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Shakespeare evokes the essence of punning in *The Tempest* so that he can portray its retarding effect upon good understanding and communication. The emphasis in this sentence falls upon the word *essence*. Once certain hazards inherent in punning are apparent, not only in this play but also in the playwright's earlier drama, audiences can better comprehend why Shakespeare performs a catharsis upon the punning spirit in this late dramatic romance. That this purging occurs with reference to Caliban is important, for it amounts to a hitherto unnoticed part of Shakespeare's subtle construction of this character's worth. Major characters in the other late romances rarely, if ever, engage in the labored wit that marks act 2, scene 1, of *The Tempest*. Gonzalo humanely tries to cheer up his king, Alonso, over the likely death of his son Ferdinand during the sea storm off Prospero's isle. "But for the miracle, / I mean our preservation," Gonzalo asserts, "few in millions / Can speak like us."[1] "Prithee, peace," Alonso commands (2.1.9). "He receives comfort like cold porridge," the king's brother, Sebastian, jests, capitalizing on the homonym *peace*/*peas* (2.1.10). "The visitor will not give him o'er so" (2.1.11), Prospero's wicked brother, Antonio, replies, after which follow these exchanges:

> *Sebastian:* Look, he's winding up the watch of his wit. By and by it will strike.
> *Gonzalo* [*to* Alonso]: Sir—
> *Sebastian* [*to* Antonio]: One: tell.
> *Gonzalo* [*to* Alonso]: When every grief is entertained that's offered,
> Comes to th'entertainer—
> *Sebastian:* A dollar.
> *Gonzalo:* Dolour comes to him indeed. You have spoken truer than you purposed.
> . . .
> *Antonio:* Which of he or Adrian, for a good wager, first begins to crow?
> *Sebastian:* The old cock.

Antonio: The cockerel.
Sebastian: Done. The wager?
Antonio: A laughter.
Sebastian: A match!
Adrian [*to* Gonzalo]: Though this island seem to be desert—
Antonio [*to* Sebastian]: Ha, ha, ha!
Sebastian: So, you're paid.
Adrian: Uninhabitable, and almost inaccessible—
Sebastian [*to* Antonio]: Yet—
Adrian: Yet—
Antonio [*to* Sebastian]: He could not miss't.
Adrian: It must needs be of subtle, tender, and delicate temperance.
Antonio [*to* Sebastian]: Temperance was a delicate wench.
Sebastian: Ay, and a subtle, as he most learnedly delivered.
Adrian [*to* Gonzalo]: The air breathes upon us here most sweetly.
Sebastian [*to* Antonio]: As if it had lungs, and rotten ones.
Antonio: Or as 'twere perfumed by a fen.

. . .

Gonzalo [*to* Adrian]: But the rarity of it is, which is indeed almost beyond credit—
Sebastian [*to* Antonio]: As many vouched rarities are.
Gonzalo [*to* Adrian]: That our garments being, as they were, drenched in the sea, hold notwithstanding their freshness and glosses, being rather new-dyed than stained with salt water.
Antonio [*to* Sebastian]: If but one of his pockets could speak, would it not say he lies?
Sebastian: Ay, or very falsely pocket up his report. (2.1.12–20, 28–49, 59–67)

The puns in these speeches are classical in form. Sister Miriam Joseph defines "[a]ntanaclasis [as] a figure which in repeating a word shifts from one of its meanings to another," while "[a]steismus is a figure of reply in which the answerer catches a certain word and throws it back to the first speaker with an unexpected twist, an unlooked for meaning."[2] Shakespeare's puns in the preceding dialogue upon *entertainer*, *temperance*, *delicate*, and *subtle* are excellent examples of the former rhetorical trope, while those on *dolour* and *pocket* nicely illustrate the latter figure. (The puns on *entertainer* and *dolour* are glossed below; *Temperance* was both a woman's name and a word for "climate"; *subtle* could mean both "pleasant" and "given to pleasure," "voluptuous.") Shakespeare sometimes employs puns to signify a certain coarseness or deficiency within a society

or culture. Such is the case with the unempathetic higher-class characters' puns during the performance of the inset entertainments in *Love's Labour's Lost* (5.2.484–655) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (5.1.108–345). Sebastian's and Antonio's wordplay consists of verbal rapier thrusts revealing their belligerent Machiavellian court culture and their opportunistic and cynical selves. Antonio and Sebastian prove insensitive to the party's predicament. Through punning, they violate the exemplary Renaissance courtier's moderate behavior. "[J]estes and merrie conceites are rather a gift, and a grace of nature, than of arte," Baldassare Castiglione remarks in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528): "Yet are there many notwithstanding both of this nation and other also, that in too much babling passe sometime their boundes and were unsavery and fond, because they have no respect to the condition of the person they commune withal, to the place where they bee, to the time, to the great gravitie and modesty which they ought to have in themselves."[3]

