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Author(s)	Yamatsu, Kaori
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## Miranda as a “Maid”

Kaori Yamatsu

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare creates the character of Miranda, whose name suggests the meaning of “wonder.” It is Anne Richter who regards “wonder” as “the basis of Miranda’s nature.”<sup>1)</sup> Howard Felperin, who is of the same opinion as Anne Richter, regards the phrase “brave new world”<sup>2)</sup> mentioned by Miranda in Act V as the most remarkable expression found in the play.<sup>3)</sup> Certainly, Miranda’s words “O, wonder! . . . O brave new world” make a strong impression upon us. There is, however, another expression of Miranda’s whose importance has been little noticed by critics. It is her words “No wonder” (I.ii.430).

When Ferdinand first meets Miranda, he wonders:

Most sure the goddess  
On whom these airs attend! Vouchsafe my prayer  
May know if you remain upon this island;  
And that you will some good instruction give  
How I may bear me here: my prime request,  
Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder!  
If you be maid or no? (I.ii.424-30)

To Ferdinand’s question, Miranda responds with a sweet humbleness, “No wonder, sir; / But certainly a maid” (I.ii.430-1). Her simple answer “No wonder” derives itself from a mental status where one can be humble enough and ready enough to aspire for and be attracted by the higher stage of “wonder.” And the humble mentality suggested in the expression “No wonder” is related not solely to the character of Miranda; it also has to do with the conception of the play itself.

The theme in *The Tempest* lies in the dialectic movement of “wonder” and two kinds of “no wonder” and the steady progress toward perfection of personality through this advance. “Wonder” means the state of astonished admiration of wonderful people and things, while, on the other

hand, the idea of "no wonder" has two meanings; one is that a person is so modest and humble that he thinks he is not one to be wondered at by others; the other is that a person is so insensible or immune to the charm of "wonder" that he does not know how to admire people and things that are truly marvellous and wonderful.

"Wonder" is preceded by "no-wonder," a stage prior to the true knowledge of what is marvellous and true. When one reaches the stage where he has acquired an awareness of wonder, he must not remain satisfied. He must tell himself that he has a long way to go before he reaches the true knowledge of "wonder." In this way, one comes to be grateful that he has been enlightened as to the meaning of things marvellous and miraculous, after experiencing the terror in a barren and dark world where the true sense of wonder cannot prevail at all.

When one critic comments that the theme of *The Tempest* is "the eternal conflict between order and chaos,"<sup>4)</sup> he does not seem to be aware of the more complicated interplay of "wonder" and "no wonder" which lies beyond the simple conflict between order and disorder.

Indeed, the theme of "wonder" is dealt with in Shakespeare's other Romances, too, but it is in *The Tempest* that this theme most persistently asserts itself in contrast with that of "no wonder." This is an outstanding characteristic of this play, and it makes this play a truly attractive one.

Miranda's sense of admiration and humility is the fruit of Prospero's efforts to strive for an idealistic creation of the world through the teaching of language. And the education is effected in the long process of the constant interaction between "wonder" and "no-wonder." In education, the teacher and the pupil must always share a feeling of wonder at something they aspire to and a feeling of humility in which they become aware that their achievement is not entirely a matter of one's personal efforts and that one must always make further endeavours.

It is true that Miranda has been a "cherubin" (I.ii.152) for Prospero since she was a "crying self" (I.ii.132). Coleridge admired the use of the epithet "crying" as showing Shakespeare's "power of genius."<sup>5)</sup> However, that Miranda was a "crying self" also means that Miranda at this stage of her development did not know language at all. This angelic being is educat-

ed in language through her father's training.

About the conversations between Prospero and Miranda, Stanley Wells points out that "If Prospero resembles a spinner of romance tales, his daughter is even more clearly the ideal audience for such tales."<sup>6</sup>) Miranda is his pupil as well as his audience. According to the conventions of romance tales, she plays the role of an ideal listener, who cleverly, almost imperceptibly leads the audience into the romantic world. She must be regarded also as the pupil of her father, who trains her in the word game of debating.

Prospero is thoroughgoing in his education of his daughter, as is shown by his lines "Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit / Than other princess' can, that have more time / For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful" (I.ii.172-4). In addition, he believes in the ideal transformation through education, and aims at achieving harmony between her royal and redemptive nature of "cherubin" and the quality acquired through the art of education. Before acquiring this golden combination of qualities, she must undergo various trials. In the world where she has no friends her age, Miranda is so thoroughly trained by Prospero the "schoolmaster" (I.ii.172) that she seems rather precocious.

Though Hartwig points out "her almost absolute lack of experience in the world,"<sup>7</sup>) her two great experiences must not be lost sight of. One is that Miranda sees the examples of Sycorax's reign over the island, and the other is that Miranda is endangered by Caliban who attempts to "violate / The honour" (I.ii.349-50). It is a rare person who goes through these two experiences.

