In 2007, when I interviewed Libby Appel, the retiring Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Director for that season’s Tempest, she confided that she found the act 4 masque “impenetrable and boring” (Vaughan 2007); indeed, to her mind, the masque seemed simply unplayable in the twenty-first century. Judging from recent Tempest productions in Britain and the United States during the last two decades, many directors share her viewpoint. In its 2008 Tempest, for example, Boston’s Actors’ Shakespeare Project made the masque into a comic farce. Underneath a rainbow banner the male actors playing Antonio, Trinculo, and Adrian (Richard Snee, John Kuntz, and Daniel Berger-Jones) appeared on the upper stage dressed in drag, each in a colorful but frumpy dress and sporting a clown’s red nose. On the stage below, Alvin Epstein’s Prospero mouthed Iris, Ceres, and Juno’s lines from behind a curtain, while the actors above spoke the words in an exaggerated sing-song – stage business that was clearly intended to remind the audience of the Wizard’s behind-the-scenes manipulations in The Wizard of Oz. Instead of the text’s dance of nymphs and reapers, the men’s drag routine gave way to an athletic sword dance performed on the lower stage. Although Shakespeare’s words were indeed spoken in Patrick Swanson’s ASP production, their import was entirely lost in a calculated effort to make the audience laugh.

Directors often substitute visual images for all or some of the text. In 2000 James MacDonald’s production for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford’s Swan Theatre set Iris before a light-induced rainbow, Ceres in front of huge video projections of sheaves of wheat, and Juno astride visually constructed peacock feathers. Aaron Posner’s 2007 Tempest at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre featured a circular screen on the upper stage, from which Ariel’s face and voice emanated, with the audience seeing only Ariel’s projected image and the actor never interacting face to face with the other characters. In the masque, ocean waves were projected from the circle and Ariel was heard singing, her face superimposed over the waves. Sam Mendes’ Bridge Tempest of 2010 combined shortened versions of the goddesses’ lines with home movies of Ferdinand and Miranda as little children.

projected onto the theatre’s back wall, followed by a line dance around the stage’s white circular platform.

Directors who approach The Tempest from a postcolonial perspective are more likely to abandon the text entirely, or at most keep Juno’s and Ceres’ song that promises Ferdinand and Miranda “Honour, riches, marriage-blessing” (4.1.106–17). George C. Wolfe’s 1995 production for Joseph Papp’s New York Shakespeare Festival employed three Brazilian stiltwalkers in the goddesses’ roles. Margaret Loftus Ranald describes what followed:

The orchestra engaged in hypnotic drumming, the singing turned into a quasi-Indian chant, and the stage filled with dancers manipulating puppets. The mood escalated into a total communal dance, with even Prospero abandoning his high seriousness to boogie with the rest [...] until a scream of shocking suddenness – an intrusion of masked creatures violated the celebratory moment, returning the forgetful and newly enraged Prospero to the realities of conspiracy. (11)

In this production Wolfe initiated the now-common practice of substituting communal ‘native’ dances for Shakespeare’s text.

Ron Daniels’ Tempest, produced in the same year for the American Repertory Theatre, is a case in point. The set designer, John Conklin, explained the staging of the masque in an A.R.T. newsletter; they decided to make it a Brazilian carnival “because we think that it will have meaning for today’s audience. [...] These popular celebrations are more familiar than the masques of the seventeenth century.” Instead of Iris, Ceres, and Juno, the masque was recast with characters named America, Africa and Europe, “the three major continents (and races) of the world” (ibid.). When these new goddesses appeared from under giant colorful parasols, they encouraged the audience to join in rhythmic clapping. Instead of Shakespeare’s text, each goddess led the audience in a chant: Africa chanted for Ormulú, god of infinite knowledge and wisdom; America sang “Shaking the Pumpkin,” with choruses that suggested Native American themes, such as “herezsometobaccozhere” and “hereszomekettlezhere” (ibid.); finally, Europe sang a traditional madrigal, “Many Colored Messenger,” that echoed Ceres’ song. The program provided the audience with refrains so that they could sing along. Daniels noted in the program that unlike Shakespeare’s mythological figures, Africa, America, and Europe “will more adequately represent the world in which we live, where the union of several cultures has transformed the identities of many people. Thus the new masque for this production will symbolize La Raza Cosmica (The Cosmic or Fifth Race)” (1995).

