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Permissive, Implied and Missing Stage Directions: Exeunt Omnes and The Tempest

by

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Meaning in Shakespearean performance is derived, in part, by the implementation of interpretative staging choices upon the text. Elizabethan and Jacobean scripts provide a paucity of stage information, but are full of performance clues that Alan Dessen refers to as permissive stage directions. These directions—sometimes explicit, often implicit, at-times omitted—are not as liberating as their name suggests; they demand often-complicated practical solutions from actors in performance. The enduring panoply of Shakespearean performance reflects the ability of the script—the permissiveness of the text—to support a multiplicity of staging interpretations. We count off and compare the different *Hamlets*, *Twelfth Nights*, and *Lears* we have enjoyed or suffered through. Thankfully, most productions have at least one or two memorable instances—moments when imaginative staging solutions were found for one or more of the countless problematic textual passages. And every once and while, if we are lucky, we may see a cohesive performance that seems to resolve magically textual ambiguities while imaginatively surmounting production challenges. We crave and cherish such experiences and keep searching for such productions. The need for interpretation is a desire shared by all participating in the process: the actors, the designers, the director and most especially the audience. We want opaque, challenging texts to be illuminated and enlivened so we can communally share the power of the revelation.

The permissive stage direction is to the key to creativity; it is an invitation to think imaginatively about a staging solution or textual conundrum. Alan Dessen identifies three types of permissive stage directions that help to define both action and setting. The first is the partial direction that can be elliptical or metonymic, where significant information has been omitted but there is an implicit, logical solution. The second kind of stage direction, perhaps never fully recoverable, is the coded shorthand note; the parlance among theatre professionals who do not need details spelled out amongst themselves, and the third type is the uncertain omission (uncertain because it may have been intentionally omitted). A direction such as “exit corpse” after a battle scene implicitly suggests that someone carries the body off, and thus is relatively benign. A direction such as Middletons’, “organs play, and covered dishes march over the stage” (*A Mad World My Masters*) is a bit more daunting. Such obscure and difficult staging cues require a leap of imagination on the part of both actors and directors. Dessen warns, however, that even seemingly straightforward stage directions can become elliptical if we are unaware of Elizabethan staging codes.ⁱ

The Tempest is filled with permissive directions and staging codes. Dessen devotes the penultimate chapter of his classic work *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* to the play, paying particular attention to the problems of staging vanishing spirits and banquets. But Dessen also discusses the even more difficult staging challenge—one that has immense ramifications for how we interpret the play—the final moments leading to Prospero’s Epilogue. The exits of Caliban, Miranda, Ferdinand, the lords, the sailors and Ariel—the leave taking moments at the end of the play—are implied stage directions that become cruxes points of interpretation; they require

performance choices that define conceptual approach. In 30 odd lines, Prospero sends Caliban off to clean the cell, invites the lords into his abode, releases Ariel from servitude, and segues into the Epilogue. The action accelerates so rapidly that the audience is thrown abruptly into the finale. This is a device that Shakespeare uses in many plays, particularly the comedies, where he neatly, and quickly, wraps things up. In *The Tempest*, however, Shakespeare creates tension by telescoping time, and not through dramatic conflict: it is acceleration in lieu of exploit. There is a dearth of narrative action; what of note or real suspense occurs from the shipwreck on? Keith Sturgess notes, “The play’s dramatic power is not developed through the conventional means of character conflict. Only Prospero, a 'god of power,' can take significant action.”ⁱⁱ Shakespeare does provide spectacle: the vanishing banquet, the spirits, the harpy, hunting dogs, and the wedding masque; inherently theatrical elements ripe for permissive staging. The actual plot, however, is relatively thin; is there ever any doubt that Ferdinand will marry Miranda? Does anyone believe that Caliban and his new masters are actually going to kill Prospero? In lieu of conventional action, time is accelerated to create tension.