Despite their differences in relationship to King Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo are essentially courtiers in a royal retinue. Not only do Antonio and Sebastian, through their jests, violate a courtier's modesty and gravity; they also, through their jokes, show no respect for the grieving condition of their ruler. Castiglione approves of homonymic puns in recommending a courtier's generally mild jesting, as long as they suit social contexts and sublimate rather than accentuate aggressive feelings.[4] Both Castiglione and Stefano Guazzo in his influential *Civile Conversation*, translated by George Pettie and Bartholomew Young (1581, 1586), recommend a golden mean in joking that antagonistic Antonio and Sebastian ignore.[5] Chris Holcomb asserts that "[n]early every early modern handbook that includes a discussion of jesting defines the subject matter of laughter as deformity, either in physical appearance or behavior."[6] The behavior of Gonzalo and Adrian in trying to cheer up the despairing Alonso is anything but deformed, and so it is not a suitable subject—at least not suitable according to Holcomb's research—for sharp quips. Guazzo concludes, "[B]esides that it is no good manner [for a courtier] to mocke another, hee is also in daunger to receive the like, or a greater mocke himselfe."[7] Castiglione, in remarks that apply particularly to grieving Alonso and to Antonio and Sebastian's taunting of Adrian and Gonzalo, pronounces that jesting should "provoke laughter and *solace*

after an honest sorte" (my italics) and that "to make men laugh in taunting, must also be diligently considered … for it provoketh no laughter to mocke and scorne a sillie [innocent] soule in miserie and calamitie."[8] The courtier must be "circumspect that he appeare not malicious and venemous, and speake tauntes and quippes onely for spite and to touch the quicke, because such men oftentimes for offence of the tongue are chastised in the whole bodie."[9]

Certainly Gonzalo is a bit indecorous, off-base in urging Alonso to be "merry" because his loss of a son is common, shared by sailors' wives, shipmasters, and merchants who have lost a relative (or their goods) (2.1.1–6, esp. 1), but the kindness informing his obtuseness does not deserve flippant denigration. Admittedly, Gonzalo and Adrian's ability to console themselves by believing that Alonso and his courtiers' preservation is miraculous and that the isle and its climate offer them a pleasant life has dissolved their immediate sorrow. Their imagined project of living indefinitely on the island may seem naive, and their failure to hear Alonso repeatedly ask them to stop speaking—he finally says to them, "You cram these words into mine ears against / The stomach of my sense" (2.1.106–7)—may accuse them of a lapse in the courtier's duty always to conform his speech decorously to his hearer's wishes. But surely no one would approve of Gonzalo and Adrian's verbal reinforcement of Alonso's utter despair. What Gonzalo tells Sebastian is also true when the latter character tells Alonso he is responsible for their sea disaster by taking his daughter to a marriage with an African against her will:

> My lord Sebastian,
> The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness
> And time to speak it in. You rub the sore
> When you should bring the plaster.
> (2.1.135–38)

Although Gonzalo and Adrian's timing may be a bit off, they at least bring the plaster to Alonso's sore. Antonio and Sebastian deflate Gonzalo's notorious fantasy of thinking he might recover Ovid's Golden Age on the island, purged of the corruptions of European civilization, by shrewdly pointing out he would be king of a society that enjoys "[n]o sovereignty" (2.1.143–69, esp. 145, 156). "The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning," Antonio jests (2.1.157). For the moment, Gonzalo, in

his garrulous forgetfulness, resembles a well-meaning Polonius. Still, the ensuing dialogue suggests that Gonzalo resembles the ideal of a self-sacrificing courtier:

> *Gonzalo* [*to* Alonso]: And—do you mark me, sir?
> *Alonso:* Prithee, no more. Thou dost talk nothing to me.
> *Gonzalo:* I do well believe your highness, and did it to minister occasion to these gentlemen, who are of such sensible and nimble lungs that they always use to laugh at nothing.
> *Antonio:* 'Twas you we laughed at.
> *Gonzalo:* Who, in this kind of merry fooling, am nothing to you. So may you continue, and laugh at nothing still. (2.1.169–76)

Antonio and Sebastian jointly break a jest that reinforces their auditors' impression of a certain dull edge to Gonzalo's mind: "What a blow was there given!" Antonio sarcastically exclaims. "An it had not fallen flat-long [on the flat, harmless side of the sword]," Sebastian concludes (2.1.177–78). The joke, however, is finally on these speakers. Gonzalo does get the better of them when he extends the sword metaphor by appropriately punning, "You are gentlemen of brave mettle [metal]. You would lift the moon out of her sphere, if she would continue in it five weeks without changing" (2.1.179–81). The edge of Gonzalo's mind may not be so dull after all. He implies in the above-quoted dialogue that he purposely introduced the contradiction of royal power and egalitarian privilege into his Golden Age to amuse his auditors. Further, he implies that he has purposely sacrificed himself, by making himself a comic butt—in a spirit of gracious accommodation Castiglione might admire in a courtier—to lighten through amusement the burden of the present moment. By becoming "nothing" but a comic butt, Gonzalo implies that he has "minister[ed] occasion" to Antonio and Gonzalo, two "gentlemen" who might feel better about themselves by finding him a ridiculous man. One could say that Gonzalo's calculated humor, if it is that, is benign whereas Antonio and Sebastian's is malign.

This possibility retrospectively makes Gonzalo's persistent attempts to alleviate Alonso's gloom less questionable and, consequently, the disruption caused by Antonio's and Sebastian's acerbic quips more blamable. A pun normally succeeds by calling attention to the embarrassing bedfellows of meaning that can accompany a word's intended significance. Gonzalo has no control over the fact that in his statement—"When every

grief is entertained that's offered, / Comes to th'entertainer"—the word *entertainer*, divorced from its syntax, can legitimately mean "performer" as well as "sufferer." This is a verbal possibility that Sebastian hears and crystallizes into a pun by finishing the sentence with the word *dolour*; the noble Stoic of Gonzalo's sentence suddenly becomes a cheap actor or innkeeper pandering for a small fee in Sebastian's completion of the remark.[10] In order to identify the inappropriate connotations of words, the punster as a rule must be more concerned with how words are put together into phrases and clauses than with the ideational meanings created by syntax. Shakespeare explicitly concentrates upon this usually tacit assumption in the dialogue of Alonso's courtiers. When Gonzalo remarks after being soaked by the tempest, "Is not, sir, my doublet as fresh as the first day I wore it? I mean in a sort" (2.1.101–2), the value of his statement for Antonio lies in *sort's* possible sixteenth-century meaning of "lot" or "quantity."[11] "That 'sort' was well fished for," he quibbles caustically (2.1.103). Antonio jests insipidly that Gonzalo should insert the word *sort* at precisely the point that he does in his speech, even as Sebastian has cynically rejoiced that the word *yet* should predictably appear (to begin a new grammatical clause infused with hope) after Adrian's initial observation on the island's bleakness (2.1.37–40). Antonio sarcastically agrees that Adrian chooses this conjunction compulsively ("He could not miss't").