Kate Whoriskey’s 2005 Tempest for Washington’s Shakespeare Theatre extended Daniels’ international theme even further. Iris, Ceres, and Juno descended to the stage, their introductory lines cut, and burst into the song of honor, riches, and marriage blessing, only this time the lyrics were in Arabic
and Swahili, ostensibly in reference to Caliban (who was portrayed as a displaced Palestinian) and Ariel (played by an African American actor in dreadlocks, suspended from the flies in harness). The dance that followed was even more eclectic, with Thai, Arabic, and African dancers illuminated by spinning wheels of light. In the midst of the hubbub, Caliban entered and grabbed Miranda, but it was not clear whether this was to be taken as really happening or as a reflection of Prospero’s sudden remembrance of the threat posed by Caliban.

Rupert Goold’s 2006 *Tempest* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, set in an Arctic wasteland, abandoned the masque’s text for a native purification ritual. Three women, dressed in Inuit costumes and ululating in quasi-native style, grabbed Miranda and Ferdinand, blindfolded them, plunged their heads in a bucket of cold water, dabbed their faces with soot, and gave them candles to hold while rhythmic drumming sounded in the background. The Inuit women ended the ritual by biting Miranda and Ferdinand in the neck and removing the blindfolds. Then, in what seemed a cultural non sequitur, they sang “Honour, riches, marriage blessing” (4.1.106) in a European madrigal style. After this frenetic initiation rite, Ariel brought in the court party and everyone ran madly around the stage.

Janice Honeyman’s production, which originated in the Baxter Theatre in Capetown and moved to Stratford and London in 2009, set *The Tempest* in Africa’s bush country. Antony Sher’s Prospero made one think of Stanley and Livingston, while Tinarie Van Wyk Loots’s Miranda was more like Tarzan’s Jane. The masque scene began when Prospero called the “spirits” (4.1.58), friendly natives dressed in tribal body paint and colorful raffia, to a dance. One spirit brought Ferdinand and Miranda an animal skin, a second a gourd, and a third a broom. The spirits exited, then returned with colorful marionettes, singing an African song as they came. Puppets on stilts helped stir up a carnival atmosphere. When Caliban entered to the spirits’ loud exclamations, Prospero angrily ended the fun. Other recent productions have resorted to musical interludes. Garland Wright’s production for Washington’s Shakespeare Theatre in 1997, for example, was set in an eighteenth-century philosopher’s library. The masque was performed by puppets who joined in a Mozartian rendition of “Honour riches, marriage-blessing,” sung rapturously to Ferdinand and Miranda. The goddesses’ ornate and colorful costumes suggested an entertainment at the court of James I. In contrast, the Globe’s three-man production of 2005 presented the spirits as three dancers clad in jeans and leather jackets. To music provided by a musical consort from the upper stage, six singers in classical togas and plastic wigs sang a madrigal while the three spirits danced a ballet. In the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s 2007 production, Libby Appel also abandoned Shakespeare’s text for a musical interlude. During our conversation, she told
me that she saw the masque as Prospero’s wedding present – he wants to give Miranda and Ferdinand a piece of his art – and because Appel believed there was a strong connection between Prospero the magician and Shakespeare the dramatist, she selected a sample of Shakespeare’s own art as a substitute for the masque’s text: sonnet 116. The choice seemed appropriate because that sonnet begins with a reference to marriage and celebrates a lasting love relationship. The spirits in this production, clad in simple tan outfits spotted with blue cloud-patterned shapes, appeared on the upper stage, three standing and two hanging from ropes. Stars shone from the sky behind them, while below the spotlight highlighted Ferdinand and Miranda who looked up in amazement. The performance concluded, once again, with “[h]onour, riches, marriage blessing” (4.1.106) set to music. Given the frequency with which *The Tempest* is performed in theatres across the globe, there are surely many other ways the masque has been performed. This sampling does make it clear, however, that few contemporary directors are willing to stage the masque as it is scripted in the First Folio. In what follows this essay will try to explain why this is the case and suggest some criteria by which we can judge whether or not a particular director’s decision on this matter is appropriate.

