonzalo, his son Ferdinand, his brother Sebastian, and other members of his court.

Already in Act I we can fathom three key elements: the complex and ambivalent relationship between Prospero and Antonio which led to Prospero's demise, Miranda's awareness of her father's magical arts, and Prospero's thankfulness for the roles played by Miranda and Gonzalo. The latter made it possible for Miranda and him to survive and for Prospero to preserve access to his books.

All the people aboard the ship have survived and Prospero maneuvers together with Ariel to separate them in ways that promote his plans. Ferdinand comes alone since Prospero intends to entice him and Miranda into mutually romantic feelings. Here the relationship between Miranda and Prospero is further revealed.

King Alonso's jester, Trinculo, and his majordomo, Stephano, meet with Caliban. With the help of the latter the three attempt to usurp Prospero's powers and take possession of the island. It's the "comic relief" of the play. Caliban and Ferdinand appear in some degree of symmetrical relationships.

Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian and Antonio have been brought into each other's presence, accompanied by Adrian and Francisco, who only play a minor role. Ariel, in concert with Prospero, fomented a plan in which Antonio and Sebastian attempt to kill Alonso and Gonzalo in their sleep. The plan is thwarted by Ariel at the last minute. The ship's captain, boatswain and sailors will not reappear until the end of the play.

Central to the last act are three magical stagings, one of which is the classical form called "masque", involving scenery, music, often mythical characters. In the first of these stagings the people of the courts of Naples and Milan witness a magic banquet, in which Ariel performs the part of a harpy that withdraws the banquet from sight. On the other hand Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban are shown a display of elegant clothings, to entice them and distract them from their murderous aims. The anticlimax comes when the three are chased off into the swamps by goblins in the shape of "dogs and hounds." The more elaborate staging is that of the masque, which makes appeal to the goddesses, Juno, Ceres, and Iris, in order to bless and celebrate the betrothal of Ferdinand to Miranda. This pageant too is interrupted when Prospero realizes he needs to attend to the business of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano.

Knowing that he is very close to securing all his goals Prospero vows to set Ariel free, and renounce his magic. Before this Ariel brings Alonso, Gonzalo, Antonio, and Sebastian into Prospero's magic circle. Prospero, touched most of all by Alonso and Gonzalo's genuine repentance, decides to forgive everybody, or at least so it seems. Prospero secures his title of Duke of Milan and Miranda's access to Naples's throne. Ariel will be free, while Caliban, sobered and filled with regret, promises to change his ways. Stephano and Trinculo face utter ridicule. Knowing that Ferdinand will marry Miranda, the noble retinue leaves the island to sail for Naples, where the marriage will be celebrated. Now Ariel is set free, and Prospero not only abjures his practice of magic but requests that the audience forgive him and set him free.

Main Characters and Related Themes

Prospero is the character around which all karmic threads converge, not to mention the one who has the lion's share of presence in the play. It is indicative that the magician's role can elicit widely divergent and extreme appreciations from literary critics. We will offer here just two of these.

To some critics Prospero appears as an unmistakably virtuous person. This is the case for Frances A. Yates because "[Prospero] clears the world of his island from the evil magic of the witch [Sycorax]; he rewards the good characters and punishes the wicked. He is a just judge, or a virtuous and reforming monarch, who uses his magical scientific powers for good." And furthermore: "Shakespeare shows us an infinitely wise and beneficent figure, working for moral goodness and reform, a marvelous evocation of the Renaissance magus in his full imaginative and creative power."⁷

Take a rather opposite view, that of Michael Neill: "Prospero's magic, moreover, is always tainted by the suspicion that it traffics in the forbidden, and that for all its benevolent professions, it may constitute a kind of Faustian overreaching—something that in the end will have to be renounced, like his magician's staff and book, and consigned to the oblivious silence 'deeper than did ever plummet sound,' of that 'abyss of time' from which his vindictive memories first surfaced."⁸

We can only make headways in this apparent contrast in seeing it as the manifestation of polarities and/or contradictions, in looking at themes after

⁷ Frances A. Yates, *Majesty and Magic in Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach to Cymbeline, Henry VIII and The Tempest*, 94 and 120.

⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: A Norton Critical Edition, second edition, 276.

themes and contrasting Prospero with others, primarily Gonzalo, Miranda and Antonio.

Miranda and Gonzalo

The magician's books are partly the source of his banishment and the power he uses to overcome it. In recalling his initial efforts Prospero indicates to his daughter: "... And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed In dignity, and for the liberal arts, Without a parallel. Those being all my study, The government I cast upon my brother And to *my state grew stranger, being transported And rapt in secret studies*" (1.2, 72-77) (emphasis added). He reiterates it soon after: "I, thus *neglecting worldly ends*, all dedicated to closeness and the bettering of my mind With that which, but by being so retired, O'erprized all popular rate, *in my false brother Awaked an evil nature*: and *my trust*, Like a good parent, did *beget of him A falsehood in its contrary as great as my trust was...*" (1.2, 89-96). Prospero's devotion to the liberal arts is praiseworthy and it seems thus acknowledged by people around him. However, it comes at the expense of his more "worldly ends." In his own words Prospero is somehow aware of his shortcomings, though not necessarily fully cognizant of their impact and repercussions. Antonio finally believes Prospero "Of temporal royalties ... now incapable" (1.2, 110-11) and schemes to usurp his position. In the above lies the crux of Prospero's difficult relationship with Antonio. And it seems that Prospero's detached intellect delivers much more than Prospero the conscious person is willing to accept or take responsibility for.

Things are different in relation to Miranda and Gonzalo. Here the relationships acquire positive connotations, later to reveal themselves critical in Prospero's change of heart. Speaking to Miranda about his banishment he reminds her "[Gonzalo] furnished me From mine own library with *volumes that I prized above my dukedom*" (1.2.198-200) (emphasis added). Gonzalo is the one who can both serve his master, Alonso, but also act independently with generosity and compassion.

Miranda knows about and speaks from the very beginning of the magic performed by the father.⁹ When Prospero wants to tell the daughter of the events that led to the tempest he first removes his cloak. It looks like a way of being just her true father. But when Ariel comes to him, Prospero, wanting to speak to him alone, has no hesitation in putting Miranda to

⁹ The first time she speaks Miranda does so in relation to Prospero's 'art.' "If by your art, my dearest father, you have Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them. (1.2,1-2) (6)

sleep: "Thou art inclined to sleep" (1.2.220) he commands. Soon after Prospero casts a spell upon Ferdinand and Miranda that leads to their mutual attraction.



Unknown author: Prospero, Miranda and Ariel, from "The Tempest"

Miranda is the image of the innocent feminine throughout. This is why she is perceived by Ferdinand as a divine being in association with the alluring music generated by Ariel: "Most sure, the goddess On whom these airs attend" (1.2.420-21). This is later repeated by Alonso (5.1.187-88). To the end of the play Miranda sees but good: "How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! Oh, brave new world That has such people in't!" (5.1.181-84). And Prospero recognizes that it was Miranda's "fortitude from heaven" that preserved him in the new environment (1.2.154). Later on the magician calls her "a third of my own life—or that for which I live" (4.1.3-4).

Interestingly Miranda and Gonzalo are first mentioned together at the beginning of the play. Both have the strong heart forces which Prospero lacks. In Gonzalo this goes together with some lack of intellectual discrimination

or logic.¹⁰ Miranda and Gonzalo develop to the strongest degree what Prospero lacks. Their heart forces compensate for Prospero's initially lacking social instincts.

We can further approach Prospero by contrast with two of the supernatural beings who stand closest to him: Ariel and Caliban.

