

# THE TEMPEST

*The Ends of Power, Part I*





# THE TEMPEST

.....  
*Act I*





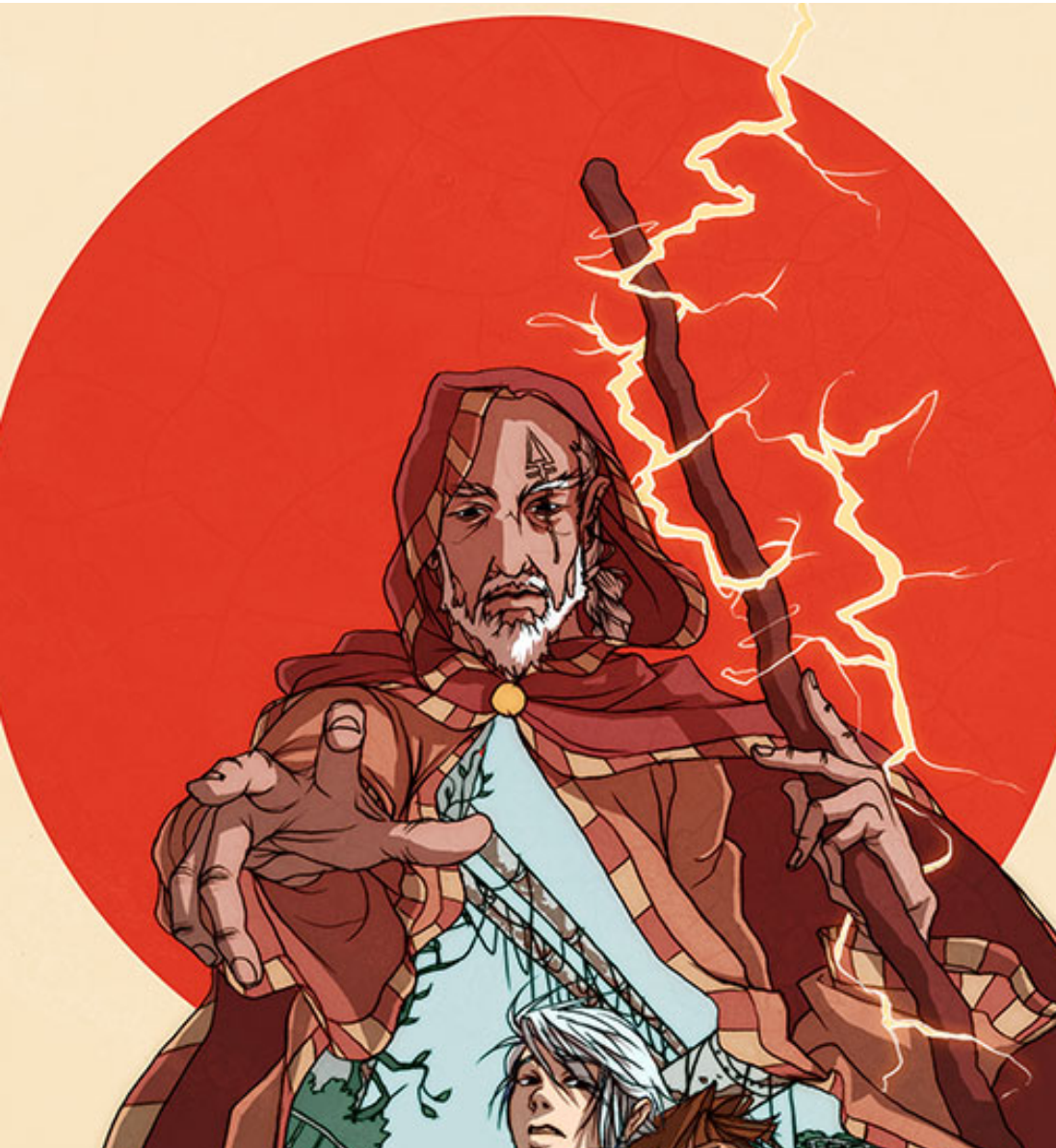


# THE STRUCTURE OF ROMANCE

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- ▶ In five acts, and, as with all of Shakespeare's plays it moves from: (1) set up, (2) background, (3) complications, (4) climax, (5) resolution
- ▶ *Deus ex machina*—but at the beginning, not the end! Already by the end of Act I, Prospero is at work on complications
- ▶ From the start, magic, love at first sight, Prospero as absolute master, director, playwright; in control; indeed, too much so. The play is at his mercy.





