The Island of Prospero

Theodore Hall

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The Island of Prospero

In Memory, Dr. Donald A. Dike

1

Prospero’s island is nothing like
The island of the travel poster
Where the Woalakka dancers
Dance away
The twentieth century discontents
Of the smiling couple
From Hackensack.
Those hoping for a “change of pace,”
A week’s escape
From the routine nightmare
Of their days
Or the cul-de-sac
Of loveless nights,
Need not inquire.

2

The man of the hour
Wears always a tragic mien.
Reality’s a sea,
Most of which is unseen.
By the time we find
Our bearings,
Vis-à-vis the Truth
We have lost the steering.

What is gained
By our disasters?
Others know better
How to fail.

Prospero’s island is beyond
The heartrending insight
And the tragic wail.
Here, rightful rule
Rules, commands
The depths, stands
Between the incubus
And the virgin’s dream.
Rule comes into its rightfulness
Through the mind in solitude
Learning what must be
Understood—
That evil’s sway is stupor
And that man’s dominion’s good.
What is gathered
Gathers strength,
Frees the spirit from the wood,
Brings the brute
Into subservience,
Orders the order of nature.
Let the lovers unite
Patience with passion
So they are fit
To keep the treasures of the heart
The measure and means
Of power. Let
Their union mend
Old injury,
And from the just reign
Of their marriage spring,
May the summer realm ascend.

All this is no more than wish?
What marriage—of man
And woman, of real and ideal—
Does not begin with wish?
Prospero and his island may be
“Magical” to mere eyes.
For them, the Bard
Descends,
Requiring in the end
Not magic
To guarantee the safe return
Of Prospero to the world,
But a very human cause—
Applause, applause!

—Theodore Hall