As Antonio and Sebastian listen for words upon which they can pun, they overlook not only the need to find cheer in the midst of darkness but also the higher conceptual meanings created by the syntax of Adrian's and Gonzalo's speech.[12] They offer a deaf ear to Adrian's optimism, which stems from his perception of the island's pleasant climate. Their spiritual loss is an apt punishment for their maiming of speech. By concerning themselves only with the word's significance as latent pun, cultured Antonio and Sebastian limit their knowledge to a single, often trivial, dimension of speech meaning, such as Caliban does when he believes that Stefano is the man in the moon. Antonio and Sebastian—to use Caliban's phrasing—have been taught speech, and their profit on it reveals itself as knowing how to pun.

A culture of predatory wit in early modern courtly circles suggests that Antonio and Sebastian's acidic jesting in *The Tempest* is not a trivial subject. Not surprisingly, this phenomenon was rarely, if ever, reported

directly in documents of court life (but see note 14). It registers itself instead in a play such as Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Two examples will suffice. Malicious Richard tells playgoers that

> This day should Clarence closely be mewed up [imprisoned]
> About a prophecy which says that "G"
> Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
>
> (1.1.38–40)

The source of this prophecy is Richard, Duke of Gloucester. It amounts to one of his nastier jests, for the letter *G* refers to himself, "Gloucester." Richard will order Clarence's murder in the Tower as well as those of King Edward's young sons. King Edward IV has placed Clarence in prison because his name is George. Punning on the letter *G*, Richard jestingly tells his victim, aware that his royal brother has arrested him because he appears to conform to the prophecy, that Edward should instead have committed Clarence's "*g*odfathers" (1.1.48; my italics). Shortly thereafter, he tells Clarence, "'Tis not the King that sends you to the Tower; / [But] [m]y Lady *G*ray, his wife (1.1.63–64; my italics). If King Edward had been attuned to the predatory punning wit of his humpbacked brother, he might have realized that the Duke of Gloucester also fulfills the prophecy. The material political consequences of apparently trivial wit-play are enormous in *Richard III*.

These consequences are also clear in the jesting between Richard and the little princes in the midst of act 3, scene 1. Calling young Richard, Duke of York, "little," Richard offers him his dagger as a gift. The boy, however, urges him to give him his sword. Focusing on the child's relative weakness, Richard replies, "Ay … were it light enough [relatively weightless]" (3.1.117). Somewhat offended, little Richard puns, "O, then I see you will part but with light [trivial] gifts" (3.1.118). Richard, stung slightly perhaps, jests again about the boy's smallness: "What, would you have my weapon, little lord?" (3.1.122). Irritated, young Richard jabs his uncle with a further meaning of the word *little*:

> *York:* I would [have the sword], that I might thank you as you call me.
> *Richard Gloucester:* How?
> *York:* Little. (3.1.123–25)

When young Prince Edward, the boy's brother, sees that their uncle is becoming angry, he says, "My lord of York will still be cross in talk.— / Uncle,

your grace knows how to bear with him" (3.1.126–27). Picking up on his brother's word *bear*, the little Duke of York cannot resist additional sharp wordplay at his uncle's expense:

> You mean to bear me, not to bear with me.—
> Uncle, my brother mocks both you and me.
> Because that I am little like an ape,
> He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders.
> (3.1.128–31)

Providing a gloss on this speech, editor David Bevington notes that "[a]t fairs the bear commonly carried an ape on his back. The speech is doubtless an allusion to Richard's hump and puns triply on *bear with*, 'put up with,' *bear*, 'carry,' and *bear*, 'an animal.'"[13] If humpbacked Richard's dislike of his cousin has not verged on hatred before this punning jest on his deformity, it likely does so after he hears it. Ominously, young Richard's punning activates and strengthens his interlocutor's homicidal impulse. Here Richard feels the pain his own, similar jests cause others, even when they do not pick up the overtones of his jokes in extended dialogue with him.

The adverse consequences of jests, including those involving puns, are far less serious in *Love's Labour's Lost*, yet they, too, exist. Rosaline describes Biron as "a man replete with mocks … and wounding flouts" (5.2.820–21). During their sharp-tongued courtship, she, along with others, has felt the sting of his puns. When he tells her he is "[s]ick at the heart" for her love and she jokes, "Alack, let it blood [bleed it medically]," he puns bawdily, "Will you prick't with your eye?" (2.1.184–85, 188). In order to purge himself of his painful jests, Rosaline tells him that to win her love, he must visit a hospital for a year and attempt to make the desperately ill smile at his quips (5.2.824–31). If he cannot, he must "weed this wormwood from [his] fruitful brain" before Rosaline will accept him (5.2.824). Biron's reply—that his task will prove impossible—suggests that he knows he must give up his facetious wit in order to win the affection of the woman he loves. No matter how humorous his jests might be, patients' serious illnesses almost certainly will preclude smiling and laughter. Nevertheless, Biron resolves to try. His possession of a jesting spirit thus has had profound consequences for the possibility of his future happiness.

