

Caliban at the fair

Johnson, Toria

DOI:
[10.1086/719933](https://doi.org/10.1086/719933)

License:
Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY-NC)

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Johnson, T 2022, 'Caliban at the fair: figuring non-humanity in *The Tempest* and *Bartholomew Fair*', *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 51-72. <https://doi.org/10.1086/719933>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Caliban at the Fair: Figuring Nonhumanity in *The Tempest* and *Bartholomew Fair*

TORIA JOHNSON, *University of Birmingham, UK*

BOOK-HOLDER. Gentlemen, not for want of a prologue but by way of a new one, I am sent out to you here, with a scrivener and certain articles drawn out in haste between our author and you; which if you please to hear, and as they appear reasonable to approve of, the play will follow presently.¹
—Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*

The induction of *Bartholomew Fair* broadcasts its strangeness even before the scrivener presents the “articles of agreement” (ind. 49) that outline a contract between Jonson and the play’s first public audience. The Book-Holder’s announcement that the articles stand “not for want of a prologue, *but by way of a new one*” highlights that what is coming is different and encourages audiences to perceive that difference as an innovation rather than a shortcoming. The induction anticipates, negotiates, and moves away from a wider set of audience expectations; that work begins when the Stage-Keeper enters and, supposedly stalling for time while Master Littlewit’s costume is mended, offers some unsolicited criticism of what the play lacks. “He has ne’er a sword-and-buckler man in his Fair, nor a Little Davy,” the Stage-Keeper complains, “nor a Kindheart . . . nor a juggler with a well-educated ape. . . . None o’ these fine sights!” (ind. 10–15). According to the Stage-Keeper, in these omissions Jonson has failed to capture the essence of the real fair in Smithfield: “He has not hit the humours—he does not know ‘em” (ind. 9).

I would like to express my thanks to Gillian Wright, Alex Davis, Will West, and my anonymous readers at *Renaissance Drama* for their generous and helpful input at various stages in this essay’s development.

1. Ed. John Creaser, in *The Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 253–428, ind., lines 44–47. All other references to *Bartholomew Fair* are to this edition unless otherwise noted.

Renaissance Drama, volume 50, number 1, spring 2022.

© 2022 Northwestern University. All rights reserved. Published by The University of Chicago Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/719933>

Using the induction's characters collectively as his mouthpiece, Jonson defines *Bartholomew Fair* by what it fails to include, and in this the playwright explains what the play refuses to be. In doing all of this, Jonson does more than distinguish the sights and personalities of his fair from their real-life counterparts. The induction insists that *Bartholomew Fair* will be judged differently than earlier plays and on the playwright's own terms. "How great soever the expectation be," the scrivener reads, "no person here is to expect more than he knows, or better ware than a fair will afford" (ind. 85–87); anyone who "will swear *Jeronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best plays" (ind. 79–80)—preferring the melodrama of Kyd's and Shakespeare's earlier tragedies—will apparently find nothing of that style in Jonson's comedy.

The vision of the audience presented here is unflattering: the scrivener's articles guard against those who might otherwise fail "to remain in the places their money or friends have put them in" (ind. 58–59) and require that they sit "with patience" (ind. 59) for the duration of the play and "exercise [their] own judgement, and not censure by contagion" (ind. 73–74). At the same time, Jonson makes clear that other playwrights have facilitated this poor behavior by so willingly accommodating their audiences' whims. The chief example, of course, is Shakespeare, as the induction's "most notorious passage" reveals: "If there be never a servant-monster i'the Fair; who can help it? he says—nor a nest of antics? He is loath to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget *Tales*, *Tempests*, and such-like drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels, let the concupiscence of jigs and dances, reign as strong as it will amongst you" (ind. 95–100).² The Herford and Simpson *Bartholomew Fair*, part of the magisterial Oxford *Ben Jonson* (published 1925–50), was the first to identify these lines as an attack on Shakespeare's later dramatic style. The reference to the "servant-monster" is, the editors note, "a clear allusion to Caliban"; "*Tales* [and] *Tempests*," they remark, "can have only one meaning."³

It has since become a critical commonplace to view this passage as an indictment of Shakespeare's use of "jigs and dances" and other "drolleries" in his late work, which Jonson saw as deliberately pandering to audiences.⁴ Critical interpretations of Jonson's severity vary: Northrop Frye offered the mild observation that Jonson "speaks disapprovingly" here; David Lucking goes a step further, suggesting that "the reaction provoked in Jonson by *The Tempest* was one of mingled

2. Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: To the First Folio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 159.

3. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson: Play and Masque Commentary*, vol. 10 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950), 175–76. This allusion was so obvious to Herford and the Simpsons that they felt inclined toward more pointed comment: "Yet [William] Gifford, and—what is very remarkable—so accurate a scholar as Alexander Dyce [editors of the 1816 and 1853 editions of *Bartholomew Fair*, respectively] closed their eyes to the allusion" (176).

4. Jonson raises similar objections earlier, in the preface to *The Alchemist* (1612), pointing out that "now the Concupiscence of Jigges, and Daunces so raigneth, as to runne away from Nature, and be afraid of her, is the onely point of art that tickles the Spectators." *The Alchemist* (London, 1612), sig. A3^r.

amusement and contempt”; Mark Thornton Burnett sees in the passage a more thorough damnation, arguing that Jonson positions Shakespeare in these lines as “an artist who . . . has mortgaged himself to a populist and spectacular brand of dramaturgy.”⁵ The passage has also been recognized as an important (and intentional) moment of professional positioning, again with varying understandings of Jonson’s vehemence: as the author’s mouthpiece, the scrivener has been described as “tak[ing] up a carelessly superior tone” when referencing Shakespeare’s work, while others have classified the passage as a moment of “Oedipal aggression.”⁶ More recently, Simon Palfrey has argued that this part of *Bartholomew Fair*’s induction epitomizes Jonson’s commitment “to a career as the corrective superego to the monstrous id-child, Shakespeare.”⁷ The passage undoubtedly takes aim at the broader theatrical culture in which Jonson found himself and seems intent on classifying the play in terms of what it is *not*. Jonson’s fair is not like the real fair; Jonson is not like other playwrights in terms of what he will tolerate from an audience. Nonetheless, the body of criticism surrounding *Bartholomew Fair*’s induction suggests that of all the things the play self-consciously poses itself as “un-like,” it is particularly unlike *The Tempest*, and that Jonson, while recognizing the possibility of understanding this play as an engagement with Shakespeare’s late romance, particularly uses the induction to deny these connections.⁸ With this act of distancing—or so many critics have it—Jonson also similarly positions himself as most particularly, most unlike, Shakespeare.⁹

The language of the induction has significantly contributed to an overarching critical narrative that sees Jonson and Shakespeare as irretrievably and fundamentally different playwrights. Jonson, within this framework, is seen as consciously cultivating the distance between them. The metaphor employed in his self-stated refusal “to mix his head with other men’s heels” typifies this twin pursuit of difference and

5. Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye’s Writings on Shakespeare and the Renaissance*, ed. Troni Grande and Garry Sherbert (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 171; Mark Thornton Burnett, *Constructing Monsters in Shakespeare’s Drama and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 154–55; David Lucking, “Carrying Tempest in His Hand and Voice: The Figure of the Magician in Jonson and Shakespeare,” *English Studies* 85 (2007): 297–310, esp. 309.

6. Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: Authority, Criticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 161.

7. Simon Palfrey, *Shakespeare’s Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 53.

8. Comparing these lines in *Bartholomew Fair*’s induction to Jonson’s earlier comment in *The Alchemist*’s prologue (see n. 4), James Shapiro notes that “what had been a veiled attack in *The Alchemist* is in 1614 given a local habitation and a name: *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*.” Shapiro goes on to highlight Jonson’s reference to Caliban and “drolleries” as further evidence that *The Tempest* was a particular target. *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 155.

9. David Bevington has written on Jonson’s habit of “using Shakespeare implicitly as his opposite example on a number of scores.” “Jonson and Shakespeare: A Spirited Friendship,” *Ben Jonson Journal* 23, no. 1 (2016): 3. Kevin Pask speaks specifically of Caliban’s “unnaturalness” as “the central example of Jonson’s own distinction from William Shakespeare.” “Caliban’s Masque,” *English Literary History* 70, no. 3 (2003): 739.

distance, with Jonson's work representing a distinct part in the larger body of dramatic work that is also spatially as far removed from the heels as possible. The work of the present essay, however, is to question just how far removed Jonson really is, in *Bartholomew Fair*, from the ideological work of *The Tempest*. While several critics have already observed that Jonson "demonstrates an active preoccupation with the relatively recent romances and earlier comedies of his master and nemesis," these arguments have for the most part framed the Jonsonian response in generic terms, emphasizing the play as a satiric reworking of Shakespeare's romance form.¹⁰ Jonson's barbed references in the induction are certainly more than a casual dismissal of Shakespeare's play, but Jonson's engagement with *The Tempest* extends well beyond genre and form. As Ian McAdam has pointed out, while "Jonson partly parodies Shakespeare's 'romantic' approach in *The Tempest* . . . thematically his own play develops, rather than contradicts, themes inherent in Shakespeare."¹¹ In what follows, I argue that *Bartholomew Fair* is a more assiduous reaction to *The Tempest*, and one that specifically picks up the earlier play's exploration of what defines humankind. Jonson's interest in what *kind* of play *The Tempest* is is clear enough, but *Bartholomew Fair* is also a testament to Jonson's interest in the kinds of characters who inhabit *The Tempest*, their relation to one another, and how issues of *kindness*—both in terms of species classification and in terms of compassion—inform the emotional landscape of Shakespeare's play. This interest in classifications of kind, I argue, extends well beyond Jonson's explicit engagement with Caliban, though critical commentary that identifies *Bartholomew Fair* as a correction of perceived faults in *The Tempest* has tended to figure this character as the locus of Jonson's issue.¹²

In spite of the critical tendency to use Caliban as a shorthand for the distance between these two playwrights, Jonson's initial reference to Shakespeare's character begins a more thorough and intimate response that extends throughout

10. Thomas Cartelli, "Bartholomew Fair as Urban Arcadia: Jonson Responds to Shakespeare," *Renaissance Drama* 14 (1983): 151–72, esp. 152. See also Dutton, *Ben Jonson*, who argues that Jonson "systematically parodies the romance conventions of lost-and-found, the vindication of innate nobility, and the wondrous working of divine providence" (148–49), and Pask, "Caliban's Masque," who calls *Bartholomew Fair* "a reconstituted and thoroughly urban version of Shakespearean pastoral" (749).

11. Ian McAdam, "The Puritan Dialectic of Law and Grace in *Bartholomew Fair*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 46, no. 2 (2006): 415–33, esp. 426.

12. The critical emphasis on Caliban stems from Jonson's comment in the induction, but also occasionally includes the character Mooncalf, whose name recalls Stephano's classification of Caliban at 2.2.106. Jonson and Shakespeare, however, seem to be working to different definitions. For Shakespeare, a "mooncalf" is "a deformed animal; a monster" (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed., s.v. "mooncalf," noun, def. 3), but Jonson's usage veers back to the human: his Mooncalf is "a born fool; a congenital idiot, a simpleton" (def. 2c). Jonson's imagined distinction between mooncalves and monsters is made explicit in Jonson's later masque, *Newes from New World Discovered in the Moon*, when one character asks, "Moone-Calves! what Monster is that?" and is quickly corrected by another: "Monster? *None at all*; a very familiar thing, like our foole here on earth" (sig. G2', my emphasis). *The Works of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1641).

Bartholomew Fair. Jonson's reduction of Caliban into Shakespeare's servant-monster also serves as another type of shorthand, an early indication of the kinds of questions that Jonson will pick up in his own play: questions of what shapes human identity, what role nonhumans play in defining humanity, and how emotional capacities—compassion, specifically—flow throughout and between questions of *kind* in both plays.¹³ Jonson indicates that the servant-monster will make no appearance at his fair, a moment many have understood as positioning Jonson and Shakespeare as “mighty opposites.”¹⁴ Nonetheless, *Bartholomew Fair* is more implicated than it admits.

* * *

Caliban has come to represent Shakespeare's interest in the “problem of distinctions,” or the early modern “English cultural anxieties about the nature of humanity,” but the servant-monster is not the only site of posthumanist exploration in the play, nor indeed the clearest.¹⁵ *The Tempest's* most explicit venture into what defines humanity, in fact, comes in an exchange between Prospero and Ariel. With Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban “brimful of sorrow and dismay” (5.1.14),

13. This essay uses “human” and “nonhuman” as its two primary categories, in part because I see Shakespearean and Jonsonian humanity as particularly defined by the “lack”-ing presence of the broad category of nonhuman other. In this essay, I conceive of these terms in the simplest way possible: human as a person or one clearly signaled as belonging to the human race, “nonhuman” as anyone not immediately and recognizably human or anyone/anything obviously belonging to or labeled with a different classification (e.g., “spirit” as in the case of Ariel or the puppets of *Bartholomew Fair*). I follow Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi in “seeking to capture the ‘menagerie’ of border-crossings” available to early modern humankind. At the same time, it is easy to see much darker implications in the idea that anyone or anything might possess varying “degrees” of humanity. Theories of humanity are always loaded, not least because they are so often brought in to discourses of race and racial difference; the characters and the boundary tensions I discuss here might all be read in that context. In recent years, critics like Elizabeth Spiller have persuasively argued that “the competing philosophical, theological, economic, and ideological traditions of the early modern period” had a profound influence on “what became a modern version of race.” Putting it another way, in their own discussion of early modern discourses of difference, Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton point out that “colonialism did not insert itself upon a blank slate but reshaped earlier understandings of human differentiation; these in turn prepared the ground for, and indeed often determined the form of, later racial and colonial perspectives.” In part, my aim here is attend to some of this foundational thinking about the privilege and purpose of “differentiation.” Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi, “Swervings: On Human Indistinction,” in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, ed. Feerick and Nardizzi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4; Elizabeth Spiller, *Reading and the History of Race in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2; Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton, “Introduction,” in *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, ed. Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 9.