Ariel and Caliban

Here too it is of great interest to the listener that Ariel and Caliban are introduced together. The two have a common origin to which we are introduced in a matter of a few lines (1.2, 266-281). Whereas Caliban was the son of the witch Sycorax—who worships the deity Setebos—name coming from European accounts of the Patagonian natives' worship—Ariel was the spirit she subdued to her command and then confined to a "cloven pine" because he was a "spirit too delicate to act her earthly and abhorred commands." (1.2, 272-73). Prospero, however, does not act very differently from the witch, witness, among others, his threat to Ariel: "If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak and peg thee in his knotty entrails..." (1.2.294-95).

Ariel is a playful and eloquent spirit that has power over the elemental beings and is the one who grants such power to Prospero. It is easy and natural for the audience to fall under his spell. He represents the keenest perceiving intellect, whose powers and knowledge appear even greater than Prospero's. He is able to detect the conspiracies of Sebastian and Antonio or Stephano and Caliban on his own. He does so without indignation or sympathy.

Ariel is compelled to serve the one who rescued him from a harsher slavery. Prospero at turns cajoles or threatens him as a "malignant thing" (1.2, 256) or "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself..." (1.2.319).

Charming though he may be, in the discharge of his office Ariel can lie. To Ferdinand he says his father has died and lies at the bottom of the sea. This lie causes dependency by lowering Ferdinand's hope and his degree of consciousness. Ariel also likes to mischievously sow discord, even that which doesn't seem strictly necessary to the plans of his master. This he does in interposing himself between Caliban and Trinculo, fanning the

¹⁰ Such is the case of Gonzalo equating Carthage to Tunis (1.2 79-81) or not understanding his own contradictions when predicating a return to a Golden Age without "sovereignty" in which he would be ... king. (2.1,151-52).

flames of Stephano's vanity. And, like Prospero does with Ferdinand, Ariel can stop Antonio and Sebastian from using their swords. (3.3.85-86) Here we see that, at some level, Ariel and Prospero play almost interchangeable roles.

In the opening scenes Prospero complements Ariel for letting Ferdinand become infatuated with his daughter: "Delicate Ariel, I'll set thee free for this" (1.2.440-41). But Ariel doesn't receive all directives from Prospero; he can also add his own inspiration to what Prospero asks him. It is Ariel who knows before Prospero about Caliban's attempt to overthrow the magician with the help of Stephano and Trinculo: "This will I tell my master." (3.2.108). Prospero in fact later forgets about it while Ariel doesn't want to interrupt him during the Ceres-Juno masque in order to remind him.

In essence Shakespeare gives away the deepest secret of Ariel's being and his closeness with Prospero in a seemingly anodyne Ariel statement: "Thy [Prospero's] thoughts I cleave to" (4.1.164) which seems to best illustrate the tenor of their relationship. Prospero and Ariel are in effect one in thinking.

Of Caliban on the other hand Prospero says he's not "honored with a human shape" (1.2.336-37) and throughout the play Caliban's full humanity remains in question. Caliban is variously described in mostly animal terms as: tortoise, hagseed, fish, monster, moon-calf, puppy-headed or misshapen. In him John Dryden sees the imagination of the Centaur: "he has all the discontents, and malice, of a Witch, and of a Devil: besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins: Gluttony, Sloth, and Lust, are manifest. Likewise he sees in him the dejectedness of a slave is likewise given him, and the ignorance of one bred up in a Desart (sic) Island."¹¹ Ludwig Tieck on the other hand sees Caliban as a monster remote from humanity.¹² As part of the audience it is probably much harder to form a warm relationship with Caliban than it is with Ariel.

Caliban can be seen as a creature confined to an Edenic island, though through the quality of his soul he is alienated/separated from it. Caliban's first means of expression is the physical symptom imposed upon him by the magician; his resentment generates pinches and cramps. His speech is articulated first in curse then in a primitive counternarrative. "Symptom, curse, and counternarrative: these are the oppositional forms that the

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: A Norton Critical Edition, second edition, 123.

¹² William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: A Norton Critical Edition, second edition, 131.

passion of resentment takes in Caliban's discourse" comments Julia Reinhard Lupton.¹³

On the positive side Caliban is at times capable of wonder. This he expresses when he describes the island "full of noises, sounds, and sweet airs..." (3.2.128-36). Through Prospero, taking pains to teach him, he has been rendered capable of wonder, but through Prospero he is also deprived of the full benefit of wonder. He isn't fully able to unite with the object of his awe, he cannot feel at one.

Caliban shows his animal nature when, confronted with his attempted rape of Miranda, he does not express regret but frustration over his being prevented from exhausting his wish. And Prospero calls him "A devil, a born devil, on whose nature Nurture can never stick." (4.1.211-12) For Caliban Prospero is a tyrant and a sorcerer but, having ascertained this, he's immediately ready to trade his present tyrant for the much more obvious exploiter that is Stephano.

The nature of Caliban's being and its relationship to Prospero is revealed by the play's end. In the final act Prospero and Caliban accomplish a rapprochement. Prospero states: "These three [Stephano, Trinculio and Caliban] have robbed me, and this demi-devil—For he's a bastard one—had plotted with them [Stephano and Trinculio] To take my life", adding soon after: "This thing of darkness [Caliban] I Acknowledge mine." (5.1.330-31). Shortly before this Caliban has invoked Setebos, the being from whom he previously received his power (5.1.264). Prospero is sobered by the admission of his Caliban nature, while Caliban is elevated: I'll be wise hereafter, And seek for grace" (5.1.297-98). He starts this movement of redemption by realizing what a fool he has been to idolize Stephano.

To understand the nature of Caliban and his relationship with Ariel and Prospero let us first look at the movement which leads to Prospero's forgiveness and redemption. Later we will turn to deeper aspects of Prospero's being in relation to the context of his time and culture, which will shed further light on the role of Caliban.

The turning point for Prospero's unburdening comes through Ariel, who conveys to him that Gonzalo, Alonso and Antonio are "brimful of sorrow and dismay, but most of all Gonzalo." (5.1.13-16). Ariel is visibly moved and suggests Prospero should be too. And because they are all supposedly penitent, Prospero can err "in virtue [rather] than in vengeance" (5.1.27-

¹³ William Shakespeare , *The Tempest*: A Norton Critical Edition, second edition, 223.

28). The magician feels he should be able to emulate what an elemental is capable of doing. "Go release them, Ariel" finally orders Prospero, "My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore, and they shall be themselves." (5.1.38-40)

The next turning point comes from seeing the four men—Gonzalo, Alonso and Antonio, Sebastian—in a lowered state of consciousness come under his dominion. But even this is not a simple "yes or no" scenario. At this point Prospero still gloats at his power to use "Some subtleties o' th' isle, that will not let you Believe things certain ..." (5.1.124-25) And he makes sure to demand the dukedom of Milan from Antonio in unequivocal terms: "... and require My dukedom of thee, which perforce I know Thou must restore" (5.1.132-34).

For all his good intentions and even genuine change of heart, Prospero is only willing to go so far with his generosity. Miranda's marriage is part of his long-term plan. Leaving the island and returning to power is hardly a renunciation.

In act V Prospero supposedly forgives his brother whom he has aspersed with disparaging comments before (especially in Act II). Stephen Orgel rightly comments that Prospero does not renounce anything and that his brother does not repent, nor is he really given a genuine chance to do so. In fact, it seems that Prospero is the one instigating Antonio's treachery on Alonso—he and Sebastian are prevented from falling asleep like Alonso and Gonzalo—before putting an end to it through Ariel. Through this maneuver Prospero can at first just point at Antonio's attempt—hinting that there is more to say about him.¹⁴ At the final confrontation/resolution, when the four men are about to recover their senses Prospero speaks about Antonio's and Sebastian's attempt to kill Alonso (5.1.73-78). Though they are in a lowered state of consciousness they receive the message subliminally. There really isn't any forgiveness of Antonio! Prospero adds power to his staging of events by revealing himself as the Duke of Milan while they slowly recover their senses.