Caliban's release from a jesting spirit is a major piece of business in the comic subplot of *The Tempest*. Separated, he stands free of an occasional corrupter of speech and knowledge. While Antonio and Sebastian consistently voice the jesting spirit in this play, Trinculo, listed as a "Iester" in the "Names of the Actors" that follow the 1623 First Folio's Epilogue, personifies it in *The Tempest*. Caliban's derogatory observation concerning Trinculo—"What a pied ninny's this! Thou scurvy patch!" (3.2.61)—indicates that the actor playing this part should wear the jester's traditional parti-colored motley, preferably with the coxcomb hood and bells.[14] The comic action pertinent to my topic involving purgation begins when Caliban mistakes the jester Trinculo for one of Prospero's spirits about to play a cruel joke on him for bringing in his burden of wood too slowly. Consequently, he falls flat on the stage in abject fear. The threat of a renewed tempest then drives terrified Trinculo to seek the only refuge for miles about—shelter beneath Caliban's large, odorous cloak. Trinculo's disappearance beneath Caliban's gabardine has the stage effect of placing a jesting spirit within Caliban. Once the two characters form a grotesque creature with four legs, Stefano, the drunken butler, enters and hears Caliban's frightened cry that the strange spirit beneath his garment torments him. So that he might preserve the freakish monster and show him for a dear price to the curious in Naples, Stefano gives the forward mouth of the bizarre creature—Caliban's—some wine to calm his fear.

Since he remains certain that his comrade must have drowned, Trinculo believes that he hears an island devil who has adopted Stefano's voice address Caliban; consequently, the lower part of the fantastic beast starts pleading for a miraculous rescue. Truly shaken, Stefano then marvels at this prodigy's double nature: "Four legs and two voices—a most delicate monster! His forward voice 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. [Caliban *drinks*] Amen. I will pour some in thy other mouth" (2.2.84–89). In this horseplay, playgoers see comically dramatized the jesting spirit's derogatory effect upon coherent conversation. At destructive cross-purposes with Caliban's "forward" voice, Trinculo's "backward" voice calls into question the authority of the former's statements. It is, after all, an anal voice, emitting "foul speech." With this farcical image, Shakespeare anatomizes the jesting spirit's

previous inner confusion of purpose in Antonio and Sebastian's derailing of Gonzalo's humane attempt to comfort King Alonso and his courtiers. As Stefano pours his wine over Caliban's bottom, Trinculo, drenched beneath the cloak, calls in earnest to his friend by name; as a result, Stefano becomes even more convinced that this mouth belongs to a demon. He then finds, however, that the backward voice issues from Trinculo. He roughly pulls the jester by his "lesser" legs down and out from under Caliban's cloak. Stefano comically—and appropriately—asks him in the process of doing so how he came to be the "siege"—the excrement—of such an odd creature (2.2.100). "Can he vent"—defecate—"Trinculos?" stunned Stefano asks (2.2.100). Stefano thus performs a comic purgation of a foul voice. This voice is not only Caliban's foul voice of cursing; it is also—as Trinculo's costume suggests—the occasionally foul voice of jesting, which at times has threatened good understanding in the serious action of *The Tempest*.

A qualification and an irony exist here that must be recognized. Jesting of course took many forms in Shakespeare's age, just as it does today. It included merry tales; ballads mocking obnoxious suitors; farce; often obscene jigs, such as those performed by Shakespeare's clown, Will Kempe; festive rituals such as Hocktide, Horn Fair, and the skimmington; commedia dell'arte *lazzi*; and so on.[15] Sebastian's and Antonio's biting puns are only one kind of jest. Castiglione and other courtesy handbook writers allowed courtiers to make such jests, but carefully. Antonio and Sebastian are notably upper-class courtiers. But Castiglione and others prohibited jests associated with base jesters. Castiglione argues that "to make men laugh alwaies is not comely for the Courtier, nor yet in such wise as frantike, dronken, foolish and fond men and in like manner common jeasters doe."[16] Trinculo is a "foolish … common jeaster." Technically speaking, one could say that Shakespeare has provided an indecorous agent for purging the jesting spirit associated with upper-class Antonio and Sebastian.

Actually, an odd connection involving monstrousness exists between Trinculo's occupation and Caliban, one that begs his dissociation from the jester. William Willeford has shown that a jester's physical deformity was often the source of laughter.[17] Four of the six fools that Robert Armin, Shakespeare's resident jester after 1599, describes in his *A Nest of Ninnies*

(1609) are deformed. Jack Oates's "more monstrous attributes included a huge underlip, a small beard, which sometimes got stuck in his mouth along with his drink owing to his pointed chin, a 'swarty' neck, and a big belly. His body was similarly distorted: a swollen knee, 'great, gowty' legs, huge hips 'On which his left hand still lay, and did halt, stooping back, a high shoulder, long hair before, but short behind."[18] Oates wore the traditional long coat made of coarse motley cloth that was the customary dress of fools who were simpletons.[19] When Armin, who was not deformed (he was an artificial fool), played the well-known natural fool Blue John in his own play *Two Maids of More-clacke* (pub. 1609), he did so by aping Blue John's "wry neck … lame foot, and … distorted hand."[20] A drawing of Armin, garbed in the long coat, shows him thus in the frontispiece to the quarto edition of his play. Armin similarly stresses the deformity of Lean Leonard:

> Long of neck and visage,
> Hookie nosde and thicke of beard,
> Sullen in his visage.
> Clutter fisted, long of arme,
> Bodied straight and slender'd,
> Boisterous hipt, motley warme,
> Euer went leane Leonard.
> Gouty leg'd, footed long.[21]