**The first Folio masque**

To determine just why so many directors find the masque unacceptable for contemporary productions requires a careful examination of the masque itself as it appears in Shakespeare’s text. At 4.1.39–41 Prospero tells Ariel, “I must / Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple / Some vanity of mine art,” a statement that supports Appel’s contention that the masque is Prospero’s wedding present (an idea Julie Taymor also suggested in a separate interview). That the masque will be “[be]stow[ed]” upon the “eyes” also indicates the importance Shakespeare placed upon its visual impact.

After Ariel’s exit, Prospero turns to his future son-in-law to warn him against succumbing to sexual desire before his wedding to Miranda, and only after Ferdinand’s fervent assertion that “The white cold virgin snow upon my heart / Abates the ardour of my liver” (4.1.55–6) does the masque begin. Today’s audiences, unaware that the liver was considered the seat of sexual desire in early modern humoral discourse, generally laugh awkwardly at Ferdinand’s response, but to Prospero it is no laughing matter. The integrity of Miranda’s marriage and the legitimacy of her offspring are crucial to his dynastic project. (*The Tempest* was written at the same time as other Jacobean dramas set in Renaissance Italy, many of them tragi-comedies like John Marston’s *Malcontent* or tragedies like Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, that featured deposed Dukes caught in a labyrinth of court intrigue.
and figured political corruption through illicit sexual liaisons.) Prospero’s insistence on his daughter’s chastity reflects his concern not just for her but for the future of Milan and Naples and his hope that Ferdinand and Miranda’s joint reign will be a model of good government. Thus it is hardly surprising that Ceres inquires of Iris whether or not Venus and Cupid are attendant on Juno, who – according to the Folio stage direction – is descending from aloft even as they speak. Iris assures her that Venus, the goddess associated with sexual passion, and her irrational (blind) son Cupid are not present. Although the masque will celebrate fertility and procreation, it will eschew illicit desire.

The masque proper that runs from lines 4.1.60 to 138 is, as Stephen Orgel so aptly describes it, a dramatic allusion to the Jacobean court masque, a highly stylized entertainment reserved for celebratory occasions at James I’s court that was also intended to underscore the monarch’s power and virtue. Ben Jonson, the most prominent author of Jacobean court masques, established the basic pattern. In the first part of the pageant, forces threatening to the monarchy were incarnated as wild men, Moors, Indians, or other symbols of disorder; eventually these anti-masque figures were dispersed, often yielding to heavenly figures – gods and goddesses – who represented royal virtue and its ability to dispel disorder and darkness. In The Tempest Shakespeare reverses this disorder/order pattern. He begins the masque with the three goddesses – Iris, Ceres, and Juno – who bestow blessings on the newly betrothed couple and celebrate their future prosperity. Then the dramatist suddenly disrupts the goddesses’ harmonious vision with Prospero’s angry outburst, spurred by his remembrance of Caliban’s conspiracy and its possible consequences: regicide (Prospero’s murder) and sexual impurity (Stephano’s plans for Miranda). In this moment, contends Gary Schmidgall, “the forces of evil subvert the wedding masque’s majestic vision” (150). The conspirators’ entrance, their dressing themselves in borrowed robes snatched off of Prospero’s line, not to mention the spirit/dogs that chase Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo offstage at line 4.1.257, comprise, in effect, the anti-masque.