14. Cartelli, “*Bartholomew Fair* as Urban Arcadia,” 151.

15. Bruce Boehrer, “Animal Studies and the Deconstruction of Character,” *PMLA* 124 (2009): 542–47, esp. 546; Tom Lindsay, “‘Which First Was Mine Own King’: Caliban and the Politics of Service and Education in *The Tempest*,” *Studies in Philology* 113, no. 2 (2016): 397–423, esp. 399. On *The Tempest's* broader posthumanist significance, Karen Raber has pointed to Ariel's reception

confined, tormented with reminders of their transgressions, and pushed toward madness first by Ariel and later by other spirits posing as hounds, Ariel reports the proceedings to his master. Urging Prospero to end his action against them, the spirit Ariel notes that

Your charm so strongly works 'em
That, if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.

(5.1.17–19)

“Your *affections* would become *tender*,” he claims.¹⁶ As one of the chief architects of these torments, Ariel’s bid for Prospero’s compassion marks an important shift in the play’s action, a movement toward resolution: this, he argues, is the moment to show pity. When Prospero presses him on this point of developing tender affections—“Dost thou think so, spirit?” (5.1.19), Ariel replies: “Mine would, sir, *were I human*” (5.1.20, my emphasis). The use of species classifications (spirit, human) rather than character names depersonalizes the exchange, framing the moment in generic terms. Ariel is not Ariel, but “spirit”; the pitying subject he imagines is not a known character, but instead someone of a specific *kind*: simply, human.

Ariel’s qualifying “were I human” creates an important distance from the emotion of the moment: as Seth Lobis has argued, Ariel’s emotional judgment can only be read as a “spritely approximation” of compassion, more hypothetical than anything else.¹⁷ Although Prospero later assumes that Ariel experiences “a touch, a feeling / Of their afflictions” (5.1.21–22), it is not clear that the spirit actually does feel anything toward those he has tormented: mine *would*, he suggests, *if*.¹⁸ The comment, in addition to making explicit the link between compassion (“tender affections”) and being human, also vitally introduces the defining capacity of

as a harpy in the play as evidence of Shakespeare’s interest in posthumanist hybridity. In *The Tempest* and elsewhere, Raber argues, “entities are presented as composites, fusions of diverse types of both material and abstract being.” *Shakespeare and Posthumanist Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 103. On the significance of *The Tempest* as a posthumanist text, see Julián Jiménez Heffernan, *Shakespeare’s Extremes: Wild Man, Monster, Beast* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015).

16. My emphasis. All references to *The Tempest* (unless otherwise noted) are to William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Thomson Learning, 1999). For another view of the importance of “tenderness” in *The Tempest*, see Eric Langley, *Shakespeare’s Contagious Sympathies: Ill Communications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), esp. 201–10.

17. Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy: Magic, Philosophy, and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 2.

18. Ariel’s proximity to compassion—however hypothetical—does fit oddly with his classification as a spirit, as Maurice Hunt points out: “The Spirit strangely acts autonomously, teaching Prospero about a virtue—compassion—rarely associated with magic.” “Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Human Worth,” *Ben Jonson Journal* 20, no. 1 (2013): 64.

nonhuman characters. Although Ariel is in other places (and by other characters) clearly identified as a spirit, in this moment he only says what he is *not*: human. Ariel figures himself as nonhuman to remind Prospero of his own humanity. Prospero is human—or could be, if he produces the appropriate emotional response to the suffering of his enemies.

Taken in the context of other emotional exchanges between Ariel and Prospero, this moment assumes compassion operating within a very specific set of rules and emphasizes in particular the “fellow” embedded in the term “fellow-feeling.” Although Ariel is clearly not the kind of spirit imagined in the great chain of being, it would nevertheless be tempting to assume that his lack of compassion simply reflects the spiritly lack of a sensitive soul.¹⁹ However, the play has already separated Ariel from this particular vision of spiritly nature by making clear that he can feel both physical sensation and emotion. Prospero reminds Ariel that he “didst *painfully* remain/ A dozen years” (1.2.278, my emphasis) in Sycorax’s prison; he is elsewhere described as “moody” (1.2.244). These references to Ariel’s emotional capacities pass quickly and evoke no special reaction or reflection from either the spirit or his master. Ariel’s later statement therefore uses compassion to facilitate an unusual moment of boundary drawing in the play. The ambiguity here raises a number of questions about how compassion functions more broadly on the island and how the capacity for this kind of emotional connection affects the identities of its inhabitants. Two possible interpretations extending from this moment rely on the question of what Ariel is and how that identity might shape his emotional response. The first is that Ariel is unable to feel compassion because he understands the emotion as a uniquely *human* capacity; the second is that he understands the emotion only as functioning between subjects of the same *kind*. The latter interpretation posits that Ariel *could* experience these feelings if he were presented with another spirit’s suffering, but precludes the possibility of such emotional connection with Prospero’s human targets. In both interpretations, compassion facilitates the drawing of species boundaries.

As Laurie Shannon has demonstrated in her own work on early modern animals, “our perennial efforts to specify what is human show how hard it is to settle the question.”²⁰ Although no animals figure in this exchange between Ariel and Prospero, here and elsewhere, the play speaks to the early modern interest in

19. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936). The concept of the tripartite soul (of which the sensitive soul is one part) is developed in Aristotle’s *De Anima*. For more, see *De Anima*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 535–603. For more on the tripartite soul, see Katharine Park, “The Organic Soul,” in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles Schmitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 464–84.

20. Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1.

determining a distinct and defining set of characteristics for humankind. These frameworks for humanity are almost always defined against the nonhuman, a group that variously includes animals, spirits, monsters, plant life, and other earthly matter.²¹ The first reading of Ariel's comment believes that only humans experience "tender affections": it seems to position the emotional capacity for compassion as a unique and qualifying characteristic of the human category and suggests that compassion is not achievable for nonhumans. The use of emotion to draw that boundary is, however, unusual. The capacity for feeling is prominent in early modern arguments seeking to collapse species boundaries, particularly in discussions of the human and animal categories. Joint possession of the sensitive soul, as Gail Kern Paster points out, "constituted the essential similarity between humans and animals."²² As Paster argues, "identification across the species barrier" was not only common in the early modern period, it also "reinforced affective self-experience."²³ But Ariel does not say, "were I human *or* animal": he references the human as an insular category, defined by compassion.