Armin portrays the jester of King James V of Scotland, his fat fool, the dwarf Jemy Camber, as "a yard high and a nayle, no more" and yet "[t]wo yards in compasse and a nayle":

> His head was small, his hayre long on the same:
> One eare was bigger then the other farre;
> His fore-head full, his eyes shinde like a flame,
> His nose flat, and his beard small, yet grew square;
> His lips but little, and his wit was lesse,
> But wide of mouth, few teeth, I must confesse.
> . . .
> His legs be square, a foot long and no more.[22]

The fools in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*—Nano, Androgyno, and Castrone—were, in Enid Welsford's words, acted so as to represent "peculiarly odious grotesques."[23] Even artificial fools possessed trademark defects. The flattened nose of Queen Elizabeth's jester, Richard Tarlton, was the "natural

deformity" that he exploited to make people laugh at him.[24] In Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592), the comic actor Toy played Will Sommers, King Henry VIII's fool, "stooping in the back," as contemporary accounts reported.[25]

Given Caliban's deformities—his fin-like arms and puppy-headedness (2.2.31–32, 146)—and his seeming simple-mindedness, Trinculo's exclamation, "That a monster should be such a natural" (3.2.30–31)—such a simpleton—is not surprising. Here one kind of fool, a court jester (an artificial fool), identifies a natural fool, in his opinion a gross inferior in both physical shape and social esteem. Tarlton was notably "savage on the personal defects and deformities of ladies as well as lords."[26] Caliban unintentionally reinforces the identity Trinculo foists upon him when he tells Trinculo and Stefano to "[p]ossess [Prospero's] books, for without them / He's but a sot as I am" (3.2.87–88). In early modern English usage, a *sot* was a "fool," specifically a kind of farcical entertainer.[27] Shakespeare's fools, such as Touchstone and Trinculo, possess neither mild nor extreme deformity. Yet Caliban is monstrously deformed, to the degree that both Stefano and Trinculo and Sebastian and Antonio laugh at him. Sir Philip Sidney speaks as a Renaissance aristocrat in claiming that laughter is the proper response to physical deformity. "We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight," Sidney pronounced in *An Apology for Poetry* (pub. 1595).[28] That Caliban's deformity might be a source of laughter (and profit) in Milan is confirmed by Antonio and Sebastian's laughter near the play's end over the sight of misshapen Caliban, who according to Prospero's brother is "a plain fish, and no doubt marketable" (5.1.269). Antonio has made a punning jest in his word *marketable*, which makes potentially real the threat that Trinculo voiced earlier about the "strange fish" Caliban. "Were I in England now, as once I was," Trinculo meditates, "and had but this fish painted [on a sign to attract spectators], not a holiday-fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man. Any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. Legged like a man, and his fins like arms!" (2.2.26–32). Despite his ethical social protest, a bit out of keeping for this character, Trinculo clearly would like to capitalize financially on Caliban's deformity, which he assumes will prompt ridiculous laughter. Like Trinculo himself,

Caliban would be an object of amusement and many demeaning jests. But in Milan, Trinculo would be the lead jester mocking Caliban. Ben Jonson, in *Everyman Out of His Humour*, had identified Carlo Buffone as "[a] public, scurrilous, and profane jester that, more swift than Circe, with absurd similes will transform any person into deformity."[29] In Caliban's case, that transformation physically occurred in Sycorax's womb, making the jester's "absurd similes" for his monstrosities easier to coin. Troubled that her disguise as Cesario has caused Olivia to fall in love with her, Viola in *Twelfth Night* calls herself a "monster" (2.2.32): a woman-man who has led Olivia to desire "him." But as the marvelously loving Antonio says later in this comedy, "In nature there's no blemish but the mind. / None can be called deformed but the unkind" (3.4.331–32). According to this Shakespearean definition, compassionate Viola will never be deformed, while those making callous jests about monstrous Caliban are the truly deformed.[30]

All this is to suggest a relationship between Trinculo and Caliban that ought to be dissolved. Caliban's separation from the jester Trinculo is even stronger in the comic subplot of act 3 than in its counterpart in act 2. Trinculo anticipates the later action of act 3, scene 2, when he tells Caliban and Stefano that they will "lie like dogs, and yet say nothing neither" (3.2.17–18).[31] Upon Caliban's dogmatic refusal to serve cowardly Trinculo, the jester says in drunken wrath that Caliban lies: "Wilt thou tell a monstrous lie, being but half a fish and half a monster?" (3.2.26–27). Sympathetic to Caliban's plea that he prevent Trinculo from mocking him, Stefano warns the jester to keep a good tongue in his head (3.2.33). Again, Caliban's immunity from foul speech becomes the dramatic issue of the comic scene. Appeased for the moment, Caliban then presents his brutal plan for seizing rule from Prospero. That plan is broken up several times by ventriloquism, which the invisible Ariel, prepared always to protect his master, practices upon Trinculo. Thus, when Caliban complains that he remains at the mercy of a sorcerer who has cheated him of the island's ownership, Trinculo seems to say, "Thou liest." Enraged, Caliban turns upon the unfortunate clown:

> Thou liest, thou jesting monkey, thou.
> I would my valiant master would destroy thee.
> I do not lie.
>
> (3.2.43–45)

Stefano's warning to Trinculo contains an unintentional pun upon *tale*/*tail*: "Trinculo, if you trouble him any more in's tale, by this hand, I will supplant some of your teeth" (3.2.46–47). Thus the recollection of the backward voice and the comic matter of the previous subplot is evoked. Shakespeare carefully formulates Caliban's accusation so that jesting amounts to a kind of false statement—here, specifically, lying.[32] Dumbfounded, Trinculo replies, "Why, I said nothing" (3.2.48). Playgoers have had the impression that in *The Tempest*, puns at times reflect the most minimal of meanings. The jester's "nonexistent" sayings underscore that impression in this episode. Twice more Ariel interrupts Caliban's tale with accusations of lying that seem to emanate from Trinculo. Finally driven beyond patience, Stefano beats Trinculo into submission, much to the delight of Caliban and the theater audience. As he moves resentfully to the other side of the stage to escape more abuse, Trinculo physically reveals how far removed Caliban now is from the jesting spirit—that is, from it in the form of the disruptive word.