Prospero disengages himself from the trappings of power by letting go of his magical sway. He forgoes temptation: the enticement to vengeance, to dark powers, to escaping the responsibilities of the world. Stephen Greenblatt asserts it “is a play not about possessing absolute power but about giving it up.”ⁱⁱⁱ Marjorie Garber notes that the Epilogue’s representation of powerlessness is “somber rather than playful.”^{iv} Prospero’s diminishment at the end is complete; he is alone—sans minions, sans daughter, sans supremacy, pleading for the audience to “release me from my bands.”

Cues in the Folio for staging the consecutive leave takings leading up to this conclusion are few and far between. The paucity of stage directions gives us practically no clue as to how to stage a series of crucial moments:

Pro. He is as disproportion'd in his Manners
As in his shape: Goe Sirha, to my Cell,
Take with you your Companions: as you looke
To have my pardon, trim it handsomely.

Cal. I that I will; and Ile be wise hereafter,
And seeke for grace: what a thrice double Asse
Was I to take this drunkard for a god?
And worship this dull foole?

Pro. Goe to, away.

Alo. Hence, and bestow your luggage where you found it

Seb. Or stole it rather.

Pro. Sir, I invite your Highnesse, and your traine
To my poore Cell: where you shall take your rest
For this one night, which part of it, Ile waste
With such discourse, as I no doubt, shall make it
Goe quicke away: The story of my life,
And the particular accidents, gon by
Since I came to this Isle: And in the morne
I'le bring you to you ship, and so to Naples,
Where I have hope to see the nuptial
Or these our deere-belou'd, solemnized,
And thence retire me to my Millaine, where
Every third thought shall be my grave.

Alo. I long

To heare the story of your life; which must
Take the eare strangely.

Pro. I'le deliver all,

And promise you calme Seas, auspicious gales,
And saile, so expeditious, that shall catch
Your Royal fleete farre off: My Ariel; chicke
That is thy charge: Then to the Elements
Be free, and fare thou well: please you draw neere?

Exeunt omnes.^v

The only explicit stage direction is the “Exeunt omnes” – exit all together—which precedes Prospero delivering the Epilogue. But for whom is this stage direction intended? At the end of the play, the stage has become a crowded place: Alonso,

Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, Adrian, Francisco, Ferdinand, Miranda, the Master, Boatswain, Caliban, Ariel, Stephano and Trinculo await Prospero's judgment. Do they, in fact, "Exeunt omnes," or are there other permissive possibilities for earlier exits offered by the text?

After Caliban and his co-conspirators in rebellion—Stephano & Trinculo—are publicly excoriated, Prospero commands Caliban: "Go, sirrah, to my cell; / Take with you your companions. As you look / To have my pardon, trim it handsomely." (5.1.292-293)^{vi} Caliban, admitting his fault, (perhaps ironically?) craves grace from Prospero and berates himself for following such fools. Alonso then commands Stephano & Trinculo to accompany Caliban into Prospero's cell. There is no explicit stage direction in the Folio indicating an exit for Caliban, Stephano & Trinculo. Prospero commands Caliban to "Go to, away" (5.1.298) and Alonso orders Stephano & Trinculo, "Hence" (5.1.299). These lines obviously contain implied stage directions and it is reasonable to assume that the chastened characters obey with alacrity, exiting quickly into Prospero's cell.

Historically, most directors, feeling this exit to be too abrupt and ignominious for such a significant figure in the play, have sought to extrapolate upon it by staging "business" to bracket and magnify the moment. Herbert Beerbohm Tree had Caliban start to lead the trio off the stage, but then stop and kneel at Miranda's feet (*His Majesty's*, 1904). Ben Iden Payne had Caliban follow Stephano and Trinculo, kicking them into the cell (*Stratford*, 1941). In the last half-century, directors, particularly with colonialist/anti-colonialist agendas, have used this implied exit as a permissive stage direction to reinforce conceptual interpretations: Giorgio Strehler's Caliban, after dropping a stick and a sword at Prospero's feet, jumped feet first with his arms raised into