In order to prevent his brother from any future claim to the Milan throne, Prospero altogether forfeits the dukedom to the kingdom of Naples upon his own death. Relinquishing Miranda to Ferdinand is a way to preserve his power and deprive his brother of it.

In decoding this decidedly enigmatic and contradictory figure of Prospero we'll plumb the depth of the complexity of the consciousness soul first, then

¹⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: A Norton Critical Edition, second edition, 186.

follow the avenues that are opened to it both for better or for worse. In so doing we'll come closer to the being of Caliban, and his relationship to Ariel and Prospero.

The Birth of the Consciousness Soul

When Miranda takes the defense of Ferdinand, Prospero doesn't hesitate: "One word more Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee." (1.2.474-75) From this even the relationship to a daughter he undoubtedly adores acquires layers of complexity. In the many-layered strata of Prospero's considerations we can recognize the anti-social element and other traits of the consciousness soul at the inception of such a new reality in England.

The consciousness soul manifests itself more strongly of all in the nature of the English people in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, according to Rudolf Steiner. This layer of the soul ultimately implies the severance of the human soul from the macrocosm. While the sentient soul is most closely united with the astral body and the intellectual soul with the etheric body, the consciousness soul is closely connected with the physical body and with the pull of the physical world. The physical body separates off the human being and thrusts him upon himself. "Every Englishman is an island" intuited Novalis, pointing to the complete severance of microcosm from macrocosm. Out of this point of nothingness there must first arise the feeling, then the growing awareness and finally certainty of our own being.

The consciousness soul places us at the parting of the ways: either attaining imaginative consciousness to reclaim the human and build a bridge to the spirit, or death/alienation by complete severance and non-being. The consciousness soul yearns for the step of expansion into the macrocosm; it offers the individual a constant reminder of death, and that there is no resurrection without it. This soul needs to live in the very breakdown of all belief, to immerse itself in the destructive element and learn to tear the self from all thought and all feeling coming from the senses. Furthermore, as Owen Barfield points out, "The consciousness soul will only say 'I know,' when it can add: 'because I have experienced.'"¹⁵ In the West it's as if there were on one side consciousness soul and on the other sentient soul, but little in the middle. And Prospero is a quintessential representative of this predicament. This is why he needs Miranda and Gonzalo to activate the forces of the intellectual soul and of the heart.

The magician is wise, though in a one-sided way, since he is also opinionated, critical and resentful, and he shows himself ill at ease with each and

¹⁵ Owen Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age*, 150.

any of the other characters, even his daughter. Prospero is thus a personification of the anti-social instincts that reach their highest expression in the time of the consciousness soul. This is visible first in how he pursues a knowledge separate from life, then in how he pursues his own ends with every individual, even his daughter.

Other impulses that are highly significant of the time of the consciousness soul are expressed in Prospero. Steiner indicates that occult knowledge naturally comes to the surface in our time, and that the human being faces the “dangers of mixing up his personal instincts with what is common with mankind as a whole.”¹⁶ The above tendencies point Prospero in the direction of Caliban. To this we will return more fully later.

The Mystery Drama Dimension of *The Tempest*

If we now look back at the whole play and its nature it is in order to better return to the central role that Prospero plays in it and how it relates to the dilemma of the time of the consciousness soul and the central place it takes in English culture.

We will look first of all at the setting. Prospero’s domain is called the “most desolate isle” (3.3.81) a “bare island” (5.1.8), or “this island where man doth not inhabit” (3.3.73-74). The island seems to point to a landscape of the soul, all the more so because not only is space different from the purely physical, so is time. Toward the end of the play Alonso speaks, with what can come as a surprise to the audience, of having spent only three hours on the island (5.1.157-58). Physical phenomena themselves seem suspended. Early on Gonzalo speaks of the survivors’ vestments being preserved in ways that seem hardly possible according to physical laws after a tempest.

Josie Alwyn lets us notice that by placing his characters and his audience in the elements’ fury Shakespeare puts us at the boundary between life and death and removes solid ground, as it were, from under our feet. He lets us be thoroughly disoriented.¹⁷ And this extends from the natural to the moral realm. In the ship at the hour of destiny the boatswain’s authority counts far more than the king’s own and he feels free to defy the then sacrosanct love of king thus: “None that I more love than myself” (1.1.21). Nature’s overpowering forces—set in motion by human will mind you—disrupt all reference to our usual physical moorings and moral boundaries.

¹⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, lecture of December 25, 1916.

¹⁷ Josie Alwyn and Brien Masters, *Educating the Soul on the Esoteric in Shakespeare*, Part V: “The Tempest and the Tree of Life”.

In the opposite direction Miranda breaks usual conventions by speaking her mind and heart very spontaneously with Ferdinand: "I am your wife if you'll marry me; If not, I'll die your maid." (3.2.83-84) Another indication appears here that the individuals cannot disguise their being. Antonio and Sebastian can but be intriguants, Miranda a disarmingly innocent and sincere soul.

Another very closely allied theme is that of literal sleep and/or sleep/dream of consciousness. It is interesting to notice, as Shakespeare critics have, that sleep in his plays is rarely of a therapeutic nature. Rather, it is associated with vulnerability to a variety of moral dangers. It is a lowering of consciousness one could say. In the play it is called a "dulling of spirits" among other things.

The word dream appears four times in the play, sleep a surprising twelve. The play has in fact a pervasive otherworldly quality deriving from the setting of the desert island, the musical interludes, and the fact that almost all characters at one point or another fall asleep, or are in a state of slumber or lowered consciousness. On the other hand wakefulness itself can be associated with lack of moral scruples, as in the case of Antonio and Sebastian.

Even from the very first act (scene 2) Miranda finds it hard to remain awake to what her father has to say, and he rebukes her for it on a number of occasions. Ironically, after she's done listening to him Prospero puts her to sleep in order to conceal his conversation with Ariel. Ferdinand appears first on the scene in a state of waking sleep. It can also be understood in part by the disorientation of a desert island and its "noises and sweet airs." On the other hand Caliban expresses how he would drift "from dream to sleep and back to dream" (3.2.128-36).

Sleep is used as a weapon by Prospero, selectively and suddenly, to target people, first his daughter, later on Alonso and Gonzalo. While Alonso and Gonzalo sleep Antonio compares Sebastian to one who is asleep to his destiny or emerging opportunity.

From all of the above it seems we are finding ourselves outside of time and space. However, from the content of the plot it is obvious we are also looking at both from another, maybe higher, vintage point. Altered consciousness is the gateway to something else; doubt, remorse and change of heart.

Ultimately, we sense that Prospero wants to unburden himself and that he can do so by finding the strength to take away the burden from his adversaries. He wants to liberate himself from sorrow, grief, guilt and vindictive

remembrance. The theme of burdening and unburdening comes to the fore in the exact middle of the play in scenes 2.2 and 3.1, one mirroring the other, Ferdinand mirroring Caliban. They both have to carry logs of firewood for Prospero. They find relief, one through Miranda, the other, rather questionably, through Stephano and Trinculo. Act 2 opens with Caliban bowed by the weight of a "burden of wood" and ends with the song 'Ban, 'ban, Ca-caliban Has a new master" (2.2.190-91) that celebrates the repudiation of bondage, but for the illusory freedom, offered by Stephano and Trinculo. In Act 3 Ferdinand suffers under the spell of the generational burden of guilt of the father and the fascination for Miranda. Caliban relieves his burden by pledging allegiance to Stephano and Ferdinand to Miranda. Ferdinand finds freedom in service performed with a happy heart, Caliban subjects himself to further and deeper humiliation. Linking one to the other, Prospero points out that Ferdinand may be no better than Caliban, or at least share some similarities with him: "To th' most of men this is a Caliban, And they to him are angels" (II, 479-80).