That Ariel should play the role of a jester in distancing Caliban from the jester of *The Tempest* is decorous. Prospero's spirit leads the conspirators offstage by playing music associated with the merrymaking of jesters. A stage direction in the only early text of *The Tempest*, that of the 1623 Folio, indicates that "Ariell plaies [a] tune on a Tabor and Pipe."[33] Traditionally, the professional jester made his music by holding a drumstick in his left hand to beat a tabor, a small drum, slung from a strap over his shoulder while holding a tabor pipe in his right, upon which he whistled. A wash drawing shows Queen Elizabeth's jester, Richard Tarlton, doing so. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare indicates that Countess Olivia's jester, Feste, begins act 3 with these instruments, for Viola-Cesario greets him with these words: "Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou live by thy tabor?" (3.1.1–2). A note on Feste's entrance in *The Norton Shakespeare* reads: "The dialogue demands only a tabor, but jesters commonly played a pipe with one hand while tapping a tabor … with the other."[34] Shakespeare—or, more properly, Prospero—has a jester punish a jester.

In this case, a nobody decorously punishes a nobody. Appropriately, the music of a jester attracts Trinculo. It is Trinculo, rather than Stefano or Caliban, who says, "The sound is going away. Let's follow it, and after do our work." "Lead, monster; we'll follow," Stefano then says. "I would I

could see this taborer. He lays it on" (3.2.143–46). Aptly, given the separation just staged, it is Caliban who holds back from following the jester's music: "Wilt come?" Trinculo asks him, before saying, "I'll follow Stefano" (3.2.147). Concerning Ariel's music, Trinculo has said, "This is the tune of our catch, played by the picture of Nobody" (3.2.121–22). Concerning Trinculo's utterance, Stephen Orgel has noted that "an anonymous comedy called *No-body and Some-body* (c. 1606) [had] a picture of a man with head and limbs but no body on the title page; the play's publisher, John Trundle, also used 'the sign of No-body' as his shop sign."[35] Again, it is apt that Trinculo should have this speech, for what the jester has said ironically devalues his occupation. He suggests, figuratively and unknowingly, a contemporary attitude toward jesters—that although they might wear a king's or nobleman's livery, considered fools or naturals, they were nobody, classed nowhere, not even with artisans.[36] Henry VIII's fool, Will Sommers, after all, lay down and slept with the spaniels.

To what degree does the notion of purging jesting in *The Tempest* apply to the play's creator—the jesting playwright Shakespeare? In Sonnet 110, Shakespeare lamented his occupation of play-acting:

> Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there
> And made myself a motley to the view,
> Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
> Made old offences of affections new.
>
> (110.1–4)

Concerning these verses, Stephen Greenblatt has judged that "[t]his is the voice of someone who worked in the entertainment business and knew the contempt heaped upon it. To make oneself 'a motley to the view' is to become a clown, a huckster, a throwaway figure of cheap, meaningless amusement."[37] Actually, it is to become a jester, a wearer of motley—the parti-colored coat of Archy Armstrong, King James's jester, and of Trinculo. William Willeford has noted that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European jesters often created laughter through comic dialogue with their own fool's head, affixed to the end of their bauble. Uproariously suggestive of self-division, jesters cast their own voice from the fool's head through ventriloquism.[38] Shakespeare plays a comic variation on this idea in the present scene, showing one jester punishing another—a self of the jester punishing its simulacrum.

This punishment reinforces the purgation of the comic scene of act 2. Shakespeare as Trinculo, both "a motley to the view." Shakespeare expelled from Caliban.[39] Shakespeare purging himself of his own facetious voice, of his own fatal Cleopatra, the punning jest that Samuel Johnson said he compulsively could not resist when dramatic decorum argued otherwise, with loss of a world of good opinion. *Love's Labour's Lost* suggests that these assertions are not as outrageous as they may appear. Shakespeare may have invested much of himself in his character Biron. I have noted that Rosaline urges Biron to purge himself of his jesting humour, which has been the source of his attractiveness for playgoers as well as the razor that has cut his jests' subjects. "A jest's prosperity lies in the ear / Of him that hears it, never in the tongue / Of him that makes it" (5.2.838–40), Rosaline pronounces. Shakespeare appears to have wrestled with this uncomfortable truth until *The Tempest*, and likely beyond its composition. Had Antonio and Sebastian understood it, they would have remained silent.