a trap (Teatro Lirico, 1978); Michael Bogdanov framed the moment by having Miranda touch and comfort Caliban before his exit (Royalty, 1992)^{vii}; Sam Mendes, in contrast, played the scene in a harsh fashion by cutting the split-line “As you look/To have my pardon.” There was no forbearance to be had; Caliban was brutally discharged and literally locked up (RST, Stratford, 1992).^{viii} Bill Alexander overtly touched on colonialist/anti-colonialist discourse by having Prospero give Stephano’s crown to Caliban and then having Miranda curtsy to him (Birmingham Rep, 1994).^{ix} In Adrian Noble’s ‘post-post-colonialist’ production (Ferdinand was black and Caliban was Caucasian/gray), Caliban reached up to touch Prospero as he sought forgiveness.^x Prospero took Caliban’s hand and Miranda looked on, obviously moved (RST, Stratford, 1997).^{xi} In Lena Udovicki’s production, Prospero (played by Vanessa Redgrave) gave Caliban his hat as a sign of reconciliation (and perhaps as a deed of ownership) prior to the exit into the cell (The Globe, 2000).^{xii}

The leave-taking of Ariel stands in sharp contrast to that of Caliban. Prospero lovingly addresses the airy spirit: “My Ariel; chick/That is thy charge: Then to the Elements/Be free, and fare thou well” (5.1.317-318). The Folio provides no stage directions, but it is customary in performance for Ariel to disappear/vanish at this point and, in some productions, for Prospero to break his staff. (Another point in the text where the staff is often broken is immediately following “I’ll drown my book” (5.1.57)). The “liberation” of Ariel is a key moment in the play, but actors and directors are left to their own devices. Ralph Berry suggests that the abrupt departure of Ariel, without response, without a word of gratitude, leaves a very public Prospero “desolated by this desertion.”^{xiii} Prospero’s use of the word “please” in “please you draw near,” directed to

Alonso and his train, is a self-aware signal of diminished status.^{xiv} Philip McGuire suggests, “please you draw near” may be directed to Ariel: a plaintive response to Ariel’s “open silence”—his failure to speak, to respond to Prospero’s farewell gift of freedom. The line could be intended “to elicit from Ariel some gesture more responsive to Prospero’s love.”^{xv} McGuire then playfully ponders the theatrical possibilities of Prospero addressing the line to Gonzalo, Miranda or even Antonio. McGuire also poses the option that “please you draw near” is addressed directly to the audience to “function as a prelude to the Epilogue.”^{xvi} Alan Dessen suggests that Ariel can “vanish” before he exits the stage. The illusion of vanishing is created for the audience if Ariel starts to move—“to vanish”—immediately following the words “be free,” and if Prospero, no longer able to see the spirit, delivers “and fare thou well” to the now empty space.^{xvii} Dessen’s suggests this staging of Ariel’s exit illustrates the sudden and total loss of power by Prospero, providing a natural bridge into the Epilogue.

Directors seeking greater emotional intimacy between Ariel and Prospero will often turn this interchange—apparently intended to be a public moment—into a private one by getting the crowd off stage so the two characters can be alone. According to Christine Dymkowski, most directors have a group exit at the half-line just prior to “My Ariel, chick.”^{xviii} Needless to say, this creates a traffic jam as everyone exits into Prospero’s apparently expansive cell. Adrian Noble solved the problem by having the crowd magically freeze for the Ariel/Prospero interchange. This allowed Noble to frame the intimate moment while honoring the *Exeunt omnes* (RST, Stratford; 1998).

The lack of definitive textual closure at the end of the play is an open-ended invitation for theatre practitioners to extrapolate or invent answers. The final “leave

takings” of The Tempest have been “augmented” over the past two centuries: nineteenth-century productions sought to 'finish' the play by adding additional action or a tableau vivant; twentieth-century directors frequently offered overt political readings. The addition of a stage moment—a “Caliban Coda”—an entirely imagined scene that is neither explicit nor implicit in the text, has been practically standard throughout the entire performance history of the play.