Francis Wheatley: A Scene from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Two 'supernatural events' point clearly to the unfulfilled nature of earthly desires. Each event ends with an anticlimax of passions denied. After presenting a banquet table to Alonso, Gonzalo, Antonio and Sebastian, Ariel appears as a harpy to withdraw the bounty from their reach. Ariel/harpy comes to the sound of thunder, playing the role of the bad conscience of the four. He instils remorse and explains how the elementals work in nature and in consciousness. Her role is augmented by the "shapes" that follow with "mocks and mows [grimaces]," but strangely to "soft music." Prospero soon after congratulates Ariel, and immediately after sets up his next "vanity" of the Juno-Ceres masque. Gonzalo, who has been touched by the scene, notices that the other three are desperate because of "great guilt." But Alonso alone is really touched. The other two fight their feelings at the literal level, pursuing the elementals with their swords, in other words chasing ghosts.

In the banquet scene Ariel the harpy declares: "I and my fellows Are ministers of fate" (3.3.62) or "powers delaying, not forgetting" (3.3.74). And to Alonso he announces/threatens "ling'ring perdition,... heart's sorrow." But he also hints to the alternative of guarding him from this wrath (3.3.80). Ariel brings to the conscience of those present the memory of the deed perpetrated against Miranda and Prospero. The individuals react each according to his soul maturity.

In another part of the island, the torment of conscience will touch Stephano and Trinculo in a parallel scene. To distract Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban from their murderous intentions Ariel prepares an appealing display of fine clothes for the conspirators. Stephano's vanity cannot resist the temptation. Caliban starts to awaken to the foolishness of adoring Stephano. The scene ends with the three pursued by goblins in the shape of "dogs and hounds." Stephano and Trinculo, we could say, receive instant karmic compensation. They end up in the "filthy-mantled pool" (4.1.182).

Remorse and karmic resolution crown the final scene of the play, it has often been said. But not quite as fully as we would like to believe! This is because some are touched fully, others hardly at all. Gonzalo and Alonso are those whose hearts are most deeply touched and so they can serve us as a point of reference.

Alonso starts to fathom that his loss of Ferdinand is a retribution for his heartless treatment of Prospero and Miranda twelve years earlier. Alonso almost expresses karmic clairvoyance when he foresees that in future Miranda should be his daughter and queen of Naples, even before he realizes

she's alive (5.1.148-50). He can take his remorse to the final step of asking Miranda for forgiveness, thus humbling himself in front of his own "child."

From everything outlined above we can consider *The Tempest* to have something of a Mystery Drama nature. We are led to realize that the scenes seem to portray the stage of the life after death that is called *kamaloka*, a phase that can also be experienced in the life between birth and death in heightened consciousness. I use the term Mystery Drama to imply a look at the archetypal nature of the consciousness soul. Contrary to Steiner's *Mystery Dramas*, in *The Tempest* we don't have fully individualized human beings, rather general, contrasting roles that characterize the emergence of the consciousness soul among the British.

The boundary setting explains how the experience can be digested by some but not others. The *kamaloka* nature of the final experiences is best recognized by Gonzalo when he detects that "These are not natural events; they strengthen From strange to stranger" (5.1.230-31). For him the resolution is a process through which "all of us [found] ourselves When no man was his own" (5.1.212-13).

And what about Prospero? Does he complete his own *kamaloka* process? Only by the time of the epilogue can we fathom what his full situation is. Meanwhile we can at least say that Prospero himself is touched by reflex and reaches an inner transformation. Prospero is the one who witnesses everybody's *kamaloka* at least in relation to the destiny they each have in common with him. In 3.3 he is present but invisible to others. He comments about the "devil nature" of Antonio and Sebastian (3.3.35-36). And Ariel, the shadow of Prospero's thinking, mirrors "You are three men of sin," including Alonso as well (3.3.50).

When we come to Prospero's *kamaloka*, we can realize that this has been witnessed by the audience. In a sense it has started from the review of the karma that united him to Antonio in Act 1. As Alonso and Ferdinand have pleaded forgiveness from Prospero, so now can the magician plead the same in the epilogue to 5.1, but from the audience. And Prospero has something else uniquely his own that he carries to his *kamaloka*. Prospero's final monologue refers to it. It is the practice of magic that he wants to abjure, the one that echoes Medea's speech in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This tends to underline that it is not benign magic to start with. Part of the speech reads:

"I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault

Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art." (5.1.50-59)

Later on Prospero mentions enigmatically that "every third thought shall be my grave" (5.1.314). Is this a reference to *kamaloka* occupying a third of our waking life? If not the next one is more likely: "As you for crimes would pardoned be, Let your indulgence set me free" (Epilogue). Prospero has been a witness to everybody's *kamaloka* and has acted with magnanimity toward most of his adversaries. The audience has witnessed the magus' own *kamaloka* and where it leads him. His magic is not just something he will renounce. He will abjure it, which goes a step further in meaning that he will turn away from the illusions and power that it offered him—knowing that it is morally questionable. He also realizes that he will relinquish something that will create a great emptiness in his life, and this will be the price of true unburdening and true freedom. Prospero we could say, has committed the "sin against the Holy Spirit" and for that reason he recognizes that he now has to stand on his own real strength and that this is "most faint". At the very end of the play he admits and implores: "... my ending is despair Unless I be relieved by prayer, Which pierces so that it assaults Mercy itself and frees all faults. As you from crimes would pardoned be, Let your indulgence set me free."

This much of the nature of the play already indicates that we have to do with something approaching a mystery drama, illustrating the path of the consciousness soul with the various possible alternatives present to it. On one hand the possible reconnection with the spirit through a newly created connection with the macrocosm. This is most aptly represented by the path of Gonzalo or Miranda. The one who reaches it with great effort is Alonso. Sebastian and Antonio renounce this possibility for the present. They are entrenched in the division between the soul and the macrocosm. Everything appears as external events to their souls. They cannot form a bridge because they cannot connect outer events with soul events.

However, the play goes even further than this in illustrating the paths that the consciousness soul can take, and we have already hinted at it with Prospero's final plea to the audience. To get deeper into these aspects we will now turn to the historical background of the play, first of all the place of *The Tempest* among Shakespeare's Last Plays. This perspective would

hardly yield any tangible fruits were it not for Steiner's revelations about the enigmatic figure of the sovereign James I and of his relationship to Shakespeare, his contemporary.

The Tempest and Shakespeare's Last Plays

As we have mentioned earlier, the most probable succession of the Last Plays is the following:

- *Pericles*, 1608
- *Cymbeline*, 1610.
- *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, 1611.
- *Henry VIII*, 1613.
- *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, 1613-14.

Frances Yates points at one of the themes common to the Last Plays being the "double plot," involving two generations within a family. The younger generation is usually represented by the daughter and her lover: Marina in *Pericles*, Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, Miranda in *The Tempest*, Imogene in *Cymbeline*.¹⁸ When she is not part of the play, the daughter Elizabeth is announced as a hope for the future in *Henry VIII*. The happy ending comes from recognizing supposedly lost children and these bring reconciliation and future hope. The themes in the plays were reflected at the historical level by the personality of King James I and his two children in which the time saw great hope for the future: Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth.

The Last Plays are also enveloped in a magical and religious atmosphere. Music plays an important role in bringing this sense of harmony, though not exclusively. It also seems that they denote a deepening of the Christ impulse in Shakespeare, both in a historical sense or in the expression of tolerance and forgiveness for all the characters. Let us look more closely at some of the themes they present.

Cymbeline is set during the reign of Caesar Augustus in Rome, but the plot has little claim to accurate historicity. It stages the confrontation between Rome and Britain around the central event of Golgotha. King *Cymbeline* is referred to as "the lofty cedar"—a very likely reference to James I as we will see shortly—and is portrayed as a sort of Arthur ruling over Great Britain.

Imogene, the king's daughter, has married Posthumus Leonatus against her parents' wishes. Thus, Posthumus has been banished. For other reasons

¹⁸ Frances A. Yates, *Majesty and Magic in Shakespeare's Last Plays*, 12.