## ROMANCE?

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- ▶ There are essentially three plots:
  - ▶ A plot of pure innocent love (Miranda and Ferdinand)
  - ▶ A plot of ridiculous, drunken slapstick comedy (Stephano and Trinculo)
  - ▶ And yet, underneath, something unspeakable, out-of-control: fratricide, illegitimate political power, slavery, imprisonment, exile
- ▶ *Power* is the central argument; its ethical use and its abuse

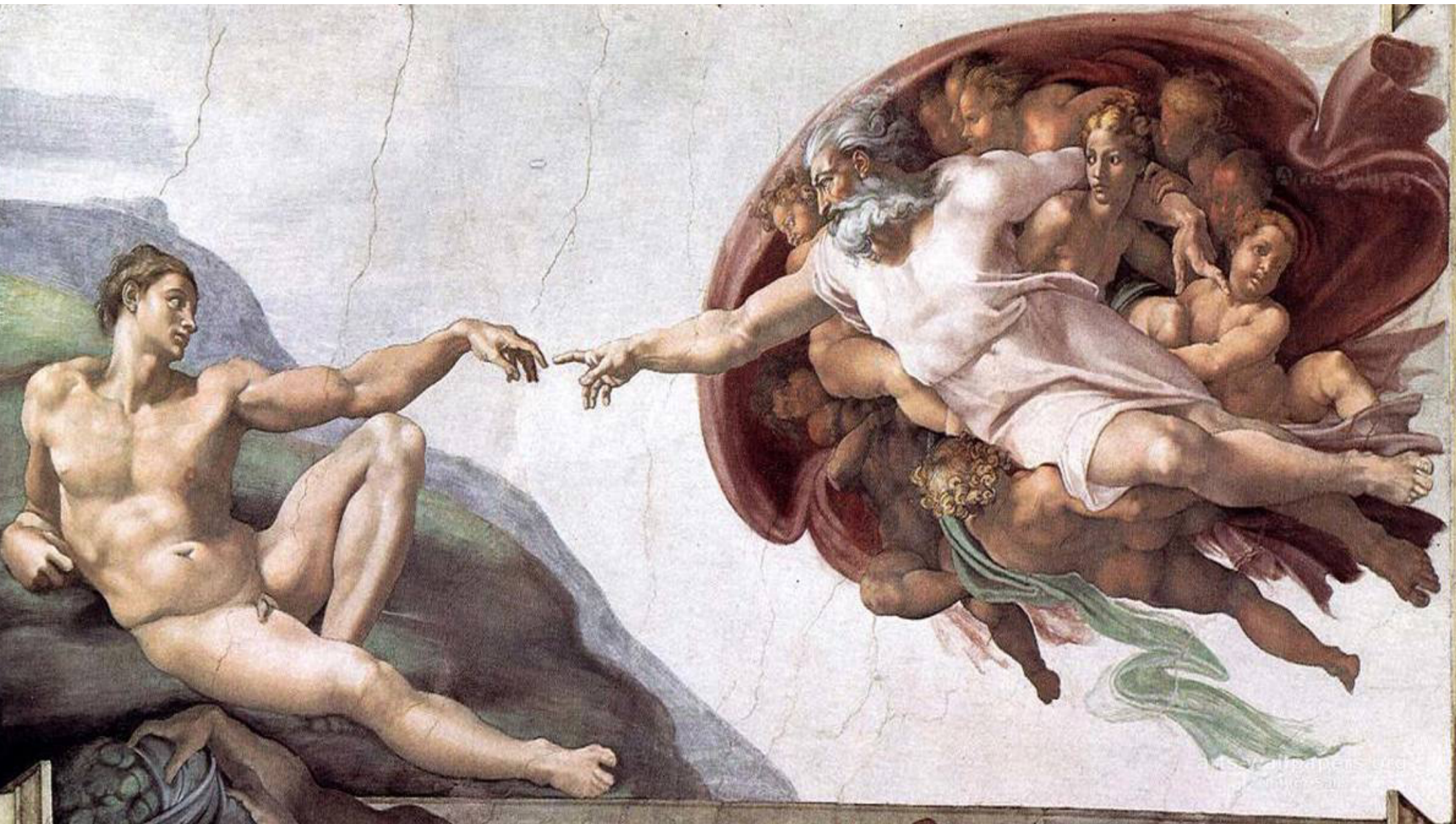




























# CHARACTERS

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- ▶ Prospero and Alonso: both fathers, both rightful rulers (Milan, Naples)
- ▶ Prospero and Antonio: brothers in contention for who should rule Milan
- ▶ Alonso and Sebastian: brothers in contention for who should rule Naples
- ▶ Miranda and Ferdinand: innocent children in love (Claudio, Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*)
- ▶ Miranda and Claribel: both daughters whose fathers decide whom they should marry
- ▶ Trinculo and Stephano: both drunken clowns
- ▶ Caliban and Ariel: both non-human slaves of Prospero, one “black” (earth) one “white” (air, water, fire)



*Trinculo & Stephano*







## CALIBAN & ARIEL

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- ▶ Radical opposites: spirit of earth, spirit of air; Caliban male, Ariel rather non-binary
- ▶ Racialized, or not? Unclear, much like Shakespeare's treatment of cross-dressing. Early modern? Proto-modern?
- ▶ Their different forms of servitude suggest racial difference to us (and maybe to Will): one is a slave, the other an indentured servant
- ▶ Prospero constantly calls Caliban "slave"; he never refers to Ariel this way
- ▶ Caliban appears to us like a colonized subject, dispossessed of his land by a white man