Throughout the nineteenth century (beginning with Macready’s restoration of the text in 1838), the end of the play was exploited for a spectacular final stage effect. Samuel Phelps (1847), William Burton (1854) and Charles Kean (1857) used rigged ships to stage a departure scene. This visual postscript provided reassurance that Prospero and his party made it safely home to Naples. John Ryder’s 1871 production, however, shifted focus away from the ship and back to the island by providing a final image illustrating, “the abandonment of the island to the sole charge of Caliban, who as the curtain descend[ed lay] stretched upon the shore basking in the rays of the setting sun.”^{xix}

The shift in attention to Caliban reflected changes in social thought. Darwin’s The Origins of Species (1859) and The Descent of Man (1871) had become the ubiquitous topic of public discourse in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1873, Daniel Wilson, in an essay entitled “Caliban: The Missing Link,” argued that the poor creature is not simply a monster (as he had been presented in Restoration productions of the play), but rather a representative of a lesser stage in human development: emblematic of a Darwinian ape-man, a work in progress striving for humanity.^{xx} Productions in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century presented Caliban

as Darwin's 'missing link', a not quite human creature ascending towards civilization.^{xxi}

Alden & Virginia Vaughan note how Caliban achieved almost heroic status at this time: “[His] struggle for knowledge and independence mirrors Victorian notions of progress, in which humankind inched towards nineteenth century European civilization’s full flowering.”^{xxii}

The Darwinian/colonialist interpretation came to full flowering in Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s landmark 1904 production (*His Majesty’s*). Like earlier productions in the nineteenth century, Caliban gains control of the island, but now the victory is tainted with remorse; he is incapable of reaching his potential without the firm, benevolent guidance of his master. According to Tree’s notes: “[Caliban] turns sadly in the direction of the ship, stretches out his arms to it in mute despair and, as night falls, he is left on the lonely rock as a king once more.”^{xxiii} The audience is left with a bittersweet view of the not-quite-human creature marooned on the island.^{xxiv} Fifteen years later (*Old Vic*, 1919), Russell Thorndike reprised this image by ending his production with the Europeans departing “leaving Caliban to resume his erstwhile savage existence, a lonely and solitary figure.”^{xxv}

In the latter half of the twentieth century, portrayals of Caliban grow ever more human (and racially and politically charged). The character is no longer seen as a Darwinian missing link but as an exploited, dispossessed member of the indigenous population. John Barton (1970) directed Caliban to enter during the Epilogue and take Prospero’s wand. Liviu Ciulei (1981) did something similar by having Caliban aggressively cross the stage while Prospero recited the Epilogue.^{xxvi} In these productions the message is clear: the rightful heir—the usurped successor—is waiting his turn.

Clifford Williams' production concludes with the image of a menacing Caliban taking possession of the island (RST, Stratford; 1978). Jonathan Miller's racially charged production suggested a struggle between a black Ariel and a black Caliban for dominance once the Europeans departed (Mermaid, 1970).^{xxvii} At the end of Miller's production, Ariel picks up Prospero's wand and points it menacingly towards Caliban; the battle for dominance has begun.^{xxviii} But George C. Wolfe provides a more hopeful postcolonial vision by staging a celebratory moment at the end between a black Caliban and a black Ariel (NYSF, 1995).^{xxix} Jennifer Tipton opted for a variation on the old-fashioned nineteenth-century colonialist ending by having Caliban enter after the Epilogue, cross to center, remove, clean, and replace his glasses as he surveyed the "island" and the audience (Guthrie, Minneapolis, 1991).^{xxx}

Exeunt Omnes: A Question of Emphasis

At the end of the play, everyone has entered Prospero's cell and there is no reference in the Folio to anyone leaving his dwelling. The play concludes with all the characters apparently still on the island with only the promise that Ariel, now free, will fulfill his final charge to provide auspicious winds for the journey home to Naples. We last saw Caliban exiting into Prospero's cell, waiting upon his master's mercy. The beauty and finality that is dramatized simply and economically between Prospero and Ariel is lacking in the last exchange with Caliban. There is no resolution or closure in the parting of Caliban and Prospero. The servant departs the stage more obsequious—more of a slave—than he has been at any earlier point in the play.