The other possible reading of Ariel's qualifying phrase is that Ariel understands compassion as something determined by considerations of *kind*. On this reading, Ariel is suggesting that as a spirit, he cannot reach across the species boundary to connect emotionally with the tormented humans. Under this model of compassionate exchange, one is emotionally connected only to one's own kind; within Shakespeare's variously populated island, this interpretation drastically reduces the possibilities for emotional obligation. Prospero's response to Ariel's report, his assurance that he will be moved to pity, suggests that this notion of kind-ly compassion may be the more appropriate reading:

21. As Patricia Akhimie points out, the notion of humanity as a shifting and unstable category has long been used to articulate racist hierarchies: "Both contemporary and early modern people understand and understood race not only by visually perceiving physical difference but also by reading difference, by writing difference, *and even failing to perceive a group as fully human*" (20, my emphasis). She observes that "wherever race is (and it is everywhere), processes of inclusion and exclusion are always underway" (11). *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference: Race and Conduct in the Early Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

22. Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 150. For more on the tension between human and animal categories in the early modern period, see Rebecca Ann Bach, *Birds and Other Creatures in Renaissance Literature: Shakespeare, Descartes, and Animal Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) and *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) and *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Karen Raber, *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); and Laurie Shannon, "Poor, Bare, Forked': Animal Sovereignty, Human Negative Exceptionalism, and the Natural History of *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2009): 168–96.

23. Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 150.

Hast thou, which are but air, a touch, a feeling
 Of their afflictions, and shall not myself
 (*One of their kind*, that relish all as sharply,
 Passion as they) *be kindlier* moved than thou art?
 (5.1.21–24, my emphasis)

In all of Shakespeare's work, this is the only use of "kindlier," a word that helps Prospero do more than just compare two groups—of one's own kind versus *not* of one's own kind. It also helps to establish one of these as more, better, *kindlier*.²⁴ Prospero makes the distinction between himself and Ariel explicit, agreeing that as "one of their kind," he is either naturally inclined or obligated to "be kind-*lier* moved" than Ariel. The play on kind and kindlier imagines a natural relationship between those of the same species (kind) and the capacity for shared emotion (kindness). It is a link echoed in Cicero's influential description of humankind as defined by the "bonds of mutual obligation which tie us together in a *societas generis humani*"—or what Mike Pincombe calls "the 'fellowship of humankind.'"²⁵ For Cicero "tenderness" (to borrow Ariel's term) is not exclusively the domain of the human: Nicholas Grimald's 1556 translation of Cicero argues that "to every kinde of living creature it is given by nature" a number of traits, including "a certayn tendernesse" for those in direct proximity, like offspring.²⁶ The kind of connection that Ariel implies here, however, in terms of its quality and broader scope, Cicero understood as a specifically human capability. Cicero comments that man "seeth sequels, beholdeth grounds, and causes of thinges, is not ignoraunt of their procedinges, and as it wer their foregoings: compareth semblaunces, & with thinges present joyneth, & knitteth thinges to come: dothe soone espye the course of his holle life, and to the leading therof purueieth thinges necessarie" (sig. A5^v). This ability to understand cause and effect, to reflect on the past and the future, and to determine from this the "purueieth things necessarie" is what defines "the said nature" of humankind (sig. A5^v). This capacity, he argues, "winneth man to man, to a felowshippe bothe in talke, and also of life" (sig. A5^v). "Severed from common felowshippe, and neybourhod of men," he warns, "[there] muste needs bee a certein savagenesse, and beastly crueltie" (sig. H6^r). Humankind's ability to reason and to feel with one another both defines humanity and defines it against the nonhuman other. Ariel's figuring of compassion uses his spirit-ness as the defining nonhuman counterpoint, but it is clear that Prospero's failure to feel compassion will not push

24. John Bartlett, *A New and Complete Concordance, or Verbal Index to the Words, Phrases, and Passages in the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1937), 829.

25. Mike Pincombe, *Elizabethan Humanism: Literature and Learning in the Later Sixteenth Century* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 15. For more on Cicero's significance in Renaissance humanism, see Robin Headlam Wells, *Shakespeare's Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

26. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Thre bokes of duties*, trans. Nicholas Grimald (London, 1556), sig. A5^r.

him toward a spiritly identity: it is his own humanity under review. There is, moreover, no sense in Ariel's comment that his own inability to offer "tender affections" negatively affects his own sense of self. The identity threat, for Prospero, is (on a Ciceronian understanding) the "certein savagenesse," the "beastly crueltie." The lack of emotion for a human subject almost always results in a move downward, toward the beastly animal and away from the privileged echelons of humanity.

Both interpretations of this moment with Ariel define humanity through absence. As Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman have noted about this passage, the emotion in 4.1 is, crucially, hypothetical for Prospero as well. As they point out, "Neither of the speakers claim to actually *experience* compassion—they imagine circumstances in which they would," and although the passage, they argue, "articulates the desired qualities associated with the human," it does so only by pointing to the absence of those qualities.²⁷ Ariel's vision of what it means to be human is defined relationally, by his own nonhuman status. The positioning work of Prospero's follow-up comments only succeeds because Ariel stands as a point of reference: Prospero does not imagine himself as independently kind; he imagines himself as kinder than Ariel. He is unable to define himself without Ariel's nonhuman coordinates. In this way, compassion underscores the negative presence of the nonhuman and humanity as created in dialogue with it.

In her own influential account of *The Tempest*, Kim Hall suggests that Caliban is made to articulate the privilege of others. As a character whose difference "defies categories," he functions, she argues, "as a 'thing of darkness' against which a European social order is tested and proved."²⁸ The play's first meditation on Caliban's murky ontological status—in his first appearance, in 1.2—also uses the connection between kind and kindness to signal the ways in which the island's characters are positioned in relation to one another and upon a human/nonhuman spectrum. Following the speech in which Caliban asserts his ownership of the island—"This island's mine" (1.2.332)—Prospero responds with a damning account of the servant's identity:

Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness; I have used thee
(Filth as thou art) with humane care and lodged thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.

(1.2.345–49, my emphasis)

27. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman, "Introduction: The Dislocation of the Human," in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy*, ed. Fudge, Gilbert, and Wiseman (London: Macmillan, 1999), 1–9, esp. 4.

28. Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 152, 142.

Prospero's objection is at least partly rooted in fear: not just of miscegenation, but of losing the powerful political commodity that a chaste Miranda represents.²⁹ His mode of self-protection—for that is certainly what this moment of positioning is—seeks to reestablish the security of stable categories by emphasizing the threat posed by cross-kind emotional relationships. Prospero's suggestion that "stripes may move" Caliban, "not kindness," firmly characterizes Caliban as different, a physical being rather than an emotional one. This itself is rather surprising given that he has just delivered one of his most poetic, emotionally driven and sympathetic speeches:

When thou cam'st first
 Thou strok'st me and made much of me
 . . . and [taught] me how
 To name the bigger light and how the less
 That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee . . .
(1.2.333–37)

Perhaps Caliban conflates emotional kindness with physical or social kind-ness or sees the two as inextricably linked. Although the servant's attempted rape of Miranda has (rightly) been an obstacle to the character's sympathetic reception with audiences, it is in another sense the play's most explicit statement of Caliban's self-identification: his regret that he was unsuccessful in "[peopling] this isle with Calibans" (1.2.351–52) hinges on the apparent belief that it is biologically possible for him to procreate with her. What for Caliban is the clearest possible expression that he is of the same *kind* becomes, for Miranda and Prospero, the definitive evidence of his *unkindness*, his nonhumanity. Even if his assault on Miranda is unsuccessful, Caliban nevertheless violates the social (perhaps also the species) boundary that Prospero and Miranda imagine divides between them.