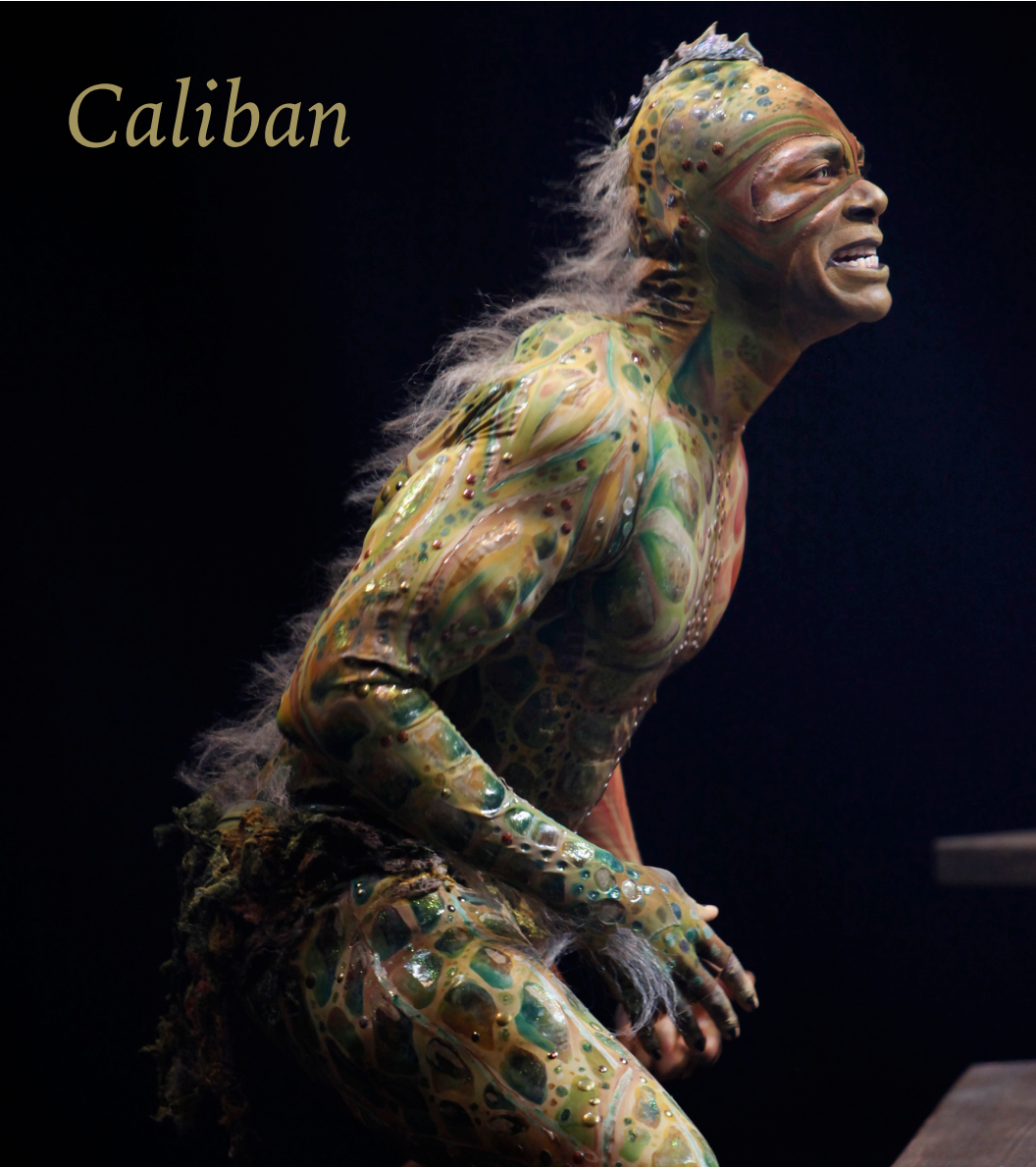


*Ariel*





*Caliban*







[*Aside*] That's a brave god and bears celestial liquor.  
I will kneel to him.  
Hast thou not dropp'd from heaven?  
I'll show thee every fertile inch o' th' island;  
And I will kiss thy foot: I prithee, be my god.  
I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;  
I'll fish for thee and get thee wood enough.  
A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!  
I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,  
Thou wondrous man.

—*Caliban*



“

“I might call him  
A thing divine, for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble.”

— *Miranda*



# THE TEMPEST

.....  
*Act II*





# ACTING & INTERPRETATION

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“ This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou takest from me. When thou camest first,  
Thou strok’st me and made much of me, wouldst give me  
Water with berries in ’t, and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less,  
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee  
And showed thee all the qualities o’ th’ isle,  
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.  
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms  
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!  
For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was mine own king. And here you sty me  
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me  
The rest o’ th’ island.

—*Caliban*



Royal Shakespeare Company, 2017





“

Thou most lying lying slave,  
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee —  
filth as thou art — with humane care.

— *Prospero*



“

PROSPERO: “I have used thee —  
filth as thou art — with humane care, and lodged thee  
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate  
The honour of my child.”

CALIBAN: “O ho, O ho! Would’t had been done!  
Thou didst prevent me: I had peopled else  
This isle with Calibans.”





# THEATER VS. LITERATURE

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- ▶ Act I is comprehensible as a literary text; Act II, scene 1, however, can only be understood on stage
- ▶ Interruptions, misunderstandings, puns, insults, rapid banter, etc., can only be understood on stage
- ▶ Improvisation, delivery, staging: what words mean change with every situation, every speaker, every repetition
- ▶ “All the world’s a stage”—from the beginning, a suggestion that this play is about representation and fiction itself; Prospero stages everything



# STAGING

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*The Tempest (Jarman, 1979)*