Yet it is Caliban who has dominated critical discourse on *The Tempest* throughout the twentieth century. Theodore Dean, in *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (1942),

focusing upon the relationship between Prospero and Caliban, fails to mention Ariel, even in passing.^{xxxix} Schematic structuralist interpretations from the mid-twentieth century generally treat Ariel primarily as a figure of oppositional comparison. Reuben Brower in his book *Fields of Light* (1951) delineates the dichotomy between Caliban and Ariel in simplistic, straightforward terms: “The earth-air or Caliban-Ariel antithesis [is] the key metaphor ... Air, Ariel, and his music are a blended symbol of change as against the unchanging Caliban, 'the thing of darkness.'”^{xxxix} Even Jan Kott, despite the radical nature of his exegesis in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964), presents a rather conventional interpretation of the character. Kott blithely dismisses the centrality of Ariel by stating unequivocally “there is no doubt that Prospero and Caliban are the protagonists of *The Tempest*.”^{xxxix} Kott devotes only one paragraph to Ariel in the course of the essay, concluding that his “dramatic conflict consists solely of his desire for freedom.”^{xxxix}

Issues of dispossession and rightful ownership come to the foreground in anti-colonialist discourse. In the 1960s, African and Latin American responses to the play—articulated by Octave Mannoni, Philip Mason, George Lamming, Roberto Fernandez Retamar and Aimé Césaire—emphasized the dynamics of imperialist exploitation in the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. According to Rob Nixon, “By the time the Caribbeans and Africans took up *The Tempest*, that is, from 1959 onward, widespread national liberation seemed not only feasible but imminent, and the play was mobilized in defense of Caliban’s right to the land and to cultural autonomy.”^{xxxv} By the mid-1980s, the anti-colonialist perspective dominated critical writing and heavily influenced

theatrical productions. So much so that Trevor Griffiths, writing in 1983, observed that in stage productions “some emphasis on colonialism is now expected.”^{xxxvi}

The emergence of a post-colonialist perspective—primarily a feminist critique of the play at the end of the twentieth century—led to a re-shifting/re-balancing of the focus from Caliban to Ariel. Critics such as Jyotsna Singh (writing in 1996) take some anti-colonialist interpreters of the play to task for neglecting to examine the exploitation of women in the text. According to Singh, they “have created liberationist, third world narratives oddly oblivious to the dissonances between race and gender struggles. Thus, ironically, their anti-colonial discourse produces the liberated 'Black Man' via the erasure of female subjectivity.”^{xxxvii} Caroline Cakebread layers a feminist critique upon the anti-colonialist position in her comparison of *The Tempest* to Marina Warner’s 1992 novel, *Indigo*. Not surprisingly both Warner’s novel and Cakebread’s critique focus on Sycorax and Miranda, but both writer and critic also call for a re-gendering of Ariel. Cakebread believes that this device, the feminization of Ariel, allows Warner’s novel to move beyond traditional anti-colonial discourse to become more encompassing: “female characters ... struggle in various ways to overcome the silence imposed upon them by two hierarchical systems, patriarchy and colonialism.”^{xxxviii} The re-gendering of Ariel combined with racial identification makes her plight even more onerous than that suffered by Caliban. In Warner’s novel Ariel “becomes a general symbol of the position of the colonized woman, contained within the limits of patriarchy on one level and within the racist gaze of the white settlers on another.”^{xxxix}