Shakespeare begins his version of the court masque with a stage direction for “soft music” (4.1.58), followed by Iris’ entrance. In classical mythology Iris was Juno’s messenger, her presence signified by the rainbow. According to Vincenzo Cartari’s The Fountaine of Ancient Fiction, a compendium of classical lore that was translated into English and published in 1599, she was the daughter of Thaumante, which signifieth admiration, insomuch as the strange variety of the colours thereof, possesseth the beholders minds, with a continuing wonder and admiring continuation. And shee is appareled in loose

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2 See Stephen Orgel (43–50) for an astute discussion of the masque scene and its relationship to Ben Jonson’s court masques.
vestures for the more nimbleness and dispatch of the goddesses affaires and negotiations. (sig. Liiv–Liiir)

Clad in the rainbow’s bright colors, Iris was thought to signal the promise of sunshine after rain, and her appearance to evoke wonder in the beholders’ minds. Her inclusion in the masque suggests that just as Prospero intended the masque to impress Ferdinand and Miranda with its harmonious vision, Shakespeare intended it to awe his audience with visual splendor.

Iris is soon joined by Ceres, ancient goddess of the harvest and maternal fertility. Iris’ and Ceres’ opening conversation alludes to the familiar myth of Proserpina, Ceres’ daughter. Abducted by Pluto (Dis) and carried to the underworld, Proserpina seemed lost forever, but Ceres persuaded Juno to allow her to return on the condition that she had not eaten anything while in the underworld. Alas, Proserpina had consumed seven pomegranate seeds, and in a Solomonic judgment, Juno and Pluto split the difference: Proserpine could spend six months each year above the Earth, but remained confined to the underworld the other six months. This mythological explanation for the change of seasons is elided in Shakespeare’s text, when Ceres offers Miranda and Ferdinand a world without winter’s barrenness: “Spring come to you at the farthest, / In the very end of harvest” (4.1.114–15).

Juno, too, sings her blessings on the young couple. Most in Shakespeare’s audience would have known that Juno, Jove’s wife and sister, was the goddess of marriage and childbirth. Cartari explains the way her visual image conveys the connection between marriage and fecundity:

Some have depictured the Statue of Iuno in Matrones habite, holding in one hand the head of the flower Poppie, and at her feet lying a yoke as it were, or a paire of fetters: by these was meant the marriage knot and linke which coupleth the man and wife together; and by the Poppie the innumerable issue of children, which in the world are conceaued & brought forth, alluded to in the numberless plenty of seed contained in the head of that flower. (sig. Miir)

As she does in Shakespeare’s masque, Juno frequently appears with (or perhaps, on) a peacock, whose many-colored feathers, according to Cartari, “enticeth the beholders’ eyes more and more to view, & to gaze upon them” (sig. Liiv–Liiir). He also explains that “shee is also oftentimes pictured with a scepter in her hand, to shew that shee hath the bestowing of governments, authorities, & kingdoms” (sig. Liiv). Juno’s stunning entrance accompanied by colorful peacocks in 4.1.73 was no doubt intended by Shakespeare to entice “the beholders’ eyes,” while her status as a powerful female monarch perhaps embodied Prospero’s hopes for his daughter as queen of a united Milan and Naples.

The lines Iris, Ceres, and Juno speak (4.1.60–105) are formal and difficult to understand, their meaning dependent upon the audience’s familiarity with the myths they represent. The tribute to Ferdinand and Miranda culminates
at line 106, when Juno and Iris join in the song, “Honour, riches, marriage-blessing [...] Scarcity and want shall shun you, Ceres’ blessing so is on you” (4.1.106–117). After the song, Ferdinand and Prospero briefly converse, the young man clearly impressed with the majestic vision Prospero has provided. The stage direction then reads, “Juno and Ceres whisper, and send Iris on employment” (4.1.124). Her job, as she explains it in lines 128–38, is to introduce a troupe of “nymphs” (4.1.128) and “sunburned sicklemen” (4.1.134) who join in a graceful dance. Toward the dance’s finale, “Prospero starts suddenly and speaks; after which, to a strange hollow and confused noise, they heavily vanish” (4.1.138 SD). Prospero’s majestic vision, his aspirations for his daughter’s future as a prosperous and powerful European monarch, cannot withstand the reality of Caliban – not to mention all that he represents to Prospero.