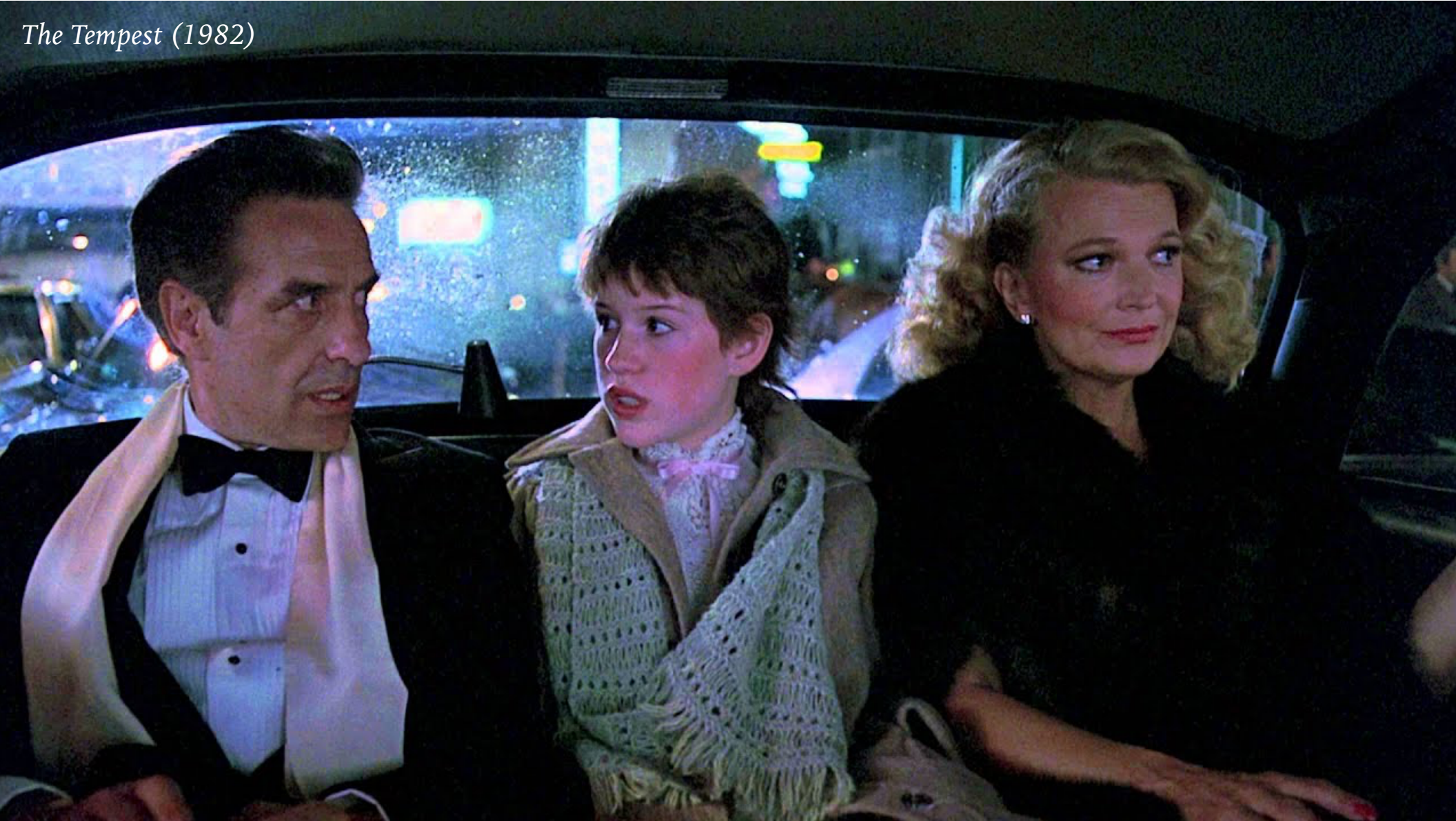


RSC, 2006





*The Tempest* (1982)





*The Tempest* (1982)





2010, *Mirren & Hounsoun*





AMAZING!