The problem with the postcolonial/feminist critique, as well as most anti-colonial discourse in general, is the fact that these approaches, despite historicist attempts to insist

otherwise, insist on finding contemporary metatheatrical referentiality in Shakespeare's text. And although identifying such resonance is fascinating, it nevertheless misses the essential point of the play. Meredith Anne Skura worries that "recent criticism not only flattens the text into the mold of colonialist discourse and eliminates what is characteristically 'Shakespearean' in order to foreground what is 'colonialist,' but it is also—paradoxically—in danger of taking the play further from the historical situation in England in 1611 even as it brings it closer to what we mean by 'colonialism' today."^{x1} A rationalist, programmatic approach to *The Tempest* stands in generalized opposition to the fundamental nature of the play; a work infused with the awe and wonder conjured by magical and mystical forces. No other play except perhaps *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (to which *The Tempest* is often compared) is so inherently anti-rational. This lack of rationality lies at the very heart of the endeavor. To insist on a materialist/historicist reading is to negate a primary element of the enterprise. The widespread acceptance and influence of racial and sexual political discourse regarding *The Tempest* has led to the politicization of the play.

Exeunt Omnes: Taking Caliban Home

In 2002, I directed a production of *The Tempest* at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts featuring Mel Cobb of Shakespeare & Company as Prospero. Reading the play in a very optimistic (perhaps self-consciously naïve) fashion, the production emphasized the romantic and magical qualities of the text in lieu of the political. A large tree—the cloven pine—dominated a stage suggestive of a dense jungle. The island was located somewhere ambiguously in the South Pacific; Ariel (played by a

woman) and the spirits dressed in Balinese clothing and using masks, accompanied by a gamelan orchestra, performed dances and a shadow puppet play.

In this production anti-colonial/post-colonial discourse was irrelevant; the island—with its noises, spirits, and mystical qualities—was not property, but an entity unto itself. Caliban, no less than Prospero and the lords, was a foreigner to this strange, magical place. He may know where the best springs are, where crabs grow, and where the clustering filberts are to be found (2.2.157-170), but this does not mean Caliban controls or owns the island. It is the isle—and the spirits that emanate from it—that exercise power over him.

In this reading of the play, where Caliban is not emblematic of a native population, the use of the conventional “Caliban Coda,” or even some more recent variation upon it, makes no sense. How could Caliban be left alone, marooned on the island? Why should he be so cruelly punished (and not Antonio or Sebastian)? Could he return, even if he wanted, to his solitary existence prior to the arrival of Prospero and Miranda, before he knew people, language and stories of the wider world? Caliban, for good or bad, has been transformed and there is no going back. Prospero is keenly aware of this when he admits responsibility: “this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine (5.1.275-276). Caliban, finishing the half-line, predicts that Prospero will unleash his wrath, “I shall be pinched to death” (5.1.277). Prospero, however, forgoes punishment, offering Caliban the possibility of pardon if he obeys diligently. In a play that apparently takes repentance and redemption seriously, it is hard to imagine that Prospero, in the end, would merely abandon Caliban. Harold Bloom posits that it is equally plausible to imagine Caliban returning with Prospero, as it is to picture him staying on the island.

Noting the absurdity of Caliban in Milan, Bloom asserts that it is no less believable than other characters returning: “The thought of Caliban in Italy is well-nigh unthinkable; what is scarcely thinkable is Antonio in Milan, and Sebastian in Naples.”^{xli}

At Holy Cross, the text was manipulated to create an alternate “Caliban Coda” that was enacted within the body of the play. As Prospero began his final speech (with an internal seven-line cut) to Alonso, a large gangplank was lowered from the wings and the characters—two at a time—exited up the gangplank onto the “ship”:

Sir, I invite your highness, and your train (301)

As Gangplank lowered

I'll bring you to your ship, and so Naples, (308)

Taking Alonso's arm and drawing him aside

Where I have hope to see the nuptial (309)

Of these our dear-beloved solemnized; (310)

And thence retire me to my Milan, where (311)

Every third thought shall be my grave. (312)

In the middle of line 316 (“And sail so expeditious...”), Stephano and Trinculo came out of the cell and also scurried up the gangplank. Alonso, by himself, was the last to go onboard as Prospero assured him that they would catch “Your royal fleet far off” (317). With the Europeans gone, Prospero turned and looked upstage; Ariel was in the tree observing, and Caliban was peeking out from the cell.