The goddesses’ conversation, song, and the ensuing dance of nymphs and reapers may at first seem like a light-hearted interruption in the play’s major plot lines, but it serves, as Orgel observes, to re-enact central concerns of the play as a whole. It invokes a myth in which the crucial act of destruction is the rape of a daughter; it finds in the preservation of virginity the promise of civilization and fecundity, and it presents as its patroness of marriage not Hymen but Juno, the goddess who symbolizes royal power as well. (49)

As the play’s most celebratory example of Prospero’s art, the masque illustrates the magician’s strange power to create a golden world that fills the “beholder’s eyes” with wonder, a world without sickness, decay, or winter’s chill. At the same time, it embodies the dangers posed by that vision. Prospero first lost his Dukedom by devoting himself to his books and to the arcane powers they offered, thrusting his worldly duties on his ambitious brother Antonio. Losing himself in the pleasure of sharing his creation with Ferdinand and Miranda, Prospero nearly repeats the mistake that cost him Milan twelve years earlier.

Prospero’s angry start and interruption of the illusion he has created indicates what early modern writers would call a sudden ‘perturbation of the mind.’ However one views Prospero, the creation of the masque and its interruption are not only crucial to the play in general, but also to his development as a character – its sudden disruption may explain why he decides to relinquish his magic in the drama’s final moments. Prospero’s anger in 4.1.139 is directed at himself as much as at Caliban. Once again he has succumbed to the seductive appeal of his own creation, and in the process forgotten his royal responsibility to be vigilant. If he intends to return to Milan as Duke, especially since Antonio cannot be trusted, Prospero cannot afford such distractions. To be an effective ruler, he must abandon his art. This moment can also be understood from a postcolonial perspective; Francis
Barker and Peter Hulme argue that Prospero’s excessive reaction to the masque

represents his disquiet at the irruption into consciousness of an unconscious anxiety concerning the grounding of his legitimacy, both as producer of his play and, a fortiori, as governor of the island [...] [H]is difficulties in staging his play are themselves ‘staged’ by the play that we are watching, the moment presenting for the first time the possibility of distinguishing between Prospero’s play and The Tempest itself. (202-3)

Regardless of one’s critical stance, Orgel’s claim that the masque “functions in the structure of the drama not as a separable interlude but as an integral part of the action” (44) is surely correct. So why do so few productions take it seriously?

**The masque in the twenty-first century**

As much as we like to consider Shakespeare ‘for all time,’ much has changed in the four centuries since The Tempest was first performed. Shakespeare could count on the more aristocratic members of his audience being familiar with the lavish entertainments Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones mounted at James I’s court. Shakespeare’s allusions to this elite and highly stylized dramatic form are opaque to contemporary audiences because court masques are never performed today and are seldom studied except by scholars of early modern England. To be sure, the well-informed director can provide copious program notes, but historical explanations tend to make the masque seem more like a museum piece than a vibrant dramatic form.

In shaping Iris, Ceres, and Juno’s dialogue, Shakespeare no doubt wanted to use elevated language befitting their status, but the result is sometimes impenetrable. Obscure agricultural references to “flat meads thatched with stover” (4.1.63), “bosky acres” and “unshrubbed down” (4.1.81) make little sense to a contemporary urban audience. The rhymes are often stilted, as in Iris’ explanation that the goddesses join “A contract of true love to celebrate, / And some donation freely to estate / On the blessed lovers” (4.1.84–6). Who uses “estate” as a verb? The masque’s clearest language comes in the song Juno and Ceres sing in lines 4.1.106–117. Their promise to the young couple of “Honour, riches, marriage-blessing / Long continuance and increasing [...]” (4.1.106–7ff.) is much more accessible than the dialogue that precedes it, so it is not surprising that even if directors dump the rest of the masque and modernize the music, they keep these lyrics. Without the goddesses’ preliminary conversation, the complex themes discussed above are discarded; what remains is simply a wedding toast.