M·G·M  
PRESENTS

# FORBIDDEN PLANET

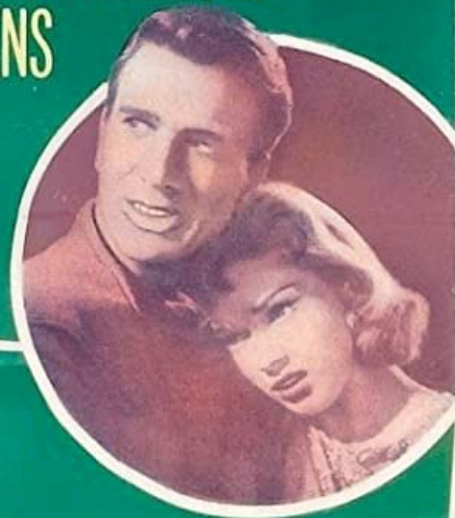
IN CINEMASCOPE AND COLOR

STARRING

WALTER ANNE LESLIE  
PIDGEON · FRANCIS · NIELSEN

With WARREN STEVENS

And Introducing ROBBY,  
THE ROBOT

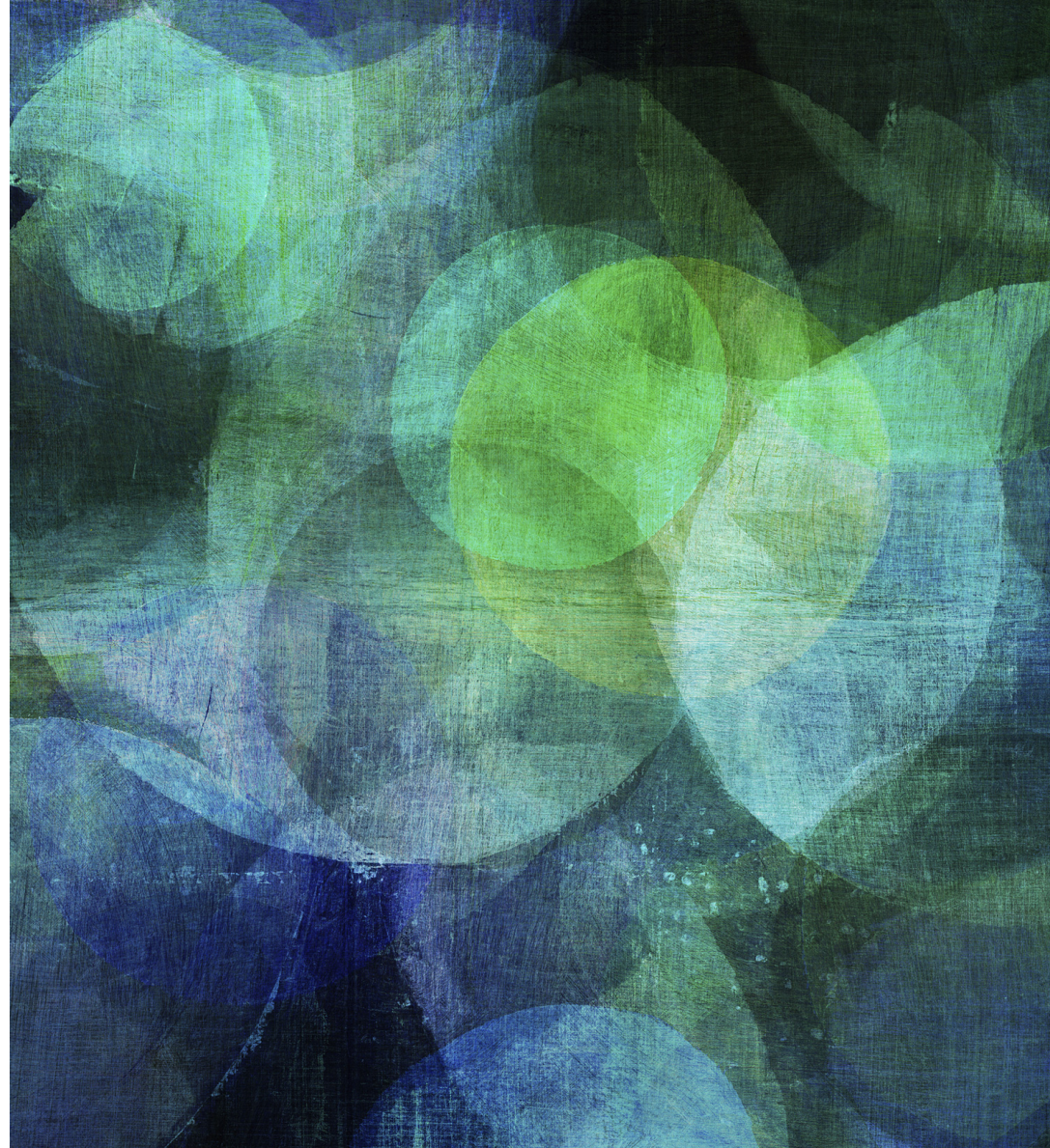


*Forbidden Planet (1956)*



# POWER & SPECTACLE

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RSC, 2017







TRINCULO: Do not torment me: O!