By transposing a line—changing the order of delivery—the production created a moment for Prospero to forgive and empower Caliban. Prospero addressed his slave: “Please you, draw near” (320). Caliban entered from the cell, expecting to be punished, slouched over and trembling. Prospero, like a father with his teenage son, admonished Caliban to stand up straight. He then gestured to Caliban to go up the gangplank.

Caliban, hesitated, considered, and exited into the ship. Prospero, now alone, turned his attention to the spirit: “My Ariel, chick,” (317). Prospero freed Ariel, who hesitated before leaving; he then broke his staff, addressed the Epilogue to the audience and exited into the “ship.” As the gangplank was raised and the “ship” disappeared, Ariel and the Spirits entered singing and doing a rousing dance and chant of “Freedom—high-day” (Caliban’s exit line, 2.2.181), accompanied by the gamelan orchestra. The island was now deserted except for the original, indigenous “inhabitants.” This celebratory moment segued directly into the curtain call.

The Holy Cross production was not conceived, consciously, as a response to anti-colonial/post-colonial discourse. Although, in fact, it could be argued that the re-gendering of Ariel and her “triumph” at the end may be, intentionally or not, a post-colonial statement. Prospero’s urging of Caliban to board the ship was not reflective of some notion of the “white man’s burden,” but rather was the action of a man acknowledging a debt to another living being. The underlying principle of the Holy Cross production was to take seriously the magical, transformative power of the island upon all who ended up on its shores. Even Prospero—the great magus—the man who pulls the strings—is utterly changed by this supernatural environment. Initially consumed by the lure of vengeance, Prospero ultimately, not expectantly, delivers forgiveness. The Italian lords who betrayed Prospero, subjected to the crucible of his wrath and the magical qualities of the island, gain self-awareness, understand the consequences of their actions, and ultimately achieve human—if not necessarily divine—redemption.

The Holy Cross production was well received, but the most common reaction—particularly from “Shakespeare freaks” (English professors and that ilk)—was invariably: “loved the show, but didn’t buy the ending.” Almost without exception, informed audience members were willing to accept the Balinese costumes, gamelan orchestra music, and other extra-textual elements. But there was something about Caliban going on the ship at the end of the production that apparently drove people crazy. Repeatedly, I was informed that Caliban simply could not depart with the Europeans because it was not in the play. However, whenever I pointed out that *no one* in the Folio gets on the ship (*Exeunt omnes*), this assertion was usually dismissed with a wry smile and a shake of the head. I was accused (gently) of trying to re-write Shakespeare. The true offense, in retrospect, was not a piece of imaginative staging, but rather, a failure to embrace anti-colonial/post-colonial discourse and the “established” late twentieth-century performance tradition. It became clear that many people had walked into the theater heavily invested in a pre-determined interpretative stance, and were unwilling to countenance an unorthodox reading of the play.

The Holy Cross production of *The Tempest* was a self-conscious attempt to explore anew the multiple possibilities for interpretation offered by the text. It began with a close reading and a search for permissive stage directions that would allow creative solutions to the many staging challenges. It was a production that was philosophically indebted to the work of Alan Dessen. The beauty of Dessen’s scholarship is that it creates informed parameters for creative musing. His textual analysis sorts out what can be known about Elizabethan/Jacobean staging from what is mere conjecture. He writes passionately in *Recovering Shakespeare’s Theatrical*

Vocabulary that the worst thing an editor can do is “close down options that might seem negligible to them but could be of considerable interest to another interpreter, whether in the theatre or on the page.”^{xlii} By embracing the viability of multiple solutions to a single staging question, Dessen encourages continued, impassioned dialogue. By modestly trumpeting “a healthy skepticism,” he invites artists and scholars to play his game of theatrical imagining: The famous Dessen “consider then” becomes the most permissive stage direction of all.

ⁱ Workshop lecture presented by Alan Dessen in Staunton, Virginia, as part of Ralph Alan Cohen’s N.E.H. Institute: Shakespeare’s Playhouses: July 19, 2004, and e-mail communication with Alan Dessen: 31 December 2005.