Finally, in act 4, Caliban's dissociation from the jester is as—if not more—pronounced than in act 3. In fact, the separation occurs specifically in terms of a homonymic pun Trinculo makes that Caliban finds inappropriate, a jest whose consequence in *The Tempest* is precisely the effect in some courts that Castiglione lamented. Prospero plans to distract Stefano, Trinculo, and Caliban, approaching his rocky cave, from their plot to kill him by enticing them with "trumpery," clothing taken by Ariel from his cell and hung on a lime tree near it (4.1.186–87, 193). Seeing the gaudy apparel, Trinculo exclaims, "O King Stefano, O peer! O worthy Stefano, look what a wardrobe here is for thee" (4.1.220–21). Caliban tells him it is "trash" he should refrain from picking (4.1.222). Stefano and Trinculo then begin arguing, to Caliban's dismay and disgust, over possession of a gown that the jester has quickly donned. Caliban again vigorously protests, and Stefano tells him to be quiet, launching into a complex homonymic pun that Trinculo completes:

> *Stefano:* Be you quiet, monster—Mistress line, is not this my jerkin? Now is the jerkin under the line. Now jerkin, you are like to lose your hair and prove a bald jerkin. [Stefano *and* Trinculo *take garments*]
>
> *Trinculo:* Do, do! We steal by line and level, an't like your grace.
>
> *Stefano:* I thank thee for that jest. Here's a garment for't. Wit shall not go unrewarded while I am king of this country. "Steal by line and level" is an excellent pass of pate. There's another garment for't. (4.1.233–41)

Puns pile up in this exchange. Lime trees were also called "line trees" in Shakespeare's age. A jerkin was an early modern English leather jacket. This jacket is under the line tree as well as south of the line (the equator); it is also "jerkin" (the repeated thrusting of sexual intercourse) under the line (a woman's waist). Such jerking could result in syphilis, one of the advanced symptoms of which is baldness. Baldness also occurred under the line, the equator, from either a tropical disease such as scurvy or from the custom of sailors shaving passengers' heads to commemorate the first time they crossed into the southern hemisphere. Not surprisingly, Trinculo approves of this obscene jest: "Do, do! We steal by line and level, an't like your grace." David Bevington glosses Trinculo's pun in this way: "steal by means of plumb line and carpenter's level, methodically. (With pun on *line*, 'lime tree' … and *steal*, pronounced like *stale*, i.e., prostitute, continuing Stefano's bawdy quibble)."[40] Stefano and Trinculo's mutual approval of these puns suggests that Shakespeare likely wanted playgoers to think the jests rather foolish, indeed lame. That he should create this impression agrees with the fact that this wit distracts the butler and jester from their plot and gives time for Prospero to create his magical hounds and set them ferociously upon the trio. Trinculo's joke represents the kind of homonymic pun that Antonio and Sebastian contrived, and his utterance of it associates the common jester with the courtiers in Alonso's party. In the process, the agency of Shakespeare's analogous comic action is justified; the separation of a comic spirit associated with the higher classes from Caliban occurs in the person of a court jester. Shakespeare, once more, makes Caliban's distance from these jests explicit. "I will have none on't," he replies to Stefano's command to take down the remaining clothes hung on the linden. "We shall lose our time," Caliban snarls, "And all be turned to barnacles, or to apes / With foreheads villainous low" (4.1.244–46). Satirized here is the practice that Castiglione and other handbook writers criticize, that of rulers crassly preferring unctuous courtiers for jests calculated to win the jokers material rewards. Ironically, Castiglione might have agreed with Caliban's righteous rejection of the gaudy material rewards that certain jests bring on Prospero's isle.

That Caliban has the ability to seek the grace that his master offers him in act 5 is partly because of the purgation described in this essay. During the catharsis of the jesting spirit, Trinculo assumes the dramatic role of a

Malvolio or Paroles—the Shakespearean comic butt in contrast to whom other characters define their virtues. Excused from such a part, Caliban expresses the abiding ingredients of his human, rather than animal, nature, which is ultimately realized in his knowledge of the thrice-double ass he has been to worship Stefano and Trinculo and in his humble determination always to sue in the future for Prospero's grace.[41] While bloodthirsty desires for political power and revenge appear bestial in Caliban, they also surface just as savagely in those whose natures have been nurtured. Caliban's capacity for speech and learning (1.2.335–41, 356–61); for dream, imaginative vision, and the appreciation of kinds of music (even refined music) (3.2.130–38); for analogical reason (3.2.93–98); and for service all mark him a man.[42] Whether Prospero will strengthen these human capacities by resuming his education of Caliban when they both reach Italy—if indeed he plans to take Caliban with him—is a question for which Shakespeare provides no answer. Nevertheless, the dramatist, by means of the sophisticated comic subplot of *The Tempest*, does make playgoers feel that Caliban is free of one dangerous form of speech—disruptive homonymic jests.[43]

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Notes

[1] *The Tempest*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2008), 2.1.6–8; subsequent quotations from *The Tempest* and other works of Shakespeare are from this edition, hereafter cited in the text.

[2] Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 165, 167.

[3] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (1561; London: Dent, 1928), 134.

[4] Castiglione, 148–49. See also John S. White, *Renaissance Cavalier* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 46. Castiglione's characters in Urbino usually tolerate "only a particularly mild and sublimated form of joking," according to Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Courtly Performances: Masking and Festivity in Castiglione's "Book of the Courtier"* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 141.

[5] J. R. Woodhouse, *Baldesar Castiglione: A Reassessment of the Courtier* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), 102; Stefano Guazzo, *The "Civile Conversation" of M. Steeven Guazzo*, trans. George Pettie and Bartholomew Young, 2 vols. (1581, 1586; London: Constable, 1925), 1:159.

[6] Chris Holcomb, *Mirth Making: The Rhetorical Discourse on Jesting in Early Modern England* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 84.

[7] Guazzo, 1:161.

[8] Castiglione, 134, 138.

[9] Ibid., 148.

[10] *Dolour* and *dollar* were pronounced similarly in Renaissance London according to Fausto Cercignani, *Shakespeare's Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 189, 262.

[11] See *OED*, definition 18a, in which it is noted that this special usage of *sort* was popular from ca. 1530 to 1600.