STEPHANO: What's the matter? Have we devils here? Do you put tricks upon's with savages ~~and men of Ind~~, ha? I have not 'scaped drowning to be afeard now of your four legs.

CALIBAN: The spirit torments me: O!

STEPHANO: This is some monster of the isle with four legs, who hath got, as I take it, an ague. Where the devil should he learn our language? I will give him some relief, if it be but for that. If I can recover him, and keep him tame, and get to Naples with him, he's a present for any emperor..."



“

STEPHANO:

Four legs and two voices: a most delicate monster!  
His forward voice now is to speak well of his friend: his  
backward voice is to utter foul speeches and to detract. If all  
the wine in my bottle will recover him, I will help his ague.  
Come. Amen! I will pour some in thy other mouth.

“

STEPHANO:

Four legs and two voices: a most delicate monster!  
His *forward voice* now is to *speak well* of his friend: his  
*backward voice* is to utter *foul speeches* and to detract. If all  
the wine in my bottle will recover him, I will help his ague.  
Come. Amen! I will pour some in *thy other mouth*.





**GET IN LOSER**  
WE'RE DOING BUTT STUFF

# THE TEMPEST

.....  
*Act III*







## ACT III: POWER

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- ▶ Act II features two main sorts of scenes: political intrigue and slapstick comedy
- ▶ Act III begins instead with the charmingly naive, even idiotic, true love of Miranda and Ferdinand.
- ▶ Stephano takes charge and declares that Trinculo and Caliban will be his viceroys. Sound familiar?





## ACT III: POWER

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- ▶ Almost every character is caught up in the desire for power:
  - ▶ Usurpation (Antonio usurps Prospero, Prospero usurps Caliban)
  - ▶ Prospero over all, but especially Miranda, Ariel and Caliban
  - ▶ Sebastian and Antonio, who plot to usurp Alonso (II, 1)
  - ▶ Gonzalo and the Mediterranean/Atlantic/Caribbean utopia — exposes the utopian impulse as a sham; Machiavellian, but with the desire for something else: magic, romance



“

Had I plantation of this isle, my lord —  
And were the king on't, what would I do?

—*Gonzalo*

“

**GONZALO:** I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries  
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic  
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;  
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,  
And use of service, none; contract, succession,  
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;  
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;  
No occupation; all men idle, all;  
And women too, but innocent and pure;  
No sovereignty—



“

**GONZALO:**

...and women too, but innocent and pure;  
No sovereignty—

**SEBASTIAN:**

Yet he would be king on't.

**ANTONIO:**

The *latter end* of his commonwealth forgets the  
beginning.