It can be said that Caliban is the companion of Miranda in the word game and that, partly as a result of this companionship, he nearly makes her the victim of a rape. It has been much discussed whether the speech in which Caliban is cursed (I.ii.353-64) should be considered as belonging to Prospero or to Miranda. In the commentary to her edition of *The Tempest*, Righter assigns the speech to Miranda, saying that "'pity' is almost the keynote of Miranda's nature" and that "she not infrequently echoes her father's style of speech."<sup>8</sup>) In *The Tempest*, in which the theme of language learning is stressed and the dialogues often contain

abusive language, it is important to note that Miranda, the pupil of Prospero, has a highly developed faculty of using the language which makes it very easy for her to curse Caliban in such a stern and argumentative tone. It is possible that Miranda, an assistant to Prospero, should utter these controversial lines because she is educated in such a way that she can retort, use abusive language, and speak like Prospero the "schoolmaster."

Ariel also helps Miranda to grow up into a wonderful woman. Caliban, who is "earth" (I.ii.316) in an allegorical sense, gives her practical experience. On the other hand, Ariel, who is "air" (V.i.21), adds an ethereal and lovely touch to her.

In analyzing the quality of Ariel, Goddard is of the following opinion:

If Shakespeare had no admiration for the womanly woman in the sense of the clinging vine, neither had he any for the manly man as embodied in what our generation refers to as "he-man" or the "red-blooded man." He scorned the gentleman, but all his best men are gentle men. Whatever else he may be, Ariel is a symbol of this union of the masculine and feminine elements of the soul.<sup>9)</sup>

Ariel, who is a "symbol of this union of the masculine and feminine elements of the soul," goes between Miranda and Ferdinand, and leads them to an ideal gentleness. As Ferdinand says, Miranda is the woman "on whom these airs attend" (I.ii.425), and she is a "gentle" (III.i.8) woman. On the other hand, Ferdinand is a "gentle" (I.ii.471) man, as Miranda says.

Referring to Shakespeare's idea about the ideal man or woman, Goddard remarks:

From Adonis and the Young Man of the Sonnets, through Rosalind and Hamlet, Desdemona and Cordelia, on to Imogen, Florizel and Cadwal, Ferdinand and Miranda (remember her willingness to carry logs!), Shakespeare is bent on finding men and women who, without losing the virtues and integrity of their own sex, have also the virtue of the other.<sup>10)</sup>

Ferdinand, whose name has the etymological meaning of "risk and travel,"<sup>11)</sup> brings the theme of "death and rebirth" into this drama.

Though he has this symbolical role in the play, he seems to lack the lively character of a young man, compared with Florizel in *The Winter's Tale*, who has the symbolical function of "the disguised lover-prince."<sup>12</sup>) One reason he seems rather lackluster is that he is depicted as one traveling to the ideal gentleness at his risk.

Miranda is also portrayed as developing to an ideal gentleness, but she is far more vivid as a character than Ferdinand. Like Prospero, who says that "to the dread rattling thunder / Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak / With his own bolt" (V.i.44-6), she says that "I would the lightning had / Burnt up those logs that you are enjoin'd to pile!" (III.i.16-7) This shows how ardent she is in her love. In her ardent love, this innocent girl gradually creates in Ferdinand an affectionate humbleness toward her, which is required for the ideal gentleness, saying, "I'll be your servant, / Whether you will or no" (III.i.85-6).

The "plain and holy innocence" (III.i.82) of Miranda, who hates "bashful cunning" (III.i.81), generates the sense of admiration as well as that of humility. By possessing the sense of "wonder" and "no-wonder" at the same time, she is endowed with the nature of "sea," not of "standing water" (II.i.216). Shakespeare suggests that these two characteristics are required for a "sea-change" (I.ii.403). Miranda has those two attributes of the sea, namely, its ebb and flow.

In one world of "no wonder," where people are kept from the true knowledge of "wonder," the "most wicked sir" (V.i.130) Antonio commits the "rankest fault" (V.i.132) with Sebastian. Stephano and Trinculo as "fool's" (IV.i.224) play a farce with Caliban, who brings the word "wonder" into the world of Stephano and Trinculo.

Antonio still remains in the world of "standing water." In spite of Caliban's guiding of Stephano and Trinculo to the "quick freshes" (III.ii.66), they must plunge into the stinking "pool" (IV.i.208). Prospero realized the meaning of "fresh springs" (I.ii.340), after he experienced the salty taste of "the wild waters" (I.ii.2) by decking "the sea with drops full salt" (I.ii.155). But Antonio craves not for the "fresh" water through a "frustrate search on land" (III.iii.10), but for a secular status. Stephano asks earnestly for the "liquor" (II.ii.22). They never long for "fresh"

water, namely, holy water, which the "green sea" (V.i.43) tries to show them through the trial of the tempest. They neither notice the "fresh" water nor are truly struck with the sense of awe that comes from experiencing the wonderful and miraculous.