Imogene is forced to flee and finds herself in a cave in Wales in the company of those who, unbeknownst to her, are her two brothers, themselves unaware of their identity and lineage.

In the play the legends of Arthur and of a somewhat glorified British history are blended in the person of James I. When Posthumus Leonatus returns to England he disembarks at Milford Haven, where Henry VII landed, the Tudor grandfather of Queen Elizabeth. The performances were given in honor of James' son Henry, Prince of Wales, both in 1610 and 1611, together with the special production of masques in his honor.¹⁹ Frances A. Yates indicates: "As a new Arthur, ruling over a new Great Britain, James presided over the shows in which his son and heir, Henry Prince of Wales, was being brought to the fore as the reviver of chivalry."²⁰

Henry VIII crowns the series of historical plays, bringing them up to present time. The play's central theme is the success of British imperial power in stemming the authority of the Catholic Church. At the plot's conclusion papal power is overthrown by the powerful figure of Henry VIII and the appearance of his daughter, the future Queen Elizabeth. Roman power is countered in *Cymbeline*, and in the form of its successor, the Papacy, in *Henry VIII*. No better way to mark the transition from the fourth to the fifth post-Atlantean epochs and the growth of the people of the consciousness soul.

Henry VIII stands as a transition play. While it completes the line of Shakespeare's historical plays, it shares in the mood of reconciliation and tolerance of the Last Plays. It shows tolerance and an empathic portrayal of all characters, Catholic or Protestant as they may be. The play closes with Queen Elizabeth appearing as an infant and even James I is hinted at as her successor.

"Nor shall this peace sleep with her; but, as when
The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix
Her ashes new create another heir
As great in admiration as herself,
So shall she leave her blessedness to one...
Who from the sacred ashes of her honour
Shall star-like rise..."

¹⁹ In 1610 Ben Johnson wrote *The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers* as a masque in honor of Henry, Prince of Wales. It was performed in conjunction with the ceremony known as "Prince Henry's Barriers." Another masque, once more by Ben Johnson, was given in honor of the Prince the following year, titled "Oberon, the Fairy Prince."

²⁰ Frances A. Yates, *Majesty and Magic in Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach to Cymbeline, Henry VIII and The Tempest*, 48.

The phoenix who will "star-like rise" is James, but later this allusion expands to his children with the mention of the cedar and its branches:

He shall flourish
And like a mountain cedar, reach his branches
To all plains about him. Our children's children
Shall see this and bless heaven."

The *Winter's Tale* enigmatically refers to a Bohemian kingdom with access to a seacoast with evident disregard to geographical accuracy. Here too a royal daughter, Perdita, is condemned to flee and hide because of the king of Sicily's unjust accusations of infidelity against the queen. Perdita too is unaware of her identity. Fate leads her in the hands of Florizel, son of Polixenes, king of Bohemia. Love blossoms between Florizel and Perdita and their marriage serves to restore peace between the two kingdoms.

One cannot help but wonder at how *The Winter's Tale* seems to anticipate in imagination the atmosphere of events that will later concern the marriage of James' daughter, Elizabeth, to Friedrich von Pfalz as King of Bohemia, the one best known to history as the "Winter King."

The above brief summaries echo Steiner's indications about Shakespeare that in these Last Plays "the dramas lead to Shakespeare's immediate present, which is a world with which it is possible to come to terms ... because from then on history takes a satisfactory course and runs on into intellectualism."²¹ In *The Tempest* a curtain is likely drawn on the archetypes that live in the "immediate present." And chief among these is King James I.

Shakespeare and King James I

How does the *Tempest* partake of the nature and content of the last three plays described above? As we pointed out it is the one most like a mystery drama. But could it also possibly enter in some fashion within the considerations of the historical plays, a sort of continuation of *Henry VIII*?

Shakespeare has presented a deep mystery to historians and literary critics alike. The ultimate reason for it lies in his writings being inspired by King James I, as we know only from Steiner. Therefore we must turn to the king before returning to Shakespeare.

In James I lies a very complex, ambivalent and almost double personality. One example will point us to the tenor of this ambivalence. On one hand lies the instigator of the biblical studies that led over seven years (1604 to

²¹ Rudolf Steiner, *Old and New Methods of Initiation*, lecture of February 24, 1922.

1611) to the writing of the Bible's King James Version, on the other the inaugurator of British Freemasonry, which shortly deepened and entrenched British imperialism and colonialism. To be sure the movement toward empire had already been implanted by Henry VIII acquiring both temporal and religious powers as the one who assumed leadership of the Church of England and dispensed the goods of the Catholic church to his Protestant supporters. However, the Empire's first colony, established in Virginia in 1607, bears the name of Jamestown, and under James I the first English trading factories opened in India and Protestant Scots were sent to Ireland better to set Catholic loyalty within bounds. Here is a passing nod from the content of history and spiritual science alike to those who see the imprint of colonialism in the content of *The Tempest*, but this would still be a very superficial assessment, based solely on historical coincidence.

We turn now to the research of Richard Ramsbotham to look at symptoms of James I's being from his biography and from the perception of his contemporaries.²² James VI and I, of the house of Stuart, was King of Scotland as James VI from the year 1567, and King of England and Ireland as James I after the union of the Scottish and English crowns from 1603 until 1625. This pivotal English figure is spoken about in Rudolf Steiner's cycle of *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, volume I. In those lectures he qualifies him as "one of the most important occultists" and also "James I who stands at the beginning of the renewal of the brotherhoods."²³

In another lecture cycle, that of *Toward Imagination*, he is contrasted with the Jesuit philosopher Francisco Suarez thus "At the time of James I, a very *Ahrimanic new development* was inaugurated. Another development began with Suarez that was very Luciferic" (emphasis added), concluding that the two figures were complete opposites. Steiner also qualifies this relationship between the two as "one of the biggest questions of modern history."²⁴

To add to the difficulty of coming to terms with this historical figure we can point to another comment by Steiner, this time about the monarch's writings: "... and the picture of him which we derive from his writings is also misleading. For even what he himself wrote does not give us any clear insight into his soul."²⁵

²² Richard Ramsbotham *Who Wrote Bacon? William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon and James I: A Mystery for the Twenty-first Century*.

²³ Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, lecture of December 26, 1916.

²⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Toward Imagination*, lecture of July 18, 1916.

²⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History*, lecture of 19 October 19, 1918.

The ambivalence of the sovereign can be unraveled after we let Steiner add elements about him. In effect on the positive side in *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, volume II we hear: "one of the greatest, most gigantic spirits of the British realm stands quite close to the opposition against what is merely commercial within the British commercial empire, and that is James I. James I brings in a new element by continuously inoculating into the substance of the British people something that they will have forever, something that they must not lose if they're not to fall utterly into materialism."²⁶ And about this element we are told that it "is something that is linked by underground channels to the whole of the rest of European culture." (20 *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, volume II). No, this is not Steiner contradicting himself. He is just presenting a very complex figure, one from which emanate both positive and decadent impulses.

Witness of the English monarch's split spiritual impulses is Steiner's revelation, very much in line with all the above, that James I was the one who inspired the progressive spirits of Shakespeare and Jacob Boehme, but also Francis Bacon and the German Jesuit Jacobus Baldus at the other end of the spectrum.²⁷ This revelation is central to Shakespeare's individuality as a playwright, and could prove all the more so in the writing of *The Tempest*.

In *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History* we are told of once more of a soul that can harbor in his breast the most radical opposites. (26–27, ref 20) This is because "... we shall only acquire a right idea of history when we recognize that whenever a so-called great man speaks, the leading spiritual powers in human evolution are speaking through him, that he is, as it were, merely the symptom of the presence of certain driving spiritual forces. He is the door through which these forces find entry into the course of history." (29, from a 1920 lecture devoted to Bacon-Shakespeare, Boehme, Balde, ref 21) In effect, due to his dual nature at times James I was in some instances close to Rosicrucianism, in others quite remote from it.