[12] Stanton B. Garner, in "*The Tempest*: Language and Society," *Shakespeare Survey* 32 (1979): 177–87, notes that Antonio and Sebastian "play with non-referential language, severing words from a concern for truth" (179) and that the banality of some of the puns in act 2, scene 1, reveals that the trivialized language used isolates a speaker (179–80). For another account of linguistic dislocation in this scene, see A. Lynne Magnusson, "Interruption in *The Tempest*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 (1986): 52–65, esp. 53–54.

[13] David Bevington, annotation to William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman), 671.

[14] That Trinculo wears the jester's traditional tight-fitting coat is confirmed by Caliban's calling him a "patch," for the parti-colored quality of the coat came from patches of variously colored cloth sewn together. For a contemporary image of the court jester, see illustration 2, titled "Wee Three Loggerheads," in Keir Elam's edition of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ser. (London: Cengage, 2008), 12, which depicts King James's jester Archy Armstrong wearing the patched, parti-colored coat and hood with bells, with a rising long cock's neck and head on its top. Armstrong also holds the jester's bauble, whose end includes his own carved face. In this drawing, Armstrong stands smiling next to Tom Derry, James's natural fool, who smiles and points to him. By looking directly at the viewer, Armstrong gives the drawing its comic import by causing him or her to conclude that he or she is the third fool. Armstrong was notorious for his verbal jests. He made an enemy, fatal to his career, of diminutive Archbishop William Laud; during Charles I's reign, Armstrong once said this grace before a meal at which Laud was present: "Great praise be given to God, and little laud to the devil."

[15] Pamela Allen Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 44.

[16] Castiglione, 138.

[17] William Willeford, *The Fool and His Scepter: A Study of Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 14.

[18] Charles S. Felver, *Robert Armin, Shakespeare's Fool: A Biographical Essay*, Research Series 5 (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Bulletin, 1961), 33.

[19] For an account of the early modern fool's skirted, ankle-length long coat, woven of motley—of coarse green and yellow threads—see Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare's Motley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 6–12. Often a muckerend, a large handkerchief, was tucked into the long coat's cloth belt. Presumably, it was used to wipe the fool's spittle and mouth. Since natural fools—simpletons—regularly stained their clothing during eating, the inexpensive fool's long coat served a purpose (ibid., 38).

[20] Felver, 18.

[21] Robert Armin, *Fools and Jesters: With a Reprint of Robert Armin's "A Nest of Ninnies"* (1609; London: Shakespeare Society, 1842), 27.

[22] Ibid., 16. Enid Welsford, in *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (New York: Ferrar and Rinehart, 1935), 179–80, notes that Queen Henrietta Maria's dwarf fool, Jeffrey Hudson, was so small that William Evans, King Charles I's giant porter, could carry him in a specially made pocket.

[23] Welsford, 244.

[24] Willeford, 54.

[25] Hotson, 80.

[26] John Doran, *The History of Court Fools* (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 176. Tarlton, for example, on one occasion told a lady that her "eruption on the face" made "all [her] body fare the worse for it" (ibid.).

[27] See Donald Perret, "The Sottie, the Sots, and the Fools," in *Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. Vicki K. Janik (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1998), 411–18; and Sandra Billington, *A Social History of the Fool* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), 30. Billington notes that the first edition of Armin's *A Nest of Ninnies* was titled *Foole upon Foole or Six Sortes of Sots*. In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century France, sots appearing with bells and baubles in patched motley with coxcombs and asses' ears on hoods capered in the sottie, or fool's play.

[28] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965), 136.

[29] Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, ed. Helen Ostovich, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 103–4.

[30] In this respect, Sir Thomas More in *Utopia* shows himself more Shakespearean than Sidneyan. Raphael Hythloday explains that in Utopia, "[t]o mock a person for being deformed or crippled is considered disgraceful, not to the victim, but to the mocker, who stupidly reproaches the cripple for something he cannot help" (Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Adams [New York: Norton, 1975], 63).

[31] At the beginning of this scene, Stefano and Trinculo make several puns—upon *set*, *standard*, and *lie* itself—thus underscoring Trinculo's role as jester. Consult the glosses on these puns in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3093–94.

[32] There is a connection here between lying and excreting that recalls the fecal overtones of Trinculo's venting. *The Norton Shakespeare* indicates a pun on *excrete* as well as *lie (down)* in Trinculo's remark that Caliban will "lie like dogs, and yet say nothing neither" (3094).

[33] William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies: A Facsimile Edition Prepared by Helge Kökeritz* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1954), 12.

[34] *Norton Shakespeare*, 1818.

[35] *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 162.

[36] Willeford, 213–14, 217.

[37] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 97.

[38] Willeford, 33.

[39] David Wiles, in *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 155–56, has argued that Robert Armin played Caliban, to the foil of Trinculo, the character type he had made popular as Touchstone in *As You Like It* and Feste

in *Twelfth Night*. Were this true, Shakespeare would be showing the purgation of his company's jester from himself! I think Wiles's suggestion is unlikely, for Armin had become strongly associated with the role of artificial jester rather than that of natural fool. One assumes Armin would have objected to the dynamics of Shakespeare's comic staging.

[40] Bevington, *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 1598.

[41] In regard to the comic purgation of act 2, R. A. Foakes, in *Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays: From Satire to Celebration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1971), 152, notes that "[t]he re-appearance of Trinculo, pulled forth by Stefano, serves to emphasize how much less of a 'monster' Caliban himself is."

[42] Maurice Hunt, *Shakespeare's Romance of the Word* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 126–27. Also see G. Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life*: *Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays* (1947; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 235–40.

[43] Parts of this essay originally appeared in Hunt, 112–14, 117–19.