"Admir'd Miranda" (III.i.37) is an idea serving as a sort of nucleus of the play, and around this idea the various aspects of "wonder" and "no wonder" are found. The meeting of Ferdinand and Miranda is the greatest "wonder" caused by Prospero's magic. The magician overcomes his sorrow and hatred, and he comes to realize that "the rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (V.i.27-8). As a token of his gratitude for "bountiful Fortune" (I.ii.178) from which his present life results, Prospero as a *dramatis persona* and stage manager creates a lot of wonders for the sake of his friends, the audience and even his enemies and intends to make them live a penitent life. He himself is situated at the top of a kind of hierarchy of "wonder." In the last scene, he makes Alonso watch Miranda and Ferdinand playing a game of chess. Alonso, Prospero's enemy, is very much amazed to see his son Ferdinand who he has believed is dead. Though he cannot escape the "strange maze" (V.i.242) of "wonder," he comes, though only barely, into a state of repentance, by feeling a little wonder. Gonzalo, who helped Prospero and Miranda by his charitable deeds and cheered Alonso by a belief in miracles, is rather smug about his general understanding of a miracle and does not try to consider the matter of "wonder" and "no wonder" any further.

A hierarchy is found in the two worlds of "no wonder," just as in the world of "wonder." It is a person's awareness of being in essence a humble and weak creature that causes him to be on his guard against the unregenerate evil such as Antonio's, which results in a spread of disorder and cannot be completely destroyed or extinguished. Using effectively the archetypal character of Antonio, who rejects "wonder" so thoroughly as to make us sad and gloomy, Shakespeare attains his purpose in showing vividly the difference between the two worlds of "no wonder." Moreover, Shakespeare makes Prospero "suffer a sea-change," too, by causing him to give up his magic and "acknowledge" (V.i.276) Caliban as part of himself. Through this trial, the right Duke of Milan, Prospero, whose court is the

poor "cell" (V.i.166), continues to aim at the best performance and the deepest contemplation of "wonder" in the dialectic movement, which comes from the interaction between "wonder" and "no wonder."

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare creates the most important compound word "sea-change." Certainly, the expression of "change" might be associated with a miraculous transformation through alchemy. When this word "change" is connected with the word "sea," however, the manifold meanings of the sea are added to the meaning of "change." Moreover, the expression of "sea" gives the word "change" two aspects of time. One means a change which is sudden and magical, marvellous and complete; the other a wonderful change that takes a long time. When he created this compound, Shakespeare may have had the former meaning in mind, but the ambiguity of this word, namely the fact that it can have the latter meaning, makes it very important and significant. Shakespeare effectively contrasts the sudden "sea-change" through magic with the "sea-change" that takes a very long time, using the unity of time and emphasizing two aspects of time, the time that seems short and the time that seems long.

Further, Shakespeare invents the contrast of "wonder" and "no-wonder." The contrast between the two meanings of "sea-change" corresponds to that between "wonder" and "no-wonder." Like the above-mentioned contrast of "sea-change," the conception of "wonder" perceived momentarily is always contrasted with the idea of "no-wonder" that causes people to perceive by intuition the long process, in which the perfectness of something wonderful and admirable can be achieved. The idea of "wonder" and that of "no-wonder" continue to influence each other.

In the structure of such a contrast of ideas, actors frequently utter the word "wonder" and its synonyms. There can be found a kind of hierarchy of "wonder." Prospero is situated at the top of the "wonder" hierarchy. He himself can bring about wonders by his magic, and he has a great ability to perceive "wonder." Even the young couple Ferdinand and Miranda, and the cheerful Gonzalo cannot reach that high mental state Prospero has achieved.

In *The Tempest*, there are two rather long and famous speeches by

Prospero. The following is his famous masque scene speech:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and  
 Are melted into air, into thin air:  
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision  
 The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
 As dreams are made on; and our little life  
 Is rounded with a sleep. (IV.i.148-58)

Certainly, these lines show the transiency and emptiness of life. Using the words, "melt," "dissolve," "air," "insubstantial," Prospero teaches the impermanency of life to Ferdinand and Miranda, and he himself tastes the meaning of the momentariness to the full. He explains to Ferdinand and Miranda the ephemerality, by taking powerful examples of "the great globe itself," "all which it inherit," and so on. The more impressive the masque through Ariel is, the more depressing its interruption and Prospero's attitude and words are for Ferdinand and Miranda. As is shown by the lines "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep," Prospero realizes that his "present fancies" (IV.i.122) enacted by his magic are only a dream.