In James' lifetime Steiner sees that unfortunately the monarch was connected with a sinister influence which links Freemasonry to materialism and its tendency to influence and manipulate world politics for material and spiritual gain of the English-speaking people. All of the above indicates that two huge spiritual influences looked at each other from Britain and Germany: Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism, through their respective

²⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, January 15, 1917.

²⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual and Social Changes in the Development of Humanity*, lecture of February 1, 1920.

representatives, Christian Rosenkreutz and James I. The stream of James I is seen as the “priestly stream” directly connected with Freemasonry: “Even what manifests today as science, that holds sway in many cultural groups, is nothing other than what is known in freemasonry terms as the priestly element...”²⁸ In a 1919 lecture Steiner goes further on this theme: “There was one person, James I, who still made an effort to save the old dominion of the priesthood; and one best understands James I if one looks at him as a conservator, a man who was trying to conserve the rule of the priesthood—although his plans were thwarted by others.”²⁹

In *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, volume I, is added something important for our explorations: “In the secret brotherhoods, especially those which grew so powerful from the time of James I onwards, it was taught as an obvious truth that the Anglo-Saxon race, as they put it, will have to be given dominance over the world in the fifth post-Atlantean period.”³⁰ This is where and why the two European streams obviously came into conflict, whether directly because of the monarch’s choices or because “his plans were thwarted by others.”

The Last Plays of Shakespeare, inspired as they are by James I, are situated at a conjunction of events that would mark the future of Rosicrucianism, much of it in tragic ways. In the early seventeenth century the work of Christian Rosenkreutz was published more than a century after his death. The performances and publishing of *The Tempest* and other of the Last Plays dovetailed closely with the three Rosicrucian works published by the parson Valentin Andreae. The beginning of the Thirty Years War indirectly implicated James I since the onset of the hostilities involved Friedrich V of the Palatinate, the so-called “Winter King,” who had married James’ daughter Elizabeth. The details of this part of history would take us far afield in the exploration of this play. Suffice to say, as we saw above, that Shakespeare/James I tangentially anticipates this theme in *The Winter’s Tale*, where Perdita marries the king of Bohemia. The years 1603 to 1618 are thus pregnant with meaning for the whole future of Europe, as we can see below, echoing the words that we heard from Steiner about Rosicrucian and Freemasonic streams.

²⁸ Rudolf Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, lecture of January 2, 1906, “The Royal Art in a New Form.”

²⁹ Rudolf Steiner, lecture of October 12, 1919 (GA 191), unpublished, quoted by Richard Ramsbotham, *Who Wrote Bacon?*, 81.

³⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, volume II, lecture of 26 December 1916.

Timeline of Events Linking Rosicrucian Impulses with James I and Shakespeare

1484: Death of Christian Rosenkreutz.

1603: James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England. Freemasonry moves from Scotland to England through James I.

1603-1604: Valentin Andreae writes *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*.

1604: discovery of the imperishable body of Christian Rosenkreutz (1484 + 120 years).

1607: establishment of the Jamestown colony as the first permanent English settlement in the New World.

1611: Performance of *The Tempest* and of *The Winter's Tale*. Completion of the King James Version of the Bible.

1614: publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis*.

1615: publication of the *Confessio Fraternitatis*.

1616: publication of *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*.

1618: beginning of the Thirty Years' War, starting with an insurrection of Czech nobles and leading to the selection the following year of the rival king of Bohemia, Friedrich von Pfalz. The Thirty Years' War led to the fall of King Friedrich, the so-called "Winter King" and the eradication of the Rosicrucian impulse in Central Europe.

1620s: James I begins preparations to lead England into the Thirty Years' War.

1625: James' death puts an end to these plans.

Modern researchers have discovered James I's role in the founding of English Freemasonry; they know it only took root after his arrival in London in 1603. James brought to England what had evolved from the Templar impulse into Freemasonry in Scotland.³¹ From spiritual science this connection

³¹ For some of the external historical links between the Templars and Freemasonry see Luigi Morelli, *Portugal's Mission in Relation to the Mission of the West*, "The Convergence

acquires depth and meaning if we can connect this epochal figure with the building of the Temple of Solomon and with the priestly Abel stream as it is done in Steiner's cycle about *The Temple Legend*. To this end we will follow further Richard Ramsbotham's research.

James I, King Solomon and the Temple

A connection between James I and King Solomon emerges symptomatically in a number of episodes and in people's judgments before acquiring deeper likelihood from looking at Solomon's incarnation. None of the single instances speak for themselves. It's only when we take all of them together that a larger picture emerges, one that has to be held lightly. Let us look at all the separate events.

At age thirteen, upon entering Edinburgh, James was invited to a staging of a central episode of King Solomon's life—the scene in which he has to offer a judgment to the two women who claim the same baby. The rapprochement between James and Solomon emerged spontaneously in a number of souls. Francis Bacon makes a comparison between the two in his dedications to the *Novum Organon* and to the *New Atlantis* and within the works themselves. Shakespeare echoes Bacon through Biblical symbolism. The character who is most associated with James I is Cymbeline, to which Shakespeare refers as a "lofty cedar" or "mountain cedar." In the Bible Solomon's "countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars" (Song of Solomon, 5:15). And cedar was an important building material in Solomon's Temple, in particular in the Holy of Holies, of which we are told "All was cedar; there was no stone seen" (1 Kings 6:18).

The painter Peter Paul Rubens adds to this evolving picture. He was commissioned by the English court for various grandiose paintings. No doubt from inspiration he depicted the "Apotheosis of King James" with titles such as "The Judgment of Solomon: James I recreates the Empire of Great Britain" and "The Reign of Solomon: The Golden Age of James I." Finally, to round off this picture, evidence has emerged that there was an intention during the monarch's reign to build a temple which would have been the successor of Solomon's Temple.³²

All of the above builds a picture of one side of this Gemini sovereign. Confirming what we know from Steiner come other testimonies of another side of James' personality. Charles Williams writes of the sovereign: "He loved

between Portugal and Scotland" at <https://www.millenniumculmination.net/portugals-mission.pdf>

³² Richard Ramsbotham, *Who Wrote Bacon?*, 76.

loose freedoms and gross pleasures, *yet he never lost himself in them*. ... He loved idleness and pleasure; but when he was rebuked for it he answered by saying that he did more work in an hour than others in a day, but his body was too weak to work without interruption" (emphasis added).³³ Sir John Carrington expands on what Charles Williams only hints at, in relation to the visit of the king of Denmark to James I's court: "We had women, and indeed wine too, of such plenty as would have astonished each sober beholder. Our feasts were magnificent, and the two royal guests did most lovingly embrace each other at the table. ... The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication."³⁴

What emerged in James' personality may have been carried over from unresolved tensions in Solomon's life. Of the wisdom that Solomon inherited from the Abel line we are told by Steiner: "This wisdom can be expressed in words which go straight to the human heart and can uplift the person, but it is unable to produce anything tangible of a technical nature, in art or science."³⁵ This was a very special kind of wisdom, a kind of atavistic, dreamy consciousness tied to blood inheritance.

Like James I, Solomon was an ambivalent, double-edged figure. The Temple Legend describes how the Queen of Sheba, betrothed to Solomon, falls in love with Hiram. Consumed by jealousy Solomon does nothing to stop the murder attempt on Hiram's life, which has come to his ears.

The Bible tells us about Solomon's later life that "King Solomon was a lover of women, and besides Pharaoh's daughter he married many foreign women... from the nations with whom the Lord had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry... *his wives turned his heart to follow other gods*, and he did not remain wholly loyal to the Lord his God" (emphasis added).³⁶ For this reason Yahweh proclaims "I will tear the kingdom from you" even if he tempers his judgment: "Nevertheless, for the sake of your father David I will not do this in your day; I will tear it out of your son's hand."³⁷ From all of the above Ramsbotham concludes that in James I, if not Solomon, we still have to do with a high representative of the Abel current. Steiner's quotes about the priestly stream point in the same direction.