**GET IN LOSER**  
WE'RE DOING BUTT STUFF





## THE ENDS OF POWER

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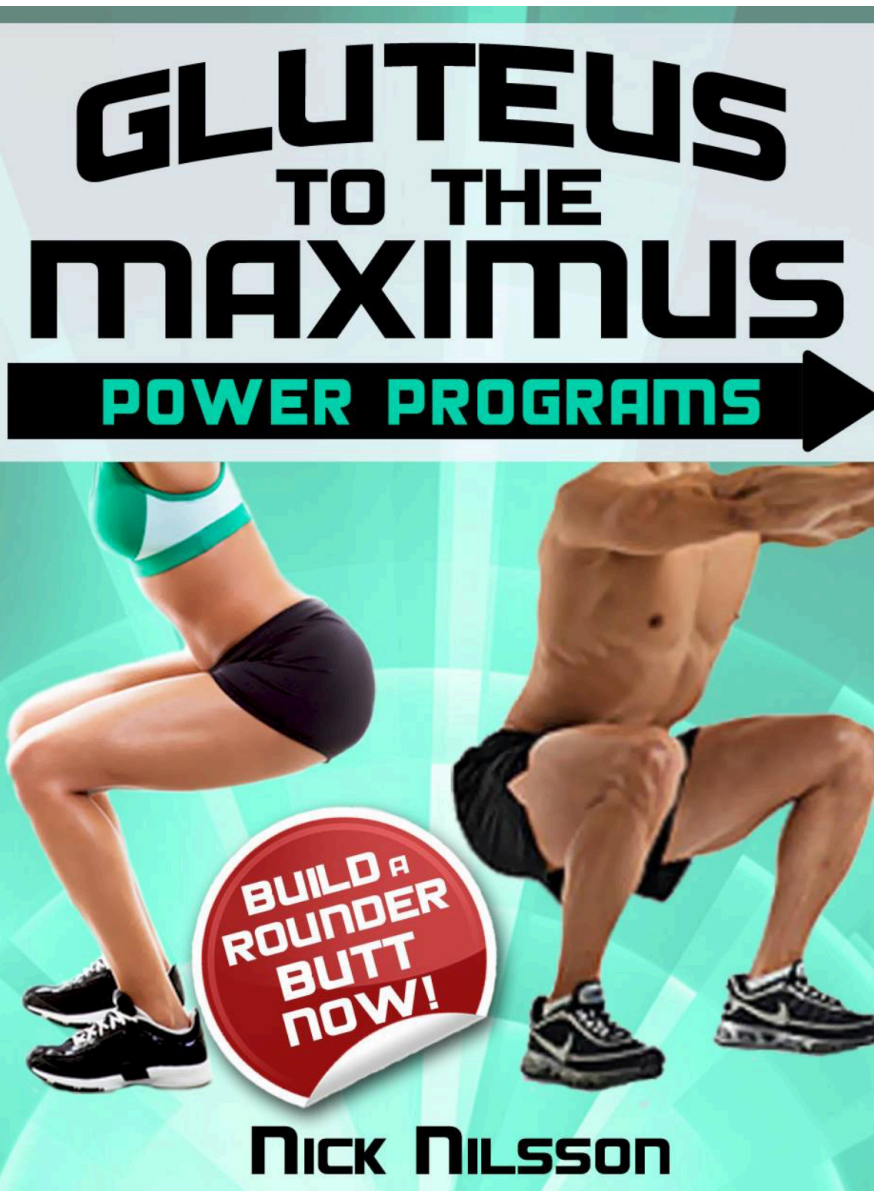
- ▶ The “latter end” of his commonwealth; we’ve seen this language before, when Trinculo and Caliban form a four-legged monster that has two voices, but two butts
- ▶ Stephano immediately imagines himself in charge of the monster, showing him to an emperor to gain money and favor
- ▶ All men who seek power are asses; they make “foul speeches” with their “other mouths,” the “latter end of commonwealth,”
- ▶ Like Gonzalo, they ask “what would I do if I were king?” This is another sense of end: to what end? What is, after all, the purpose of power?

“

STEPHANO:

Four legs and two voices: a most delicate monster!  
His *forward voice* now is to speak well of his friend: his  
*backward voice* is to utter *foul speeches* and to detract. If all  
the wine in my bottle will recover him, I will help his ague.  
Come. Amen! I will pour some in *thy other mouth*.





## THE ENDS OF POWER

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- ▶ That “other mouth” is Trink-culo (Drink-ass, but also ‘triple ass’ — three of them on stage); Shakespeare never forgets body’s ‘lower stratum.’
- ▶ This isn’t just ‘comic relief’ (comedy is never “just comic relief,” but always masks a political or ideological critique): bodies are essential to power (the loss of Ferdinand means Alfonso’s line is at an end; Prospero ignores body in favor of mind and loses power; the power of controlling bodies for (re)production)
- ▶ But don’t just take my word for this cheeky, preposterous, asinine suggestion. Caliban gets behind it, too:

“

**CALIBAN:**

What a thrice-double ass

Was I to take this drunkard for a god.



“

**CALIBAN:**

*Caliban takes Trinculo (tris + culo = triple ass) for a god; in taking such an idiot for a deity, Caliban reveals that he is twice the ass of Trinculo; hence a thrice-double ass. We have progressed from two asses (the four legged beast) to three asses (Trinculo) to six asses (the thrice-double ass).*

What a **thrice-double** ass

Was I to take this drunkard for a god.

**THE END**