These moments, all implicated in a larger inquiry into what it means to be human and act humanely, demonstrate *The Tempest's* preoccupation with ways of determining the boundaries of humanity. Here and elsewhere, the characters' own identities are shaped and clarified by their emotional reaction to other characters, characters who are either of the same kind; not of the same kind; or, in the case of Caliban, not obviously or firmly placed on either side of the human/nonhuman

29. On this fear of miscegenation, Ania Loomba observes that "Caliban imagines that his coupling with Miranda will result in the peopling of the island with little Calibans, a scenario that is repugnant both to Miranda and to Prospero. None of them visualizes little Mirandas as the outcome." Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33. See also Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference*, who notes that throughout the play that Caliban "has been carefully cultivated not as fit to inherit, rule, marry, and procreate, but as fit *not* to do these things" (152).

divide. What is also clear is that this play sees a paradox in questions of what it means to be kind: kindness is at once the humane care that Prospero mentions in 1.1.2; it is being “kindlier moved” with tender affection. This implies a reaching out; it imagines a compassionate connection between characters that is inherently social. At the same time, the kindness deployed here is also divisive, used to create boundaries and space between characters: with the line, “shall not *myself* / *One of their kind*” (5.1.22–23, my emphasis), Prospero gestures toward his compassionate facilities as one equipped to “relish all as sharply” (5.1.23). However, he also uses this formulation to set himself apart from Ariel, both emotionally and physiologically: “Thou, *which art but air*” (5.1.21). Reaching out to another with compassion in this way becomes a marker of kind, but also a specific and divisive marker of *humankind*.

That Shakespeare’s focus is specifically the defining capacity of the nonhuman (rather than, for example, “the animal”) is made clear through his emphasis on the inchoate “human-animal amalgamation” Caliban, rather than the largely overlooked and effectively partitioned animal life on the island.³⁰ Caliban mentions these animals in his introduction to Stephano and Trinculo:

I prithee, let me bring thee where *crabs* grow,
 And I with my long nails will dig thee *pignuts*,
 Show thee a *jay*’s nest, and instruct thee how
 To snare the nimble *marmoset*. I’ll bring thee
 To clust’ring *filberts*, and sometimes I’ll get thee
 Young *scamels* from the rock.

(2.2.164–69, my emphasis)

Prospero makes reference to yet more animals in several of his exchanges with his servants. When threatening Caliban, Prospero promises that he will “make thee roar, / That beasts shall tremble at thy din” (1.2.371–72); he reminds Ariel that when he released the spirit from his captivity under Sycorax, “thy groan / Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts / Of ever-angry bears” (1.2.286–88). All of these examples suggest a lively animal community—the crabs “grow,” the jays nest, the filberts “cluster,” and the wolves “howl”—but that community exists at a remove from the world of the play. When Prospero speaks of animals responding to Ariel’s torment (or Caliban’s promised torment), he does so in a way that reinforces distance: the noise of the torment, in both cases, is so loud it reaches across physical distance and the distance between species. The “ever-angry bear” will be emotionally penetrated; beasts shall tremble at Caliban’s roar. The positioning of the island’s animal life—at a remove—also importantly solidifies Caliban’s in-betweenness. As

30. Raber, *Shakespeare and Posthumanist Theory*, 104.

the native guide figure, he is the only character who acknowledges the animal population as vibrant, productive, and independent of the human story line. His ability to recognize the agency of these animals makes him the most sympathetically aligned character, but that lone sympathy also pushes him further toward the murky interstitial space between human and animal.

For many critics, this unnatural (or additional) category represented by Shakespeare's "servant-monster" defines the relationship between *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Tempest* and defines it as negative. Jonson's emphasis on Caliban, however, also singles him out from the broad range of other characters who push against the bounds of realism in *The Tempest*. There is Ariel, of course; the "strange shapes" (3.3.17, SD) and shadowy "fellow ministers" (3.3.65) that accompany him in his interactions with Alonso and the other Italians; the "diverse Spirits in shape of dogs and hounds" (4.1.254, SD) that torment Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban; and of course, Iris, Ceres, and Juno, the nymphs and reapers who preside over Ferdinand and Miranda's betrothal. In spite of this rich company of otherworldly characters, Jonson points only to indeterminate Caliban as the exemplar of other playwrights' tendencies "to make Nature afraid" (ind. 96–97) by manipulating or ignoring the bounds of realism. As Katharine Eisaman Maus points out, among the broad corpus of Jonson's "snide remarks" about Shakespeare and *The Tempest*, he "object[s] particularly to Caliban."³¹ And yet, as Mark Thornton Burnett argues, in another sense this moment of objection further solidifies the connection between these plays. Because this is the only early modern play to stage the fair, Burnett suggests, Caliban's absence has a presence all its own: "the 'anticipated' execution of Trinculo's fairground fantasy, the exhibition of Caliban," he writes, "is frustratingly absent" from Jonson's play.³² Jonson's invocation of Caliban—a character one critic has seen as evidence of Shakespeare's "enduring concern with the boundaries separating human from nonhuman species"—also pulls *Bartholomew Fair* neatly toward a central concern of *The Tempest*, which is how (and where) to draw the boundaries between human and nonhuman.³³

The Tempest sees Caliban identified in myriad ways, with language that, taken together, gestures toward a broad range of possible racial, social, and species identities. He is, to begin with, the "salvage, deformed slave" of the 1623 Folio's *dramatis personae*; a "freckled whelp . . . not honour'd with / A human shape" (1.2.283–84); an "abhorred slave" (1.2.352); a "strange fish" (2.2.27); and Prospero's "thing of

31. Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 97, my emphasis.

32. Burnett, *Constructing Monsters*, 154, my emphasis.

33. Bruce Bohrer, "Shakespeare and the Character of Sheep," in *Posthumanist Shakespeares*, ed. Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 58–76, esp. 58.

darkness" (5.1.275).³⁴ Julia Reinhard Lupton has demonstrated that "this indeterminacy at the heart of Caliban" is something that "moves throughout the play between 'creatures' and 'mankind,' between animate beings in general and their realization in humanity."³⁵ This seemingly never-ending enquiry into Caliban's ambiguous nature, or his position on the island, is perhaps what most clearly defines his character in *The Tempest*: we are only certain that we cannot be certain about him.³⁶ At the same time, the premise of Caliban's nonhumanity has a specific defining function for the human characters on the island: denied a stable sense of kind, he nonetheless acts as the barometer of each character's kindness. Positioned as a subject, he confirms and reflects Prospero's privilege and authority at the end of the play; he equally clarifies the baseness of Stephano and Trinculo, who straightforwardly see Caliban as a "fairground fantasy." The unstable vision of humanity that Caliban represents, in this respect, reaches outward to shape the humanity of those who encounter him. That Caliban's intended function is as the nonhuman definer of human characters is further underscored by his deployment in the play: in spite of *The Tempest's* variously populated island, we only ever see Caliban in dialogue with human characters.