As seen above, concerning James' life Steiner sees that unfortunately the monarch was connected with a sinister influence which connected

³³ Quoted in Richard Ramsbotham, *Who Wrote Bacon?*, 110.

³⁴ Quoted in Richard Ramsbotham, *Who Wrote Bacon?*, 115.

³⁵ Rudolf Steiner, lecture of 4 November 1904 in *The Temple Legend*.

³⁶ I Kings, 11: 1-10.

³⁷ 1 Kings 11:11-13.

Freemasonry with materialism and world dominion for material and spiritual gain. Does something of this nature emerge in Prospero's modus operandi?

James I and Prospero

Could Prospero's soul represent much of James I's complex, bewildering soul? What can we learn from this play about the thematic of the consciousness soul, so central to the English folk soul? This would extend of course in some degree to the American soul as well. To explore this possibility we will turn to what Steiner uncovered about the working of the occult brotherhoods, most of all in *The Karma of Untruthfulness*.

That King James was familiar with the theme of witchcraft we know from his books titled *Daemonologie* in which he discussed various forms of sorcery and indicated the need to persecute the witches. In Book 1, Chapter 2 he has this to say: "... the sin against the Holy Ghost has two branches: the one a falling back from the whole service of God, and a refusal of all his precepts; the other is the doing of the first with knowledge, knowing that they do wrong against their own conscience, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, having once had a taste of the sweetness of God's mercies." Further on he distinguishes: "the one is called magic or necromancy; the other sorcery or witchcraft." And he attributes three reasons for the practice of such arts: curiosity, thirst for revenge or "greedy appetite of gear, caused through great poverty."³⁸

Prospero's claim that "Graves at my command have waked their sleepers..." (5.1.57-58) and his motivation coming from "thirst for revenge" fall then under the definitions that make of him a magus according to James. How can spiritual science help us to recognize the way Prospero operates and the forces behind it, the ones that according to G. Wilson Knight "Shakespeare had only to look inward to find them"?

Caliban, Ariel and Prospero: A Modern Problem

Prospero has conjured up the perfect ending for his divided soul: he has reconciled ambition with sincere if rather selective forgiveness. And still this is not enough to close the play even with his own version of a happy ending. Why does Prospero need to renounce it all and ask for our forgiveness, not to mention prayers? We have looked so far at Prospero's relationship with the one who "cleaves to his thoughts," the brilliant, playful and mischievous Ariel. It is through him that Prospero can devise such an elaborate plan that

³⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: A Norton Critical Edition, 89-92.

gives him everything he wants and makes him appear magnanimous beyond his real achievements and remorse.



Henry Fuseli: The Enchanted Island Before the Cell of Prospero:
Prospero, Miranda, Caliban and Ariel

But there's another part of Prospero that has fled the light. And that is Caliban, "this thing of darkness" which Prospero acknowledges his own. But finding the part of Caliban in Prospero's soul is not as simple as acknowledging Ariel in his thinking. This is because Caliban lives hidden in Prospero's will. In fact it is there since Act I. As a man of the consciousness soul Prospero can see the nuances of his relationship with his brother Antonio from the very beginning. But seeing the nuances doesn't mean acknowledging the feeling and impulses of will that still preserve intact the negative karmic links with his brother. In the play Antonio starts off as the one that Prospero uses to do his legitimate work, that of a duke, without the corresponding recognition and rewards. He could after all resign, pass on to him the title and be leisurely occupied in his studies as a member of the nobility, rather than having it both ways. This Prospero opts not to do; he also opts not to fully acknowledge it to himself. And, of course, these feelings fester when Prospero is banned and his life exposed to deadly danger at sea.

The relationship between Antonio and Prospero ends along the lines where it started. Prospero tempts his brother to murder just to expose him and hold him captive. And in the end he deprives him of all power. The two brothers share much more than it appears on the surface. Everything that Antonio can be accused of Prospero could as well.

Antonio shows what it is like to manipulate in a Machiavellian way, inciting Sebastian to murder, through flattery and subtle hints, such as "My strong imagination sees a crown Dropping upon thy head" (2.1, 201-02) or "Thou lett'st thy fortune sleep; wink'st Whiles thou art waking" (2.1. 209-210). Going a step further Antonio suggests altogether getting rid of the voice of conscience: "Twenty consciences that stand twixt me and Milan, candied be they, and melt ere they molest" (2.1.320-21).

After the first failed attempt Antonio knows how he can take advantage of the lowered consciousness of Alonso: "I am right glad that he's so out of hope" (3.311). And he reminds Sebastian to stay on target with their intention of killing Alonso and Gonzalo while their hope is sagging (3.314-16). In the terminology that Steiner uses in *The Karma of Untruthfulness* Antonio acts like a "1" manipulating a "0" (Sebastian) for his own purposes.³⁹

So much for Antonio and Sebastian. In Prospero's hands the tables are turned. Now it is Antonio who is manipulated like a 0. In modern terms we could say that Prospero has mastered the art of framing his enemy. And Antonio has fallen in each of the traps that his brother tenders him. Antonio and Prospero manipulate people but in different ways: Antonio from this side of the threshold, Prospero from the other.

To offer other examples, Prospero uses Ferdinand in state of lowered consciousness letting him believe his father is dead: "Thy nerves are in their infancy again, and have no vigor in them" (1.2.590-91). Later he takes advantage of Alonso's lowered state of consciousness by lying about the death of Miranda, and Ariel does so as well. Prospero keeps up the pretense that he has lost his daughter, even specifying that she died in the tempest.

Prospero is not just manipulating individuals. In the last scene he draws to his "magic circle" individuals in a sort of hypnotized state. Hypnotizing groups and inducing lower states of consciousness in them is something practiced in the work of decadent Freemasonic lodges, apparently even easier than manipulating individuals.⁴⁰ In fact, much of *The Tempest*

³⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, volume I, lecture of December 17, 1916.

⁴⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, volume I, lecture of December 16, 1916.

portrays the behavior of individuals placed in a lowered state of consciousness. Prospero is thus an individual who can use the elementals for egotistic purposes.

When all is said and done we come to realize that Ariel and Caliban are two sides of one coin. The clever, scheming Ariel is complemented by the ruthless will without scruples and morality of Caliban. The two together form the dual aspect of what Steiner calls the "Doppelgänger," or double, about which he explains: "These beings [Doppelgänger] have an extraordinarily high intelligence and a significantly developed will, but no warmth of heart at all, nothing of what we may call human soul warmth [Gemüt]." ⁴¹ The double is that entity which enters the human being a short time before birth and leaves it a short time before death. The duality Ariel/Caliban is in fact integral to the whole "constitution" of the double, which possesses a higher, Luciferic pole, and a lower Ahrimanic one. The Ariel part in us pulls us to the collective, animalistic forces connecting us to the past through the blood, while through Caliban—most often described in animalistic terms—we are pulled toward a premature materialistic future that anticipates future conditions in a completely external way. The latter is, for example, what we see constructed around us in a virtual reality that mimicks the possibility of breaking through our physical boundaries only to reach into the sub-human realm of sub-nature.

The double is an elemental-etheric being that can gain mastery over the unredeemed elemental beings, those who have not recognized the Christ being. Ever since the onset of the age of the consciousness soul the double wants to inhabit the human being more and more and acquire the soul and spirit they don't have from the human being that submits to its aims. In individuals completely transformed by a thoroughly materialistic life these beings would have access to the soul after death just as they have before death. This is what Steiner calls "Ahrimanic immortality." Though this was not yet completely possible in the seventeenth century, as it is in the present, the practice of a magician of Shakespeare's time already worked in this direction. The Ahrimanic immortality he sought corresponds to the Biblical "second death" or "death of the soul" in spiritual scientific terms.