ⁱⁱ Keith Sturgess, “A Quaint Device’: The Tempest at the Blackfriars,” Critical Essays On Shakespeare’s The Tempest, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (New York: G. K. Hall, 1998), p. 109.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stephen Greenblatt, Will in the World (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 374.

^{iv} Marjorie Garber, Shakespeare After All (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), p. 874.

^v William Shakespeare, A Facsimile of the First Folio, 1623, intro. Doug Moston (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 37.

^{vi} All textual citations are from The Arden Shakespeare Edition of The Tempest, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1999).

^{vii} Christine Dymkowski, ed., Shakespeare In Production: The Tempest (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 323-324.

^{viii} Peter Holland, "Shakespeare Performances in England," Shakespeare Survey 47, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 204.

^{ix} Dymkowski, p. 324.

^x Russell Jackson, "Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1996-98: or the Search for a Policy," Shakespeare Quarterly 50:2 (1999): 199.

^{xi} Robert Smallwood, "Shakespeare Performances in England," Shakespeare Survey 52, ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 239.

^{xii} Michael Dobson, "Shakespeare Performance in England," Shakespeare Survey 54, ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 264.

^{xiii} Ralph Berry, Shakespeare in Performance (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 139.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Philip C. McGuire, Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare's Open Silences (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 44.

^{xvi} McGuire, p. 46.

^{xvii} Allan C. Dessen, Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 214.

^{xviii} Dymkowski, p. 325.

^{xix} Trevor R. Griffiths, "This Island's Mine: Caliban and Colonialism," Critical Essays On Shakespeare's The Tempest, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (New York: G. K. Hall, 1998), p. 135.

^{xx} Alden T. Vaughan & Virginia Mason Vaughan Shakespeare's Caliban (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 110.

^{xxi} Griffiths, p. 133.

^{xxii} Alden T. Vaughan & Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Introduction," The Arden

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^{xxiii} Era, 15 October 1919, p. 6: Cited in Griffiths, p. 140.

^{xxiv} Albert Bermel, Shakespeare At the Moment: Playing the Comedies (New York: Heinemann, 2000), p. 317.

^{xxv} Quoted in Griffiths, p.144.

^{xxvi} Dymkowski, p. 332.

^{xxvii} Alden T. Vaughan & Virginia Mason Vaughan, Shakespeare's Caliban, p. 197.

^{xxviii} Griffiths, p. 149.

^{xxix} Dymkowski, p. 334.

^{xxx} Randall Louis Anderson, "Shakespeare at the Guthrie: The Tempest Through a Glass, Darkly," Shakespeare Quarterly 44:1 (1993), p. 92.

^{xxxi} Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York: Macmillan, 1942), pp. 195-201.

^{xxxii} Reuben Brower, "The Tempest," Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Leonard F. Dean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 462-466.

^{xxxiii} Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, trans. Boseslaw Taborski (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1964), p. 318.

^{xxxiv} Kott, p. 330.

^{xxxv} Rob Nixon, "African and Caribbean Appropriations of The Tempest," originally printed, Critical Inquiry, 13 (Spring 1987), reprinted A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism, eds. Richard Danson Brown and David Johnson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 47.

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^{xxxvii} Jyotsna G. Singh, "Caliban versus Miranda: Race and Gender Conflicts in Postcolonial Rewritings of The Tempest," Shakespeare's Romances, ed. Alison Thorne (New York, Palgrave, 2003), pp. 209-210.

^{xxxviii} Caroline Cakebread, "Sycorax Speaks: Marina Warner's Indigo and The Tempest," Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance, ed. Marianne Novy (New York: Palgrave, 1999), p. 226.

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^{xl} Meredith Anne Skura, "Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in The Tempest," originally published, Shakespeare Quarterly 40:1 (1989), reprinted in Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000, ed. Russ

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^{xli} Harold Bloom, Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1998), p. 683.

^{xlii} Dessen, p. 222.