In spite of this famous indeterminacy, Jonson's description of Caliban in *Bartholomew Fair* is strikingly precise: "If there be never a *servant-monster* i'the Fair," he writes, "who can help it?" This language, of course, is lifted from *The Tempest*, at 3.2, when both Stephano and Trinculo use the term: "*Servant-monster*, drink to me"; "*Servant-monster!* The folly of this island!" (3.2.3–4); "Drink, *servant-monster*, when I bid thee" (3.2.7, my emphasis). Jonson's more restrained use of the term has shaped the critical perception of his stance on the character. Because he selects only one of Caliban's descriptors, and uses it only once, we might assume that the playwright has no interest in making any enquiry into Caliban's nature at all; Jonson offers him one concrete identity—the servant-monster—and moves on, apparently without considering the matter further. Nonetheless, in raising the issue of Caliban, Jonson participates in a tradition—both within *The Tempest* and in its long history of reception—of directing an evaluative gaze at Shakespeare's character. By identifying Caliban as the servant-monster, Jonson, like so many of *The Tempest's* characters, passes judgment on what Caliban is. The chosen descriptor, servant-monster, seems a particularly uncompassionate evaluation, and it suggests both the negative spirit with which Jonson approaches Caliban and larger implicit

34. William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies* (London, 1623), sig. B4^r.

35. Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Creature Caliban," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2000): 1–23, esp. 2.

36. This lack of clarity is, as Mark Thornton Burnett (*Constructing Monsters*, 133–34) argues, part of the point of Caliban's character, who is designed in such a way that "each character moulds Caliban in a different image, and the sum total of those imagined representations can never cohere."

consequences. Jonson monsters Caliban: because he is “unnatural,” he is excluded from the community of *Bartholomew Fair*. This appears to be a straightforward move, but the move itself—mirroring as it does similar evaluative moments in *The Tempest*—effectively implicates Jonson in the enquiry surrounding Caliban’s humanity.

* * *

I suggested at the outset of this essay that with *The Tempest* and *Bartholomew Fair*, Shakespeare and Jonson reveal shared interests in determining the boundaries of humanity, understanding the role that nonhumans play in this debate, and exploring how principles of compassion both clarify and confuse definitions of kind. With this argument, I aim to extend our understanding of these plays as a dialogue between Jonson and Shakespeare and particularly to implicate Jonson more thoroughly in the ideological debates laid out in *The Tempest*. *Bartholomew Fair* often (and pointedly) echoes Shakespeare’s earlier play, repeatedly prompting recollection. Like Shakespeare, Jonson brings us to a place “full of noise” (ind. 62; see also *The Tempest* at 3.2.135): for Shakespeare that noise comprises “sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not” (3.2.136), for Jonson the noise is “made to delight all, and to offend none” (ind. 62). Like Shakespeare’s Italians, the hapless Bartholomew Cokes finds himself trapped within an artificially controlled landscape. Even Overdo’s ward, Grace, seems aware of Miranda as her dramatic predecessor, a woman who naively falls in love with “the third man that e’er I saw” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.446). In her dealings with Quarlous and Winwife, Grace reminds the men that they are “not yet of two hours’ acquaintance” (4.3.20); she comments (even as she agrees to marry one of them), that “you are both equal and alike to me yet, and so indifferently affected by me as each of you might be the man, if the other were away” (4.3.26–28). Grace’s insight here corrects and contains Miranda’s unwieldy affection, replacing romance with something more cynical, but also something more realistically aware of the conditions of time imposed on a play. And of course, like *The Tempest*, in *Bartholomew Fair*, the brokering of marriage plays a central role. Like Prospero, Justice Overdo plans to secure his own position by marrying off his young ward.

These similarities are easy to overlook because Jonson’s play—a satirical, often cynical city comedy—feels and looks so different to Shakespeare’s island romance. Nonetheless, the connection between these works is made clearer by what Jonson’s play admits that it lacks: Caliban. Jonson is true to his word in the induction: there is no servant-monster in *Bartholomew Fair*. The absence of Caliban’s murky humanity, however, importantly highlights the defining role of the nonhuman. Without the nonhuman presence to serve as a boundary marker, the “humanity” of Jonson’s human characters becomes unstable. Most are described in animal terms: human characters are named as animals, marked by animal traits, and surrounded

by animated objects. As Neil Rhodes has noted, for example, Ursula herself is “inseparable from the pigs which are her trade”; she is the “pig-woman” (2.2.59), the “walking Sow of tallow” (2.5.59), but also the “she-bear” (2.3.1).³⁷ Mooncalf is marked by his “grasshopper’s thighs” (2.2.56); Wasp is, like his name, a “pretty insect!” (1.4.34); the singer Nightingale uses his “hawk’s eye” (2.4.37) and his “beak” (2.4.39) to help Edgeworth, the cutpurse, identify victims; and Littlewit calls himself “a silkworm” (1.1.2). Quarlous envisions Winwife as the stag when he asks, “Oh, sir, ha’ you ta’en soil here?” (1.3.1), and later imagines a time when Winwife might “walk as if thou had’st borrow’d legs of a spinner and voice of a cricket” (1.2.64). The hapless Bartholomew Cokes is labeled “one that were made to catch flies, with his Sir Cranion [crane fly] legs” (1.5.80); Ursula assures Knockem that he “shall not fright me with [his] lion-chap, sir, nor [his] tusks” (2.3.37–38). Busy describes the delights of the fair as “hooks, and baits, very baits” designed to catch its visitors “by the gills” (3.2.34–36); Winwife describes Busy guiding his party through the fair as “driving ‘em to the pens” (3.2.43).

