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The Island of Prospero

Theodore Hall

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The Island of Prospero

In Memory, Dr. Donald A. Dike

1



Photo by Stanley Jesudowich

Theodore Hall is a graduate of Syracuse University, where he holds an M.A. in creative writing (1969) and a Ph.D. in English literature (1976). He has taught at Muskingum College and now directs Creative Associates Productions, a company of songwriters. He lives in Westport, Connecticut.

Prospero's island is nothing like
 The island of the travel poster
 Where the Woyalakka 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.

3

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.

4

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