In considering what is meant by "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep," it is only natural that many people should regard these lines as pessimistic. Prospero's lines seem to be depressing because of the situation, but they contain a wonder which comes from a sense of "no-wonder." In the Epilogue, the other of his famous speeches, Prospero emphasizes his own transiency by using such words as "most faint" (Epilogue, line 3) or "despair" (Epilogue, line 15). The most important word "prayer" (Epilogue, line 16) is not to be forgotten.

Prospero does not completely yield to "despair." The "prayer" for "wonder" comes no doubt from a sense of "no-wonder." Thus, the mental attitude of "wonder" is closely connected with that of "no-wonder." The

meaning of the word "dream" must be considered in this connection. Prospero, the old magician, dreams of Ferdinand and Miranda's happy life and other people's future happiness. Caliban, who causes his teacher to despair, dreams of freedom. Ariel, who is only air, sings, dreaming also of freedom, "Merrily, merrily shall I live now / Under the blossom that hangs on the bough" (V.i.93-4). On the other hand, Antonio cannot really sleep, though sound sleep may make him dream a fertile dream.

Charles R. Forker says, "To the unregenerate Antonio a sleeping Alonso suggests a dead Alonso. But for the actual sleepers of the play (Alonso, Gonzalo, Miranda, the Boatswain, even perhaps Caliban), slumber is restorative and life-affirming."<sup>13</sup> Though the prevailing note of Prospero's speech in the masque scene may be of the transiency of life and of despair, there is a ray of hope, not a big one to be sure, in the words "dreams" and "a sleep" as they are used here. Though this speech is full of a strong sense of "no-wonder," the profound sense of "wonder" in it must not be overlooked.

In the Epilogue, Prospero uses such words as "most faint" or "despair," revealing his own transiency, in the same way as he uses such words as "weakness" (IV.i.159) and "infirmity" (IV.i.160) in his speech after the masque. The tone of life's transiency is predominant in the Epilogue, too. Prospero, however, uses the expression "prayer" in the Epilogue. He intends to crave for "wonder," by appealing for "prayer." In the Epilogue, the word "prayer" sets the tone of "wonder" over the keynote of "no-wonder." Thus, Prospero possesses both the sense of "wonder" and that of "no-wonder" in the highest degree.

Miranda's refreshing admiration of the world surprises those who have forgotten to admire their world, and makes them want to see it again from such a fresh viewpoint as Miranda's. But the more attractive humility of "no wonder" uttered by her results from the highest education by her dear father, who attaches great importance to the ever-lasting dialectic movement of disorder, humility, and heartfelt admiration in the most desirable and ideal sense.

This drama can also be regarded as one of the "shipwreck pastorals."<sup>14</sup> The essential idea implied in the antithesis of "wonder" and "no-wonder"

can be found in the genre of the pastoral. In this setting, the creation of Miranda, who experienced the "sea-sorrow" (I.ii.170), is a most exquisite crystallization of the theme of this pastoral antithesis.

#### Notes

- 1) Anne Righter (Anne Barton), "Introduction" to *New Penguin Shakespeare: The Tempest* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1968), p. 10.
- 2) Frank Kermode (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: The Tempest* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979), p. 124, V.i. 183. All the following quotations of *The Tempest* are from this edition.
- 3) Howard Felperin, "Romance and Romanticism: Some Reflections on *The Tempest* and *Heart of Darkness*, or When is Romance no longer Romance?" in *Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered*, edited by Carol McGinnis Kay, and Henry E. Jacobs, (Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1978), p. 65.
- 4) Rose Abdelnour Zimbardo, "Form and Disorder in *The Tempest*," in *Shakespeare: The Tempest* (A Casebook), edited by D.J. Palmer (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1968), p. 234.
- 5) Terence Hawks (ed.), *Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), p. 212.
- 6) Stanley Wells, "Shakespeare and Romance," in *Later Shakespeare*, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 8, edited by John Russel Brown & Bernard Harris (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1966), p. 72.
- 7) Joan Hartwig, *Shakespeare's Tragicomic Vision* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), p. 159.
- 8) Righter, p. 149.
- 9) Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, vol. II (Chicago & London: Phoenix Books, The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 286.
- 10) Goddard, p. 286.
- 11) *Kenkyusha's New English-Japanese Dictionary*, edited by Yoshio Koine, (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1980).
- 12) J.H.P. Pafford, "Introduction" to *The Arden Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1963), p. lxxix.
- 13) Charles R. Forker, "Immediacy and Remoteness in *The Taming of The Shrew* and *The Winter's Tale*" in *Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered*, p. 144.
- 14) David Young, *The Heart's Forest: A Study of Shakespeare's Pastoral Plays* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 149.