Jonson’s overwhelming use of animal language would make it easy to believe that the fair is rich with animal life or that Jonson is reverting back to a more conventional way of defining his characters’ humanity against the animal category. It is tempting to interpret Jonson’s animal referencing as a way of dehumanizing his characters; framing these characters as animals could be a way of signaling mutual rapacity and removing entirely the notion of *humanitas* from the fair. There is, however, more to see here, particularly because there are, in fact, no animals in the play. Jonson offers *approximations* of animals—the human characters described in animal terms, the animal products that define the identities of those human characters (as in the case of Ursula’s pigs), and other material goods fashioned after animals (such as Leatherhead’s hobbyhorses)—but there are no actual animals. The animal content therefore becomes just the “stuff”—the language, the meat, the commodities—that creates the characters. But in this, Jonson introduces his own version of slippage between human and nonhuman categories, because the human is also occasionally figured as “stuff” that passes between other characters. Grace’s lucrative wardship ensures that she is always figured as a commodity to be passed along; reporting on her relationship to Overdo, for example, she comments, “He bought me” (3.5.230). In addition to buying all of their wares, Cokes also effectively “buys” Leatherhead and Trash, instructing Leatherhead to “shut up shop presently, friend. I’ll buy it both and thee too” (3.4.112–13); Wasp even comments on this before the deal has been made: “You’d be sold too, would you? What’s the price on you, jerkin, and all as you stand?” (3.4.87–88). Even the constant refrain of Leatherhead’s sales call conflates the human alongside the rest of

37. Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 146.

the material goods of the fair when referencing dolls: “What do you lack? What do you buy, pretty mistress? A fine hobby-horse, to make your son a tilter? A drum, to make him a soldier? A fiddle, to make him a reveler? What is’t you lack? Little dogs for your daughters, or *babies, male or female?*” (3.2.28–31, my emphasis). Leatherhead’s call emphasizes the defining impact of all this material on the imagined human subject. The goods Win purchases from him, he implies, will determine the identity of her unborn child, “making” him a tilter, a soldier, or a reveler.

Within this landscape, there is only one substantive reference to compassion and its defining capacity, directed at Jonson’s Prospero-like Justice Overdo.³⁸ After overhearing Bristle and Haggis’s description of Overdo as “a severe justicer” (4.1.58) with a reputation for being “angry, be it right or wrong” (4.1.65), Overdo makes a calculated commitment to be more compassionate. “I will be more tender hereafter,” he vows, commenting that “I see compassion may become a justice, though it be a weakness, I confess; and nearer a vice than a virtue” (4.1.67–68). This reworking of Prospero’s own move toward compassion is striking, down to the re-deployment of the key word, “tender” and the use of the future tense. Like Prospero, Overdo *will* be more tender, though *Bartholomew Fair*, in fact, stages his misguided attempts to show compassion to the pickpocket Edgeworth and the madman Trouble-All. This moment acknowledges the link between performed emotion and self-fashioning. “I see compassion may *become* a justice,” he notes: it is expected, attractive, a commodity. But the word also implies a more active moment of creation: to become. Compassion is a perceived necessity for the kind of man Overdo aspires to be. As in *The Tempest*, here is a way to “make” a man. Here again, the notion of kindness opens up questions of *kind*, specifically the kind of person Overdo wants to be. And yet, Overdo’s efforts at compassion are also effectively his undoing, leading to his sustained humiliation in the fair, where he is repeatedly beaten and eventually put into the stocks. His attempt to show compassion to Trouble-All by giving him—but really, giving the disguised Quarlous—his warrant eventually costs Overdo his wardship of Grace, or part of “the stuff” that he has used to define his own position in the play.

This vision of compassionate kind-ness therefore sees compassion as a practice through which one loses that which defines him. Prospero’s own move toward compassion—if it does come in *The Tempest*—comes only at the end of the play, when he has given up the magic that has defined his position on the island:

38. Margaret Tudeau-Clayton notes that through Overdo, Jonson “engages critically with Shakespeare’s figure of the learned (over)seer, Prospero.” “I Do Not Know My Selfe’: The Topography and Politics of Self-Knowledge in Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*,” in *Textures of Renaissance Knowledge*, ed. Margaret Tudeau-Clayton and Philippa Berry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 18.

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
 And what strength I have's mine own,
 Which is most faint.

(Epilogue, 1–3)

Given Jonson's interest in the defining capacity of the nonhuman, and the similarities between Prospero and Overdo, it is worth noting that one of the clearest signals of Jonson's engagement with *The Tempest* comes in his redeployment of Prospero's speech about the "stuff" his revels are made on. Following the fantastical pageantry of Ferdinand and Miranda's union in 4.1, a scene that explicitly stages the "drolleries" that characterize life on the island, Prospero offers a dreamy catalogue of the island's makeup:

Be cheerful, sir.
 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-capped 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.

(4.1.147–58)

"We are such *stuff*," he observes, "As dreams are made on." This comment on the "stuff" of the play summarizes how most of the characters understand the island's material: utterly malleable, wholly invested in, shaped by, and in service of the human characters. Jonson's own emphasis on nonhuman "stuff" therefore picks up and clarifies an element that already exists in *The Tempest*, and this, I suggest, brings us back to Jonson's original entry point: Caliban and his murky position on the island. The greatest evidence of Caliban's own nonhuman status is that he, too, is figured as the material of the island, the specimen that Trinculo imagines using to define his own identity back at home: "What have we here, a man or a fish? Dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish, a very ancient and fish-like smell, a kind of—not of the newest—poor-John. A strange fish! Were I in England now (as once I was) and had but this fish painted, 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*" (2.2.24–31, my emphasis). Caliban's material value is determined by his ambiguous

status, his human-but-not-human-ness, and Trinculo's meandering assessment of what makes a man confirms that Caliban's status is only significant in relational terms. What he is determines what Trinculo will be (in this case, a wealthier man). Stephano echoes this sentiment when he frames Caliban as transferable material or goods: "If I can recover him and keep him tame, and get to Naples with him," Stephano muses, "he's a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat's leather" (2.2.64–69).

By the end of the play, however, all three of these characters have in a sense become someone's "stuff." When they appear in their stolen apparel at the play's conclusion, Sebastian speaks of them as goods to be bought or sold: "What things are these, my lord Antonio? / Will money buy 'em?" Antonio responds: "Very like. One of them / Is a plain fish and no doubt marketable" (5.1.264–65). Prospero carries this further in his comments to Alonso: "Two of these fellows you / Must acknowledge and own," he claims, but "this *thing* of darkness I / Acknowledge *mine*" (5.1.274–76, my emphasis). Prospero's comment has been recognized as "one of the most suggestively resonant lines in the English language," and its power rests in its multivalency.³⁹ However underwhelming, it might be a moment of compassion: an extension and expression of the "tender affections" that Ariel has counseled. At the same time, as Paul Brown points out, it is also a moment that "powerfully designates the monster as [Prospero's] property, an object for his own utility, a darkness from which he may rescue self-knowledge."⁴⁰ Prospero's acknowledgement of Caliban is a performance of the magician's new (or indeed, his old) identity, and Caliban therefore becomes the material proof of Prospero's transformation. Moreover, if Prospero's acknowledgement of Caliban means his fate is to return with Prospero to Italy, then it is actually Prospero who will realize Trinculo and Stephano's vision of Caliban "making a man" back home.⁴¹

If Prospero's speech in 4.1 appears to look upward toward "cloud-capped towers," then Jonson's hobbyhorse seller Leatherhead brings the vision back down to earth, making clear that the "stuff" that defines humankind is neither lofty nor harmless. His discussion with Trash mobilizes this same question—what stuff

39. Lorie Jerrell Leininger, "Cracking the Code of *The Tempest*," *Bucknell Review* 25, no. 1 (1980): 121–31, esp. 127.

40. Paul Brown, "'This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 48–71, esp. 68.

41. Stephen Greenblatt has commented that "Shakespeare leaves Caliban's fate naggingly unclear." "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the 16th Century," in *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, ed. Fredi Chiappelli (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 570.

things are made on—but situates itself in the material reality of the fair, which is anything but dreamlike:

LEATHERHEAD: The Fair's pest'lence dead, methinks; people come not abroad to day, whatever the matter is. Do you hear, Sister Trash, Lady o' the basket? Sit farther with your gingerbread-progeny there, and hinder not the prospect of my shop, or I'll ha' it proclaimed i'the Fair *what stuff they are made on*.