The goddesses, as we have seen, are also a problem. Many in Shakespeare’s audience had some familiarity with classical mythology because, if
nothing else, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was commonly used to teach schoolboys their Latin, but few schoolchildren in the twenty-first century receive any grounding in mythological material. The director once again has to rely on program notes to identify Iris, Ceres, and Juno, why Iris is wearing that multi-colored outfit, why Juno comes in on a peacock, and why Ceres keeps talking about agriculture. No wonder so many directors switch Shakespeare’s goddesses for native spirits, however ill-defined they may be.

Another difficulty with the masque is changing attitudes toward Prospero. Postcolonial productions that underscore the injustice of Caliban’s slavery and Ariel’s servitude make him the villain of the piece. Whatever substitutes for Shakespeare’s masque generally switches the focus from Prospero’s indulgence in his art to an emphasis on Ferdinand and Miranda. Natives join in a carnival dance to celebrate their betrothal – the spectacle emanates from the islanders, not from the magician showing off his art. Such interpolations ignore the Barker-Hulme contention, noted above, that the masque is centered on Prospero and crucial to our understanding of his psychology.

Lastly, despite the efforts of religious fundamentalists, in the twenty-first century men and women in developed countries have access to reliable means of birth control. As a result, sexuality and fertility are not ineluctably linked in the contemporary mind the way they were in Shakespeare’s England. It is doubtful, for example, that many wedding celebrants understand the significance of throwing rice (or for the environmentally conscientious, bird seed) at a newly married couple. The masque reflects an early modern concern that those who are married bear fruit, and certainly Prospero’s vision of a united Milan and Naples depends upon Miranda’s fecundity. For generations the primary purpose of marriage was the orderly conceiving, bearing, and raising of children. Today, judging by recent newspaper accounts of the number of couples who live together without marrying and nevertheless bear children, not to mention the many who marry and decide not to procreate, the link between marriage and fecundity is tenuous at best. Even if the goddesses’ identities and the words they speak were entirely transparent to contemporary audiences, they might still seem irrelevant to twenty-first-century cultural practices.

**Some directorial choices**

What’s a poor a director to do? How can a production preserve the masque’s integral role in the play and yet be made accessible and relevant to a contemporary audience? Each director will arrive at his or her answer to these questions, of course, but a close examination of Julie Taymor’s filmic version suggests two kinds of choices, one that preserves the spirit of Shakespeare’s text
without using its words and another that eschews any connection to the original.

In preparing her film adaptation of *The Tempest*, Julie Taymor made a conscious decision to cut the masque. She confided to me in an interview, “[t]he masque is so foreign to our culture; it has no meaning” (Vaughan 2010). Instead, Taymor begins the masque scene with Prospera’s (Helen Mirren) instructions to Ariel (Ben Whishaw) to bring “the rabble” (Taymore 136) – Ariel’s corollary spirits – to perform “some vanity of mine art” (ibid.) for the young lovers. From the top of a cliff overlooking a rocky shoreline, she sends Ariel off to the heavens. The film then cuts to “another part of the promontory” (ibid.) where Ferdinand (Reeve Carney) and Miranda (Felicity Jones) “are sitting quite close to one another on the soft grass. He turns and begins to whisper a love song into her ear” (ibid.). Ferdinand then sings Feste’s song from *Twelfth Night*, “O mistress mine, where are you roaming?” (ibid.) to music composed by Elliot Goldenthal. Taymor explained to me that her decision to borrow Feste’s song was sparked not simply by the conviction that Shakespeare’s masque is inaccessible to contemporary audiences, but also by a desire to showcase Carney, a young singer well known in America’s youth culture and the future lead in what would become the ill-fated musical, *Spider Man: Turn Off the Dark*. Taymor conveys the lovers’ passion through their actions as well: “During the song, his hands and hers slowly begin a cautious tour of each other’s bodies until they are entwined and lost in each other’s embrace,” action that provokes Prospera’s charge, “Look thou be true” (Taymore 137).