What Prospero represents on stage has a bearing on the Anglo-American soul configuration as Steiner indicates in relation to the decadent brotherhoods in more than one place. Witness, among others, the following statement: "The Anglo American element is thriving after a remarkable and strange ideal: no longer to return into earthly bodies, but through the souls

⁴¹ Rudolf Steiner, lecture of November 16, 1917.

of the living to have an ever greater influence on the earth, becoming, as souls, more and more earthly."⁴² The soul of the magician will remain bound after death to the physical environment of Earth and lose contact with the spiritual spheres. Life after death in the spiritual environment closest to Earth will resemble life on Earth. The soul will continue to exert an influence on earthly matters from the other side of the threshold. In effect that the magician cannot go beyond the reality of the senses is what Prospero has to admit toward the end of the play in the often quoted: "Our revels now are ended. These our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits and Are melted into air, into thin air ... We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep" (5.1,165-74) reckoning with how little he has altered his perception of reality or penetrated the spiritual world. This incapacity to pierce through the veil of the senses leads Prospero to recognize that his strength is "most faint." Add to this the soul's condemnation to the second death as the predicament from which Prospero now wants to extricate himself.

Interestingly Steiner indicates that the goals of the double can be fulfilled most of all in America, owing to the influence of the Earth's magnetic forces strengthened by the north-south direction of the mountain ranges in the continent. And the forces of the double can take full possession of the male body, not quite so the female body.⁴³ Thus it is that in the play redemption comes because of the other side of the consciousness soul, as it were, the heart forces of Miranda and also of Gonzalo, those that correspond to the intellectual soul, which would best be described in its dual nature as "gemüt, or feeling soul" on one hand and "intellectual soul" on the other.⁴⁴ On the side of the intellect the intellectual/gemüt soul builds a bridge to the consciousness soul; on the side of the gemüt it is connected to the sentient soul. It is not a coincidence that Gonzalo officiates the symbolic wedding

⁴² Rudolf Steiner, lecture of July 9, 1918 (GA 181).

⁴³ Quoted in Jeshayahu Ben Aharon, *The Time Is at Hand: Ahrimanic and Michaelic Immortality and the Apocalypse of the Age of Michael*, 17, 96. Ben Aharon indicates that according to Steiner in America social and political progress has to happen through women. This is also what appears in his understanding of the role of Mary in the Rosicrucian *Legend of High Tor* (Jeshaiah Ben-Aharon, *Spiritual Science in the Twenty-first Century*, lecture 13: "High Tor Part 2: The Fallen Angels and the Alchemical Processes in Initiation.") I have advanced a similar line of thought concerning the role of Dorothy in an understanding of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, as a tale relating to Americas' history and future (Luigi Morelli, *Searching for the Spirit of the West: A Hidden History of the USA and the Twentieth Century*, Chapter 9: "America and the Transformation of the Will.")

⁴⁴ This differentiation of the duality of feeling soul and intellectual soul is hardly ever brought forth in English translations of Steiner's work. The following is an exception appearing only as a footnote to *The Cycle of the Year*, Lecture 2 of 1 April 1923: "The Gemüt, or feeling soul, together with the intellectual soul forms the centermost of the three soul elements in Rudolf Steiner's picture of man."

recognition of Miranda and Ferdinand that Prospero in his hasty and overwrought mind cannot complete during the Ceres-Juno masque.

After meeting Ferdinand and Miranda, Alonso first kneels in front of Miranda, and Gonzalo acts like the minister of the couple's wedding. As Josie Alwyn points out: "Here, through Gonzalo's priestly words, we experience the weaving of the spiritual worlds behind the scenes of life—that is, the spiritual weaving of human relationships into virtuous harmonies."⁴⁵ Gonzalo calls on the gods to "drop a blessed crown" on the couple. After this, first Gonzalo then Alonso proclaim 'Amen.' Alonso joins the hands of Miranda and Ferdinand's with his own (5.1,201-216).

Prospero is finally deeply touched where it matters most. It isn't just a matter of forgiving the Naples nobles and his brother. No, at bottom and hardest of all, Prospero has to forgive himself. He has been able to keep a distance from himself even in his most devious feelings and impulses of will. But he has deserted his soul and left a vacuum in it that only Miranda and Gonzalo in their power to love have been able to fill to some degree. The recognition of this vacuum is a shattering event, the one that a magician can only wish to delay indefinitely. But when that happens the hour of reckoning cannot be postponed; it is the fight for the soul itself about which Prospero entreates the audience in his last heart-wrenching pleading. Could this also be the soul of the monarch who "loved loose freedoms and gross pleasures, yet he never lost himself in them."?

At the end of the play the path of the consciousness soul is illustrated in all its possibilities, even the least common one, that of the magician who consciously seeks to use the double and summon other spiritual beings to his egotistical goals. Such a magician can, through an unchristian cosmology, call elemental beings to his help. Rudolf Steiner offers us an example of this in the figures of Heinrich von Ofterdingen and the magician Klingsor in the Wartburg contest that took place among minstrels in 1207 and pitted von Ofterdingen and Klingsor against the representative of the Grail impulse, Wolfram von Eschenbach.⁴⁶ Steiner lovingly pursues the fate of

⁴⁵ Josie Alwyn and Brien Masters, *Educating the Soul on the Esoteric in Shakespeare*, Part V: "The Tempest and the Tree of Life".

⁴⁶ "Klingsor puts Wolfram to the test, and succeeds indeed, with the help of the spiritual being [that he has summoned], in proving that Wolfram (though indeed he has a star-less Christianity, a Christianity that no longer reckons with the cosmos) is quite unlearned in all cosmic wisdom. This now is the point. Klingsor has proved that the Minstrel of the Holy Grail, even in his time, knows only that Christianity which has eliminated the Cosmic Christianity. Klingsor himself, on the other hand, is only able to appear with the support of spiritual beings, inasmuch as he possesses a wisdom of the stars." (Rudolf Steiner, *Karmic Relationships*, volume 4, lecture of September 18, 1924).

Heinrich von Ofterdingen on stage in his four Mystery Dramas, where the reincarnated individuality portrayed as Dr. Strader, can overcome and transform his karmic burden and find a new connection with cosmic Christianity.

Could *The Tempest* have been inspired by James I to illustrate the plight of his own soul? It would be in keeping with all the inspirations of the last plays in which the fate of James I is announced in disguise; first in *Cymbeline*, then in *Henry VIII*. Here the soul of the English people extricates itself from the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, first in the opposition to Roman Empire through the Arthurian impulse (*Cymbeline*), then in the opposition of the Church of England to the Catholic Church, the descendant of the Roman Empire (*Henry VIII*). And in all of this James I plays a central role at the time that ushers in the Thirty Years War which stamped out the possible blossoming of Rosicrucianism.

James I is an individual for whom Steiner pleads—as we can read between the lines his concern for such a divided soul—which on one hand genuinely inspired Jacob Boehme and Shakespeare and on the other laid the foundations for the London Lodge and a Freemasonry of world domination. Steiner, and *The Tempest*, invoke both our sympathy for the potential and grandeur of such an individual and a warning to soberly recognize what his kingdom signified for the future of Europe. Truly James' late fate could not have been very different from that of Prospero. And only Shakespeare at his most mature could have elicited both a sober assessment and a compassionate portrayal for such a great, but tragically divided soul. With all of this in mind the play can inspire the anthroposophical public in the direction of what Steiner reminds us and did not tire to attempt: "Our task is to bridge the gulf between the Freemasons and the Rosicrucians. The work is difficult, but it must be done."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, lecture of October 23, 1905, "Freemasonry and Human Evolution, II." In the preceding lecture of *The Temple Legend* Steiner states this intention thus: "I have reserved to myself the aim of bringing about a reconciliation between those of the Abel's race and those of the Cain's race." (footnote to the lecture of October 23, 1905, "Freemasonry and Human Evolution, I.")

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