TRASH: Why, *what stuff are they made on*, Brother Leatherhead? Nothing but what's wholesome, I assure you.

LEATHERHEAD: Yes, stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey, you know.⁴²

(2.2.1–8, my emphasis)

Leatherhead's description of Trash's gingerbread casts a knowing eye on what's behind the spectacle of her seemingly appealing wares: "Stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey." Leatherhead's description of the gingerbread as her "progeny" makes clear the intimate connection between Trash and her wares: she is of the same "stuff." Moreover, that stuff is lacking something—goodness, in this case, though Trash assures us it is "*wholesome*." Jonson's interest in "stuff" also picks up and extends Shakespeare's use of the "thing of darkness" that clarifies Prospero. The possible lack of compassion threatens Prospero's humanity, but Jonson's Leatherhead carries this threat of lack into his repeated call in the fair: "What do you lack, gentlemen, what is't you lack? A fine horse? A lion? A bull? A bear? A dog or a cat? An excellent fine Barthol'mew-bird? Or an instrument? What is't you lack?" (2.5.3–5). The stuff he proposes imagines a broad spectrum of nonhumanity, ranging from the animal, to the animal/human whores of the fair, to the purely material instrument. For Jonson, this is all the "stuff" of self-fashioning: humankind is not essential, but composite—made up of, and defined by, the non-human material surrounding it.

* * *

In his own discussion of Jonson and Shakespeare's relationship, Ian Donaldson offers a more positive reading of the "creative relationship that subsisted between these two men."⁴³ If, as I have argued here, Jonson is building on a foundation laid

42. Surprisingly, no edition of *Bartholomew Fair* makes note of Jonson's clear borrowing of Prospero's phrase here.

43. Ian Donaldson, "Looking Sideways: Jonson, Shakespeare, and the Myths of Envy," *Ben Jonson Journal* 8 (2001): 1–22, esp. 8.

by Shakespeare—if he has, in fact, resolved himself to ask the same basic questions that Shakespeare asks in *The Tempest*—then perhaps Jonson’s one staged drollery, Littlewit’s puppet show, gives us some indication of what he concludes about humanity at the end of his own dramatic investigation. Leatherhead’s puppets are, of course, only performing humanity, a point made quite literally when the puppet Dionysius “takes up his garment” to prove that the puppets have “neither Male nor Female amongst us” (5.5.83–85). Their “humanity” is demonstrably less satisfying, less reliable than it appears. And, although the puppets are able, in a sense, to “ape” humanity, their performance is wholly dependent on human mediators (at the very least, they are reliant on Leatherhead, who facilitates the performance).⁴⁴ Jonson’s drollery ends as empty as those offered on Prospero’s island. There is, in the end, no satisfaction in the search: in attempting to locate an immutable definition of “the human,” we look for something that is not there, just as Overdo strives in vain for a heightened plane of humanity throughout the play and has to be reminded, finally, that he is “but Adam, flesh and blood” (5.6.80). For Jonson—but also for Shakespeare—the human can only be defined relationally.

Bartholomew Fair ends with Overdo’s reveal and his rather lackluster attempt to (re)assert a position of authority. Like Prospero, Overdo invites the assembled company to his home—as Prospero invites the others to his “poor cell” (*The Tempest*, 5.1.301–2)—but it is really Quarlous who pushes the play toward its conclusion by instructing Overdo on how “to save [his] estimation” (5.6.66–67). Given the strength of the connection between Jonson’s play and Shakespeare’s, Overdo’s choice of language in the final moments of the play is significant: “I invite you home with me to my house, to supper. I will have none fear to go along, for my intents are *ad correctionem, non ad destructionem; ad aedificandum, non ad diruendum* [To correct, not to destroy; to build, not to demolish]: so lead on” (5.6.92–94). This comment—which resembles both the Vulgate text of 2 Corinthians 13:10 and James I’s well-known opening speech to the 1610 Parliament—is often read as Overdo’s retreat to the safety of divine and royal power.⁴⁵ To read this in the context of

44. Kristina E. Caton has written persuasively on how, in *Bartholomew Fair*, “the boundary is blurred between the puppets and the human actors who manipulate them.” “Shared Borders: The Puppet in Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*,” *Early Theatre* 16, no. 1 (2013): 52.

45. 2 Corinthians 13:10: “*Secundem potestatem, quam Dominus dedit mihi in aedificationem, et non in destructionem* [according to the power which the Lord hath given me, to edification, and not to destruction].” Quoted in Debora K. Shuger, “Hypocrites and Puppets in *Bartholomew Fair*,” *Modern Philology* 82 (1984): 70–73, esp. 72. In this speech, James I described the king’s power as “ordained by God *Ad aedificationem, non ad destructionem*.” Quoted in John Manning, introduction to *A Choice of Emblems*, by Geoffrey Whitney (1586; repr., New York: Scholar, 1989), 342–44. On these lines as a testament to the play’s political intelligence, see Leah S. Marcus, “Of Mire and Authorship,” in *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre, and Politics in London 1576–1649*, ed. David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170–81.

Jonson's engagement with Shakespeare yields a different view, signaling a more sympathetic interaction with the ideas underpinning Shakespeare's play. Overdo's lines here call to mind the "corrective" stance of the play's induction, and in this way, Jonson begins and ends his play with reference to correction. This is not, however, the familiar eighteenth-century model of "correction" that imagined Shakespeare as a "wild untutored genius" in need of formal restraint.⁴⁶ Jonson corrects Shakespeare's dramaturgy, banishing magic and the vast nonhuman population in favor of more realistic earthly representation. But he does not abandon the philosophical inquiry that Shakespeare's island sustains—rather, he expands it. Like *The Tempest*, *Bartholomew Fair* is deeply invested in the processes by which humans define and protect their own category. Moving these considerations to the fair also makes the ideological result more dramatic and stark. If *The Tempest* demonstrates that nonhumans are all enlisted to define and secure a privileged human position, *Bartholomew Fair* highlights just how exploitative this instinct really is. The characters of the fair appropriate animal language to define themselves, but so too do they use their wares and their objects for the same purpose. It is, in short, a correction that builds, a correction that unleashes the dark rapacity of what has previously been contained by Shakespeare's drolleries.

46. Jacques Barzun, *On Music and Letters, Culture and Biography 1940–1980*, ed. Bea Friedland (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 127.