The song Taymor selected does underscore *The Tempest*’s emphasis on the swift passage of time. In the play’s long exposition Shakespeare’s Prospero explains to Miranda that if he doesn’t take advantage of the moment – “If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes / Will ever after droop (1.2.183–4). The time for Ferdinand and Miranda to marry is now, for “Youth’s a stuff will not endure” (Taymor 137). All the same, Feste’s song suggests that what the lovers feel now will not last, a message that undercuts Prospera’s dynastic project of bringing them together in the first place. In addition, Taymor’s choice focuses the spectator’s attention solely on the lovers’ private relationship without regard to Prospera’s political aspirations or her desire to display her powers in an impressive majestic vision. Carney’s love song seems, in other words, like a bad choice, a mundane interruption irrelevant to the central import of the Folio’s masque.

But Taymor redeems herself in the next shot (fig. 1). Called to attention, Ferdinand and Miranda gaze at the heavens to see “A thrilling spectacle of sea creatures and constellations dance together and explode like fireworks before the eyes of the young couple, melding sky and ocean in an animated alchemical chart” (137). This choice fits with what we know about Prospero.
In 1.2.181–82, the magician indicates that his “zenith doth depend upon / A most auspicious star”; the study of the heavens is central to his magical repertoire. Taymor shows these stars moving in a celestial dance, shaping the patterns one might find in early modern alchemy. They soon outline a figure akin to Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian man, a human figure whose outstretched arms and legs form not just a study of proportions, but a statement that the human body is a reflection of universal harmony. Taymor’s Vitruvian man soon morphs into the androgynous image of a man and woman joined as one. They face each other, the female’s arms outstretched, the male’s reaching in the opposite direction. Like a shooting star, this vision is fleeting, and it is soon interrupted by Prospera’s remembrance of Caliban’s conspiracy and her reflections on the ephemeral nature of her art.

Although the second part of Taymor’s masque, like the first, eschews the Folio’s language, it captures some of Shakespeare’s most important themes. Like Shakespeare’s ornate masque of goddesses, Taymor’s pageant of light offers the kind of visual wonder Prospero wishes to bestow “upon the eyes of the young couple” (Taymor 137). It uses, as most successful film adaptations do, visual imagery to signify ideas and emotions that are signaled verbally in a stage performance. While Taymor’s vision of the heavens does not link Ferdinand and Miranda’s marriage to the themes of fecundity and prosperity found in Shakespeare’s text, the camera’s shift from the lovers’ admiring faces to the celestial dance suggests that their union has significance beyond their personal love affair. Moreover, the superimposition of Mirren’s face over ornate alchemical designs takes the viewer back to Prospera and indicates how much this display of her magical powers means to her. The stars’ alchemical designs also continue a motif established by the glassmaking equipment and other scientific paraphernalia in Prospera’s cell; together these images establish her expertise in early modern scientific inquiry. Addi-
tionally, the vision’s culminating androgynous image, refracted in pixels of light, works especially well with a female Prospero who wishes her daughter to be an equal partner in marriage.

In the medium of film, the visual is paramount. As Prospero’s words in 4.1.40 indicate – the spectacle he creates is for this young couple’s eyes, not their ears – the visual mattered at the Blackfriars as well. The masque must be beautiful. In addition, Prospero’s masque culminates in Ceres’ and Juno’s song of blessing and a graceful dance. The masque must also include some kind of musical harmony. After all, Ferdinand describes the effect of the goddesses’ appearance as a “majestic vision, and / Harmonious charmingly” (4.1.118–19). Because the masque is a creation of Prospero’s magic, the play’s prime example of his art, it must emanate from him and be seen to matter to him – he can’t be a casual bystander caught up in a carnival parade. Indeed, whatever spectacle a director or designer selects for this scene, it must evoke wonder, not just in Ferdinand and Miranda but also in the audience. If a director or designer can make the masque work in the context of an entire production, maintain its wonder and beauty, and somehow reiterate the important themes embedded in Shakespeare’s text, he or she will deserve our gratitude, and Shakespeare’s.
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